

## **Why the Protestant Reformation Failed!**

It seems that most mainstream Christians cannot fully grasp the tremendously important role that the Sabbath has played in church history. For instance, the significance of the Sabbath in the history of the Protestant 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 (*Sola Scriptura*), and to refuse the traditions of the Church. Yet 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 were challenged at the termination of the Council of Trent by the Archbishop of Reggio. Reggio stated that their claims of discarding tradition were false as long as they retained Sunday. The rejection of the Seventh day Sabbath was also a tradition instituted by the Catholic Church. The change in the day of worship is nowhere to be found in the Scriptures.

## **The Sabbath Truth Presented, But Rejected by Luther**

Almost unknown in most Christian literature is the name of Andreas Rudolph B. Carlstadt, the great witness 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. Luther himself admitted that Carlstadt was his superior in learning (Fifield's History. Reference book ten, page 315).

The rejection of the Sabbath at the Council of Trent at once crippled the advance of the Reformation. Protestants and Protestant reformers failed in their call for *Sola Scriptura* at a time when the entire Roman Church pivoted toward discarding all tradition.

The eminent Protestant Doctor Dowling wrote in his *History of Romanism*: "The Scriptures, and the Scriptures only, is the religion of Protestants." It is of no "account in the estimation of a genuine Protestant how early a doctrine originated if it is not found in the Scriptures." Hence if a doctrine is to be accepted, the Protestant asks, "Is it found in the inspired Word? Was it taught by the (Yeshua Messiah) or His apostles?" It should not matter to a Protestant whether a doctrine had been established in the third or fourth century or whether it emerged from the teaching of some modern visionary of the nineteenth. For Dowling, if a doctrine was not found in the Scriptures, it presented no valid claim to be

received as an article of religious creed. He who received a single doctrine by the mere authority of tradition, stepped down from the Protestant Rock, passed over the line that separated Protestantism from Popery, and had no reason not to receive all the earlier doctrines and ceremonies of Romanism.

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."

Even Luther wrote 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 Scriptures."

Luther asserted on the contrary, "Whatever is not against the Scripture is for it." "Not so," said Carlstadt. "We are bound to the Scriptures, 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 had the credit" (McClintok and Strong's Cyclopedia, Volume 2, page 123). References in the following paragraph are taken from History of the Sabbath by Andrews. See third edition, 1887:

"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." (Not incidentally, Menno Simons also rejected the doctrine of "justification without works.")

Read what Draper said: "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, out of three hundred millions of Christians, more than half owe allegiance to Rome. Almost as 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).

### **The Protestant Victory Almost Won, But Lost.....Why?**

Now in dealing with the Council of Trent (lasting from 1545 to 1563 A.D.), and to quote another well-versed writer, G. E. Fifield, in his tract, *Origin of Sunday as a Christian (?) Festival* (Published by American Sabbath Tract Society, Seventh

Day Baptist Church)....."*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. 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.

### **The Results of the Reformation**

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 death blow 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.

The consequence of the Reformation was the separation from the Roman Catholic Church of the Teutonic nations of Northern Germany, parts of Switzerland and the Netherlands, and of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, England and Scotland. The Romance Nations of Italy, France and Spain, together with Celtic Ireland, adhered to the old Church. The spiritual results of the revolt was the severance of the Israelite nations from the bonds that united them to the ecclesiastic empire of Rome. Twelve hundred and sixty years after Constantine

(the "time, and times, and half a time" of Daniyel 7:25), the captivity of the Ten Tribes of Israel came to an end. Many Christians in Northern Europe were able to cast off much of the darker, more idolatrous elements of Catholicism. The modern Messianic or Nazarene Israel movement is a continuation of what the Reformation began, namely a return to the Scriptures and the original faith of the apostles.

Note: This article is a reworking of paper by Frank M. Walker which he compiled from a much earlier tract by Raymond Clark. The original can be found at [www.yashanet.com](http://www.yashanet.com) (Library/Historical Studies)

Conclusion: "Come out of her, my people . . ." (Rev. 18:4-8)

Shalom