

Why the Protestant Reformation FAILED!

By Frank M. Walker, from a tract by Raymond Clark, D.D.

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city,” Revelation 22:14.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” John 8:32.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God. I will also forget thy children,” Hosea 4:6.

“...here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,” Revelation 14:12.

It seems that most mainstream Christians cannot fully grasp the tremendously important role God’s Holy Sabbath has played in church history. For instance, what part did the Sabbath play in the Reformation? The reformers paid a terrible price for their rejection of the seventh-day Sabbath and for their refusal to accept it as an article of revolt against the Catholic Church. They flatly rejected the Sabbath rest of the Scriptures. They claimed to follow the written word only (the Bible as we now call it), and to refuse the traditions of the Church. (Sunday is a tradition of the Roman Church that has not one text word of divine authority.)

Martin Luther was not the staunch advocate of truth that many suppose. He is highly praised for claiming to follow the Scriptures only. He stated that he was discarding *all* tradition. He and the reformers (so-called) were challenged at the termination of the Council of Trent by the Archbishop of Reggio. He said all their claims of discarding tradition were false as long as they retained Sunday. This rejection of the seventh-day Sabbath was also a tradition instituted by the Catholic Church. This change in the day of worship is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures.

Sabbath Truth Presented, But Rejected by Luther

Almost unknown to most Christian literature is the name of Andreas Rudolph B. Carlstadt, the great apostle of the seventh-day Sabbath. He was born in Carlstadt, Bavaria, in 1480 and died in Basel, Switzerland, on December 25, 1541, at the age of 61 years. Carlstadt was a personal friend and co-worker with Martin Luther, but strenuously opposed him on the Sabbath issue. Carlstadt observed the seventh-day

Sabbath and taught its observance. D'Aubigne says that Luther himself admitted that Carlstadt was his superior in learning (Fifield's History, Reference book 10, page 315).

The rejection of the Sabbath at the Council of Trent at once crippled the advance of the Reformation. Protestants and Protestant reformers will be held responsible on Judgment Day for their unfaithfulness at a time when the entire Roman Church pivoted toward discarding all tradition.

At this point let us refer to the eminent Doctor Dowling. In his History of Romanism, book 2, chapter 1, he says: "The Bible and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." It is, further, of no "...account in the estimation of a genuine Protestant how early a doctrine originated if it is not found in the Bible..." Hence if a doctrine be propounded for his acceptance, he asks, "Is it found in the inspired word? Was it taught by the Lord Jesus Christ or His apostles?" It did not matter to him whether it had been discovered in the musty folio of some ancient visionary of the third or fourth century, or whether it emerged from the fertile brain of some modern visionary of the nineteenth. If it was not found in the sacred Scriptures it presented no valid claim to be received as an article of his religious creed. He who receives a single doctrine from mere authority of tradition, by so doing steps down from the Protestant Rock, passes over the line that separates Protestantism from Popery and gives no reason why he should not receive all the earlier doctrines and ceremonies of Romanism.

Again, the Italian historian Gavassi says, "A pagan flood flowing into the church, carried with it its customs, practices and idols" (Gavassi's Lectures, page 290).

To quote another authority, Dr. White, Bishop of Ely: "The observance of the seventh day was being revived in Luther's time by Carlstadt" (Treatise of the Sabbath, page 8). And from Sears' Life of Luther, page 402: "Carlstadt held to the Divine authority of the Sabbath from the Old Testament."

Indeed Luther says (in his book Against the Celestial Prophets): "Indeed, if Carlstadt were to write further about the Sabbath, Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath—that is to say, Saturday—must be kept holy."

Carlstadt said: "In regard to the ceremonies of the Church, all are to be rejected which have not a warrant in the Bible."

Luther asserted on the contrary, "Whatever is not against the Scripture is for it."

“Not so,” said Carlstadt. “We are bound to the Bible, and no one may decide after the thoughts of his own heart” (Sears’ Life of Luther, pages 401, 402).

“It cannot be denied that in many respects Carlstadt was in advance of Luther, and doubtless the Reformation owes him much good for which he has not the credit” (McClintock and Strong’s Cyclopedia, Volume 2, page 123).

“From the Catholic (Roman) teaching of justification by works of penance, etc., Luther went to the opposite extreme of justification without works. This idea caused him to deny that the Epistle of James was inspired, because James said, ‘Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.’ This attitude made Luther spurn the true Christian Sabbath” (History of the Sabbath by Andrews, 3rd edition, 1887).

Read what Draper says: “Toward the close of Luther’s life it seemed as if there were no other prospects for papal power than total ruin. Yet at this day, 1930, but of three hundred millions of Christians, more than half owe allegiance to Rome. Almost as if by enchantment the Reformation ceased to advance. Rome was not only able to check its spread but even to gain back a portion of what she had lost” (Intellectual Development, Volume 2, page 216).

Protestant Victory Almost Won, But Lost, Why?

Now in dealing with the Council of Trent, held in northeast Italy, and lasting from A.D. 1545 to 1563, we must quote another well-versed writer, G. E. Fifield, D.D., in his incomparable tract, Origin of Sunday as a Christian (?) Festival (Published by American Sabbath Tract Society, Seventh Day Baptist Church). To quote Dr. Fifield: “At the Council of Trent, called by the Roman Church to deal with questions arising out of the Reformation, it was at first an apparent possibility that the Council would declare in favor of the reformed doctrines instead of against them, so profound was the impression made thus far by the teachings of Luther and other reformers.”

The Pope’s legate actually wrote to him that there was “strong tendency to set aside tradition altogether, and to make the Scriptures the sole standard of appeal.” The question was debated day by day, until it was fairly brought to a standstill. Finally the Archbishop of Reggio turned the Council against the Reformation by the following argument, “The Protestants claim to stand upon the written word only: they profess to hold the Scriptures alone as the standard of faith. They justify their revolt by the plea that the Church has apostatized from the written word and

follows tradition. Now the Protestant's claim that they stand upon the written word alone is not true."

Why Luther's Claim Not True

"Their profession of holding the Scriptures alone as the standard of faith is false. Proof: The written word explicitly enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath. They do not observe the seventh day, but reject it. If they truly hold the Scriptures alone as the standard, they would be observing the seventh day as it is enjoined in the Scripture throughout. Yet they not only reject the observance of the Sabbath as enjoined in the written word, but they have adopted, and do practice the observance of Sunday, for which they have only the tradition of the (Catholic) Church."

"Consequently, the claim of Scripture alone as the standard fails and the doctrine of 'Scripture and tradition' as essential is fully established, the Protestants themselves being Judges." See The Proceedings of the Council of Trent, Augsburg Confession, and Encyclopedia Britannica, article "Trent, Council of." At this argument, the party that had stood for the Scripture alone surrendered, and the Council at once unanimously condemned Protestantism, and the whole Reformation. It at once proceeded to enact stringent decrees to arrest its progress.

Results of the Reformation

Now what were the results of the Reformation? Let us hear what Myers says: "The outcome of the revolt, very broadly stated, was the separation from the Roman Catholic Church of the Northern, or Teutonic nations, that is to say, of Northern Germany, parts of Switzerland and the Netherlands, and of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, England, and Scotland. The Romance Nations, namely, Italy, France, and Spain, together with Celtic Ireland, adhered to the old Church." Of the spiritual results of the revolt the same writer says: "In a spiritual or religious point of view, this severance of the Northern nations of the bonds that formerly united them to the ecclesiastic empire of Rome meant a transfer of their allegiance..." And he finally sums up: "Thus one half of Western Christendom was lost to the Roman Church."

From this we see that the Roman Church, attacked by the Reformers, had at one time faced utter defeat. But she recovered! The reformers had dealt a deathblow to the Papacy. Unfortunately, the reformers themselves bound up the wound by clinging to Sunday, Rome's day, and to other Papal traditions. They rejected the Sabbath of the Scriptures.

Conclusion: “Come out of her, my people...” (Revelation 18:4-8).

God is giving a last solemn warning today to come out of those same traditions that most early Protestant leaders carried over from the Roman Catholic Church. The attempted change of the Sabbath command (Exodus 20:8-11) is only part of the list. Tradition is vain worship (see Mark 7:6-13). Our eternal destiny is at stake in our decisions, friends.

Published by:
The Bible Sabbath Association
3316 Alberta Drive
Gillette, WY 82718

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Fairview, OK 73737