

# Augsburg Confession - 3

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*Sunday and Easter*

## Part 1

This is the final broadcast in our three-part series on the Augsburg Confession of Faith. Two weeks ago we began the series by looking at the courage of the men of Augsburg who risked their lives by confessing the crime of being Lutherans. We hoped that the example of their faith would give us all the courage to stand for Christian principles even when it is unpopular to do so.

Last week we examined the Augsburg Confession itself to see exactly what it was that the Lutherans were protesting. Specifically, they objected to the abuses that had crept into the Church over the centuries. They protested against the notions that salvation comes from the Church rather than God, and the doctrine that one could earn salvation by performing man-made ceremonies. They protested against the corruption that the sale of indulgences for sin had brought into the church. Their battle cry was, "The Bible and the Bible only!"

We reserved for this week the final article of the Augsburg Confession, which dealt with the important and controversial topics of Sunday and Easter.

Valentine's Day is always February 14. Thanksgiving is always the third Thursday in November. But it takes an astrologer to tell you when Easter will be in any given year. Why is that?

Holidays fall on dates determined by someone in authority. Thanksgiving is in November in the United States because the U.S. Government decreed it. In Canada, Thanksgiving is in October, according to the dictate of the Canadian Government. We Yankees celebrate Thanksgiving in November because we accept the authority of the United States Government rather than the Canadian Government.

When it comes to Easter, whose authority should Protestants accept? Who should tell us when to celebrate Easter? Should the U.S. Government decide when we should celebrate Jesus' resurrection? Or should we yield to the authority of the Bible, or a church?

The date of Easter is determined by the Catholic Church. According to a Catholic source,

*The formula for calculating Easter was set down at the Council of Nicaea in 325--one of the seven ecumenical councils accepted by both Catholics and Orthodox, and the source of the Nicene Creed that we recite every Sunday at Mass. It is a fairly simple formula:*

*Easter is the first Sunday that follows the paschal full moon, which is the full moon that falls on or after the spring equinox.*

*For calculation purposes, the full moon is always set at the 14th day of the lunar month (the lunar month begins with the new moon). This is called the ecclesiastical full moon; the astronomical full moon may fall a day or so after or before the ecclesiastical full moon.*<sup>1</sup>

But why was this "fairly simple formula" adopted by the Council of Nicaea in the 4<sup>th</sup> century? We need to go back in history to find that answer.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://catholicism.about.com/b/2009/04/16/reader-question-is-the-date-of-easter-related-to-passover.htm>

Originally, Christians celebrated Jesus' resurrection in conjunction with the Passover because Jesus was the actual realization of the Passover lamb. The important Messianic prophecies contained in the Passover service are the topic for another broadcast. For now, let us just say that at the first Passover in Egypt, a lamb was slain and its blood saved those who were protected by it. The symbolism was not lost on the Jews. John the Baptists understood it.

**The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)**

Paul told the Corinthians,

**For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (1 Cor 5:7)**

Peter said,

**For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:18-21)**

The Book of Revelation refers to Jesus as the Lamb 31 times.

The connection between Jesus and the Passover lamb is undeniable. It was no accident that Jesus died on Passover. So, why would anyone celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection at any other time? You probably aren't going to like the answer to that question.

As the church grew, many Gentiles joined the church. They were accustomed to celebrating Easter, a spring fertility festival named in honor of a pagan fertility goddess. It involved many fertility symbols, including bunnies, colored eggs, chickens, and more adult celebrations of the reproductive process. The pagan converts didn't want to give up this popular festival. So, some congregations attempted to Christianize Easter by changing it from a fertility festival of birth to a festival commemorating Jesus' rebirth. It was relatively easy to assign new Christian meanings to ancient pagan customs. For example, an ugly brown bulb was buried in the ground, and burst forth into a beautiful, pure white Easter lily, just as Jesus burst forth from the tomb in all His glory. Chicks burst forth from eggs just as Jesus burst forth from the tomb.

Because Easter is a pagan holiday, it is bound up with astrology. As we read earlier, its date is dependent upon the phase of the moon, and falls on different dates in March or April every year. That's why it takes an astrologer to tell you when Easter is. Sometimes it coincides with Passover. Sometimes it doesn't.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century there was a division in the church. Some congregations celebrated Jesus' resurrection at the time of the Jewish Passover, and some celebrated His resurrection at the time of the pagan Easter celebration. The 4<sup>th</sup> century church/state coalition didn't like division. They wanted church unity. So, the Council of Nicaea addressed the issue.

Some say that the decision was based on anti-Semitism. That's a pretty serious charge. We would hate to make that accusation without substantial evidence. So we will leave it to you to decide. Here are some excerpts from Emperor Constantine's letter explaining the decision of the Council of Nicaea. See if you can detect any traces of anti-Semitism.

*Constantine Augustus, to the churches.*

...  
*At the council we also considered the issue of our holiest day, Easter, and it was determined by common consent that everyone, everywhere should celebrate it on one and the same day. For what can be more appropriate, or what more solemn, than that this feast from which we have received the hope of immortality, should be kept by all without variation, using the same order and a clear arrangement? And in the first place, **it seemed very unworthy for us to keep this most sacred feast following the custom of the Jews, a people who have soiled their hands in a most terrible outrage, and have thus polluted their souls, and are now deservedly blind.** Since we have cast aside their way of calculating the date of the festival, we can ensure that future generations can celebrate this observance at the more accurate time which we have kept from the first day of the passion until the present time. Therefore **have nothing in common with that most hostile people, the Jews.** We have received another way from the Savior. In our holy religion we have set before us a course which is both valid and accurate. Let us unanimously pursue this. Let us, most honored brothers, **withdraw ourselves from that detestable association.** It is truly most absurd for them to boast that we are incapable of rightly observing these things without their instruction. **On what subject are they competent to form a correct judgment, who, after that murder of their Lord lost their senses, and are led not by any rational motive, but by an uncontrollable impulsiveness to wherever their innate fury may drive them?** ... [Y]ou should still be careful, both by diligence and prayer, that your pure souls should **have nothing in common, or even seem to do so, with the customs of men so utterly depraved.***

...  
*So first, it was desirable to change the situation so that **we have nothing in common with that nation of father-killers who slew their Lord.** Second, the order which is observed by all the churches of the western, southern, and northern parts, and by some also in the eastern is quite suitable. Therefore, at the current time, we all thought it was proper that you, intelligent as you are, would also cheerfully accept what is observed with such general unanimity of sentiment in the city of Rome, throughout Italy, Africa, all Egypt, Spain, France, Britain, Libya, the whole of Greece, and the dioceses of Asia, Pontus, and Cilicia. I pledged myself that this solution would satisfy you after you carefully examined it, especially as I considered that not only are the majority of congregations located in the places just mentioned, but also that we all have a most sacred obligation, to unite in desiring whatever common sense seems to demand, and what has **no association with the perjury of the Jews.** But to sum up matters briefly, it was determined by common consent that the most holy festival of Easter should be solemnized on one and the same day; for it is not at all decent that there should be in such a sacred serious matter any difference. ...*

*Since these things are consistent, gladly receive this heavenly and truly divine command. For whatever is done in the sacred assemblies of the bishops can be traced to Divine will. Therefore, once you have demonstrated the things which have been prescribed to all our beloved brothers, it would be good for you to make public the above written statements and to accept the reasoning which has proved itself to be sound, and to establish this observance of the most holy day. In this way, when I arrive to check on your condition, which I have desired earnestly for some time, I will be able to celebrate the sacred festival with you on one and the same day, and will rejoice with you for all things, as I see that through our efforts divine power is frustrating Satan's cruelty, and that your faith, peace, and unity are flourishing everywhere.*

*May God preserve you, beloved brothers.* <sup>2</sup>

We trust you found Constantine's reasoning as offensive as we did. We hesitated to quote that to you for fear someone might turn on their radio in the middle of that quote, mistake that vile rhetoric for our own position, and change the channel. But you need to know the truth, as ugly as it is. The Council of Nicaea

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<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Lutheran College website, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-26>

chose to celebrate Jesus resurrection on the pagan holiday of Easter rather than on the Jewish Passover because of their hatred of the Jews.

The same church/state coalition changed the day of worship from the Jewish Sabbath to pagan Sunday for the same reason. Anti-Semitism was so strong in the 4<sup>th</sup> century that the Roman leaders wanted nothing to do with the Jews.

Constantine's letter is terribly offensive to us today, but there was nothing offensive about it in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It was mainstream thinking back then. Easter and Sunday worship are the historical result of that anti-Semitism.

This doesn't mean that people who celebrate Easter and Sunday are anti-Semitic today. Most people incorrectly believe that Easter is actually the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead, and that Jesus or His Apostles changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Most people today simply don't know that Easter and Sunday are the result of 4<sup>th</sup> century anti-Semitism. Catholics and Protestants who celebrate Easter and Sunday aren't anti-Semitic—they are just ignorant of church history.

Modern Catholics don't celebrate on Sunday and Easter because they love the sun god Apollo and the fertility goddess Ishtar<sup>3</sup> and hate anything associated with the Jews. Catholics celebrate Sunday and Easter because it is a church tradition. They accept the authority of the Catholic Church.

But our main concern isn't why Catholics celebrate Sunday and Easter—we want to investigate why Protestants celebrate these pagan holidays. Why do Protestants accept the authority of the Catholic Church rather than the Bible? The answer is in Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession of faith. We will read that answer, right after we listen to Michael Harris sing about the Lamb of God.

[music "Lamb of God"]

## Part 2

In our first segment we saw that Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nicaea substituted Easter and Sunday for Passover and Sabbath because the prevailing public opinion in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was more favorable toward pagan holidays than Jewish holidays. The modern Catholic Church continues these observances because they are traditional.

But why do Protestants observe Easter and Sunday? That, too, is an interesting story. We have to go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, to the founding document of the Lutheran church, the Augsburg Confession of Faith, for that answer.

Last week we saw that the Augsburg Confession took a hard stand against elevating man-made traditions over the commandments of God. The Reformers rejected the festivals and ceremonies the Roman Church had instituted as ways to earn grace and escape divine punishment. The Reformers stood by the Bible, and the Bible only, for guidance in spiritual matters.

So, it would be consistent for the Reformers to worship on Sabbath rather than Sunday, and celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus in conjunction with Passover, as God intended, rather than in conjunction with the Pagan fertility festival, Easter. In Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession, the Reformers tried to justify their inconsistency. Here's what they wrote:

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.goddessgift.com/pandora%27s\\_box/easter-history.htm](http://www.goddessgift.com/pandora%27s_box/easter-history.htm)

*Moreover, it is disputed whether bishops or pastors have the right to introduce ceremonies in the Church, and to make laws concerning meats, holy-days and grades, that is, orders of ministers, etc. ... They refer to the Sabbath-day as having been changed into the Lord's Day, contrary to the Decalog, as it seems. Neither is there any example whereof they make more than concerning the changing of the Sabbath-day. Great, say they, is the power of the Church, since it has dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments! But concerning this question it is taught on our part (as has been shown above) that bishops have no power to decree anything against the Gospel.* <sup>4</sup>

This is understandably puzzling. They “dispute whether bishops or pastors have the right to introduce ceremonies in the Church.” They give as an example, the change of Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, by which the church “has dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments!” Then, specifically referring to the change of the Sabbath they say, “But concerning this question it is taught on our part (as has been shown above) that bishops have no power to decree anything against the Gospel.”

After stating as clearly as possible that the bishops had no authority to change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, one would logically assume that the Lutheran leaders would reform this error by worshipping on Sabbath instead of Sunday, because the first 27 articles of the Augsburg Confession have consistently maintained that Scripture takes precedence over tradition. But in Article XXVIII they choose tradition over Scripture.

We aren't going to leave anything out of their rationalization; but it is easy to get bogged down in 16<sup>th</sup> century style. So, we will interrupt the Augsburg Confession from time to time to summarize each point as it is made.

*Now, it is against Scripture to establish or require the observance of any traditions, to the end that by such observance we may make satisfaction for sins, or merit grace and righteousness. For the glory of Christ's merit suffers injury when, by such observances, we undertake to merit justification. But it is manifest that, by such belief, traditions have almost infinitely multiplied in the Church, the doctrine concerning faith and the righteousness of faith being meanwhile suppressed. For gradually more holy-days were made, fasts appointed, new ceremonies and services in honor of saints instituted, because the authors of such things thought that by these works they were meriting grace.* <sup>5</sup>

In other words, “motive matters.” It is wrong to observe human traditions that conflict with Scripture if you are doing it to merit grace or make satisfaction for sins. They say nothing about whether or not it is wrong to observe human traditions that conflict with Scripture for any other reason.

*Since, therefore, ordinances instituted as things necessary, or with an opinion of meriting grace, are contrary to the Gospel, it follows that it is not lawful for any bishop to institute or exact such services.* <sup>6</sup>

In other words, bishops don't have the authority to establish new services if the purpose of those services is to merit grace; because the notion of being able to merit grace is contrary to the Gospel.

*What, then, are we to think of the Sunday and like rites in the house of God? To this we answer that it is lawful for bishops or pastors to make ordinances that things be done orderly in the Church, not that thereby we should merit grace or make satisfaction for sins, or that consciences be bound to judge them necessary services, and to think that it is a sin to break them without offense to others. So Paul ordains,*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/concord/web/augs-028.html>

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

[in] 1 Cor. 11, 5, that women should cover their heads in the congregation, [and in] 1 Cor. 14, 30, that interpreters be heard in order in the church, etc.

*It is proper that the churches should keep such ordinances for the sake of love and tranquility, so far that one do not offend another, that all things be done in the churches in order, and without confusion,[1 Cor. 14, 40; comp. Phil. 2, 14;] but so that consciences be not burdened to think that they are necessary to salvation, or to judge that they sin when they break them without offense to others; as no one will say that a woman sins who goes out in public with her head uncovered provided only that no offense be given.*<sup>7</sup>

In other words, bishops can make rules about worship, as long as those rules don't have anything to do with meriting grace and simply keep order and tranquility in the church.

*Of this kind is the observance of the Lord's Day, Easter, Pentecost, and like holy-days and rites. For those who judge that by the authority of the Church the observance of the Lord's Day instead of the Sabbath-day was ordained as a thing necessary, do greatly err. Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day; for it teaches that, since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. And yet, because it was necessary to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church designated the Lord's Day for this purpose; and this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary.*<sup>8</sup>

Here is the crux of the argument. First of all, they say that the Roman Church does not require Catholics to go to mass on Sunday and celebrate Easter in order to merit grace. That's a tough stand to take because Sunday attendance at mass, and the observations of Ash Wednesday, Lent, Good Friday, and Easter are required by the Church. Church members would have to go to confession to get forgiveness for failing to observe these holy days, so one really does sin (in the eyes of the church) by missing them.

Second, they say, "Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day" without giving any scriptural reference. I don't think there are any. Scripture did not abrogate the Sabbath-day. The Scripture says the Apostles always worshiped on Sabbath, not Sunday. In Acts 13 it says,

**As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.**

**On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. (Acts 13:42-44)**

As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, they did not say, "Come back on Sunday and we will tell you more." They told them to come back next Saturday. If they had been worshipping on Sunday, they would have told the people to come back the next day to hear more, instead of telling them to wait a whole week for the next sermon.

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

Acts 16:13 says,

**On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.**

Acts 17:2 says,

**As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,**

Acts 18:4 says,

**Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.**

Clearly, Paul preached every Sabbath. What did he do on Sunday? Acts 20 tells us that, after preaching a killer sermon all Saturday night, he set out on a journey at daybreak on Sunday morning. If the Christians used to meet together on Sunday morning, why would he miss the service to start his journey.

The convention of defining a day as starting at midnight is a relatively recent custom. When the New Testament was written, days began and ended at sunset. The first day of the week began at sunset on Saturday, just after the end of the Sabbath. In Acts 20, Luke tells us:

**On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “He’s alive!” Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted. (Acts 20:7-12)**

Nowhere in the book of Acts does it say anything about Paul preaching to Jews or Greeks on Sunday. So, their second point, that “Scripture has abrogated the Sabbath-day” is highly questionable.

Their third point in this paragraph was, “because it was necessary to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church designated the Lord’s Day for this purpose; and this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary.”

What made it necessary for the Church to “appoint a certain day?” In the first segment of today’s broadcast Emperor Constantine told us exactly why he and the Council of Nicaea appointed certain days. It was because, and remember these are Constantine’s words, not ours, “*it seemed very unworthy for us to keep this most sacred feast following the custom of the Jews, a people who have soiled their hands in a most terrible outrage, and have thus polluted their souls, and are now deservedly blind. ... have nothing in common with that most hostile people, the Jews. ... Let us, most honored brothers, withdraw ourselves from that detestable association. ... On what subject are they competent to form a correct judgment, who, after that murder of their Lord lost their senses, and are led not by any rational motive, but by an uncontrollable impulsiveness to wherever their innate fury may drive them? ... have nothing in common, or even seem to do so, with the customs of men so utterly depraved. ... we have nothing in common with that nation of father-killers who slew their Lord.*” Constantine and the Council of Nicaea

didn't say anything about the Gospel abrogating Sabbath, or the Apostles worshipping on Sunday as an example of Christian freedom from the law. The Roman leaders changed the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the Jewish Passover to pagan Easter because they wanted to "have nothing in common with that most hostile people, the Jews." They replaced Sabbath with Sunday so as to "have nothing in common with that nation of father-killers who slew their Lord."

Did the men who wrote the Augsburg Confession not know this? Perhaps so, but that seems unlikely. They knew every Canon Law, and every other decree of past church councils, and the writings of the church fathers. How could they not know that Easter and Sunday were relics of anti-Semitism?

Quoting the section of the Augsburg Confession we just read, remember, "this day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason, that men might have an example of Christian liberty, and might know that the keeping neither of the Sabbath nor of any other day is necessary."

By this logic, it isn't necessary to keep Sunday, either. If you really are free to keep any day holy, why not keep the day God commanded to keep holy?

Paul wrote several letters to non-Jewish converts. In any one of them, did he ever say, "have nothing in common with that nation of father-killers who slew their Lord?" No! He told the Galatians,

**You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)**

Could it be that the hatred of the Jews so evident in the 4<sup>th</sup> century still existed in Augsburg, Germany, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century? If the actions of Adolph Hitler are any indication, anti-Semitism existed in Germany as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Two weeks ago we devoted an entire broadcast to praising these great men who had the courage to stand up for Biblical truth at the risk of their lives. They were truly great men; but they weren't perfect. They lived in a society that was fiercely anti-Semitic. There were a product of their times. Everybody hated the Jews. It probably never occurred to them not to hate the Jews. We can't blame them for being anti-Semitic any more than we can blame the signers of the Declaration of Independence for owning slaves, and making the holding of slaves a constitutional right.

When we, as a nation, recognized that slavery is wrong, we amended the constitution. When we, as Christians, finally recognize that Easter and Sunday are monuments to anti-Semitism, we will acknowledge that Jesus is the Passover lamb who was slain, and celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Passover, as God intended, rather than on the pagan festival named in honor of a fertility goddess. We will keep the Sabbath as God commanded, rather than worshipping on the day named in honor of the sun god.

But we digress. Let's continue reading Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession where we left off.

*There are monstrous disputations concerning the changing of the law, the ceremonies of the new law, the changing of the Sabbath-day, which all have sprung from the false belief that there must needs be in the Church a service like to the Levitical, and that Christ had given commission to the Apostles and bishops to devise new ceremonies as necessary to salvation.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

That 62-word sentence might have been a little bit difficult to follow. In plain English, they said the change of Sabbath sprang from a false belief. That false belief was that Christ commissioned the bishops to devise new ceremonies. They admit the change of Sabbath was an error that crept into the church. But they didn't want to correct it.

*These errors crept into the Church when the righteousness of faith was not taught clearly enough. Some dispute that the keeping of the Lord's Day is not indeed of divine right, but in a manner so. They prescribe concerning holy-days, how far it is lawful to work. What else are such disputations than snares of consciences? For although they endeavor to modify the traditions, yet the mitigation can never be perceived as long as the opinion remains that they are necessary, which must needs remain where the righteousness of faith and Christian liberty are not known.*<sup>10</sup>

The Reformers said the change of Sabbath crept into the Church because righteousness by faith was not taught clearly enough. They are absolutely correct. If righteousness by faith had been taught clearly in the Roman Church, there would not have been a need for Catholics to think they had to earn salvation by attending mass on Sunday, obtaining indulgences by going to the cemetery, fasting on Fridays and during Lent, and counting Rosary beads. If righteousness by faith had been clearly taught, parishioners would have wanted to obey all of God's commandments out of love and gratitude for the sacrifice He made to save them. The Sabbath day would have been a delight.

*The Apostles commanded [in] Acts 15, 20 to abstain from blood. Who does now observe it? And yet they that do it not sin not;*<sup>11</sup>

Yes, in Acts 15 the Apostles did tell Gentile converts that they must obey the Jewish food laws. And it is true that the Apostles' decision on this matter has been widely disregarded. But is it valid to argue that those who disregard the laws "sin not" because everybody disregards the law? If a cop pulls you over for speeding, and you tell him that everyone else is speeding, too, will that prevent him from giving you a ticket?

*for not even the Apostles themselves wanted to burden consciences with such bondage; but they forbade it for a time, to avoid offense. For in this decree we must perpetually consider what the aim of the Gospel is.*<sup>12</sup>

Does the presumed intention of the Apostles supersede the expressed decision of the Apostles? What is the evidence that the Apostles only intended the restriction to abstain from blood to be temporary, to avoid offense? And why would they then not want to offend the Jews if the Jews were hated by the Apostles?

*Scarcely any Canons are kept with exactness, and from day to day many go out of use even among those who are the most zealous advocates of traditions. Neither can due regard be paid to consciences unless this mitigation be observed, that we know that the Canons are kept without holding them to be necessary, and that no harm is done consciences, even though traditions go out of use.*<sup>13</sup>

The man-made Canons are very restrictive ways to earn salvation, but they are only traditions of men. Let's not confuse human traditions with God's laws.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

The title of Article XXVIII is “Of Ecclesiastical Power.” It is about what power the bishops have and don’t have when it comes to writing rules for church members to obey in order to be saved. The Reformers wanted to make the point that the bishops have no authority to make rules that go beyond, or, worse yet, conflict with God’s laws. But they got into trouble trying to justify the bishop’s anti-Semitic decisions to celebrate Jesus’ resurrection on the pagan holiday of Easter instead of on Passover as God intended, and worship on the pagan holiday of Sunday instead of keeping God’s Sabbath commandment. They tried their best to explain why Easter and Sunday are exceptions to the rule. But ending the Augsburg Confession by admitting that the bishops do have that power in these two cases seriously weakened their entire argument. Is it, “The Bible and the Bible Only” or “The Bible most of the time except for two notable exceptions.”

Perhaps they hoped that these two compromises would make the bishops more likely to make concessions of their own. If they compromised and agreed that the bishops had the power to ordain Easter and Sunday, then maybe the bishops would agree to compromise on indulgences and all the other traditional ceremonies. Article XXVIII ends with this suggested compromise.

*But the bishops might easily retain the lawful obedience of the people if they would not insist upon the observance of such traditions as cannot be kept with a good conscience. Now they command celibacy; they admit none unless they swear that they will not teach the pure doctrine of the Gospel. The churches do not ask that the bishops should restore concord at the expense of their honor; which, nevertheless, it would be proper for good pastors to do. They ask only that they would release unjust burdens which are new and have been received contrary to the custom of the Church Catholic. It may be that in the beginning there were plausible reasons for some of these ordinances; and yet they are not adapted to later times. It is also evident that some were adopted through erroneous conceptions. Therefore it would be befitting the clemency of the Pontiffs to mitigate them now, because such a modification does not shake the unity of the Church. For many human traditions have been changed in process of time, as the Canons themselves show. But if it be impossible to obtain a mitigation of such observances as cannot be kept without sin, we are bound to follow the apostolic rule, [Acts 5, 29,] which commands us to obey God rather than men.*

*Peter, [1 Pet. 5, 3,] forbids bishops to be lords, and to rule over the churches. It is not our design now to wrest the government from the bishops, but this one thing is asked, namely, that they allow the Gospel to be purely taught, and that they relax some few observances which cannot be kept without sin. But if they make no concession, it is for them to see how they shall give account to God for furnishing, by their obstinacy, a cause for schism.*<sup>14</sup>

Sadly, it will be for us to give account to God for our obstinacy in continuing to follow traditions rooted in anti-Semitism that cause us to celebrate Jesus’ fulfillment of the Passover on the pagan holiday of Easter and break the Sabbath commandment every week by worshipping on the day named in honor of Apollo, the sun god.

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*