



The Lighthouse

October 2020

WHAT DO PROTESTANTS PROTEST?

In October, 503 years ago, the Protestant Reformation had its beginnings when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg church. Why are we called Protestants? We are called Protestants because those who became labelled as Protestants were involved in a protest against various teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Many people today identify as Protestants, but have no idea what they are protesting. What were those teachings and practices against which our Protestant ancestors were protesting? It is important for us who live on the Gulf Coast to understand these matters because we have so many friends who are Roman Catholic.

The underlying issue which was at the heart of the entire dispute was the question of authority; specifically the authority of Scripture. The slogan, or battle cry, for the Reformers in regard to this issue is *Sola Scriptura*, or *Scripture Alone*. Protestants will sometimes wrongly assume that Roman Catholics do not have a high view of Scripture. However, both Protestants and Roman Catholics have historically had a high view of Scripture, both affirming the inerrancy of Scripture (though now there are liberals in both groups who deny this). The difference between the two groups lies in the other word in the slogan – Scripture ALONE. Protestants believe that the God's special revelation to humanity comes only through the Scriptures. Roman Catholics recognize two sources of revelation, Scripture (they include 7 extra Old Testament books called the Apocrypha) and the traditions of the church (such as church councils and papal decisions). Protestants look to the Scriptures alone as "our only rule of faith and practice."

While the issue of the authority of Scripture was the underlying cause of the Protestant Reformation, the issue at the forefront of the debate was the issue of justification. The Reformers protested against the Roman Catholic view of how sinful humans could be right before a holy God. For the Reformers, the battle cry was *Sola Fide*, or *Faith Alone*. Protestants often falsely accuse Roman Catholics in believing in justification by works and faith is not important. They do believe faith is important, but not faith ALONE. They believe faith plus works, grace plus merit (hence another Reformation slogan, *Sola Gratia* or *Grace Alone*), Christ plus inherent righteousness (hence the Reformation slogan, *Solus Christus*, or *Christ Alone*) is what is required for justification. Here is a simplistic formula of the two views...

Roman Catholic: faith + works → justification

Protestant : faith → justification + works

Roman Catholics believe that the righteousness of Christ is *infused*, or actually "put in" the believer so that the person is actually (inherently) righteous. They believe this happens at baptism which they believe is the instrumental cause of justification. Here is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992) says:

“Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life.”

Protestants believe faith alone is the instrumental cause of justification. Protestants believe that the righteousness of Christ is imputed, or credited to the believer when they put their faith in what Christ has done for them. The Westminster Confession of Faith (11.1) states:

I. Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

II. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.

These two issues were the main issues. Is there any more important question for which one must have the correct answer than, “How can a sinful person be accepted by a Holy God?” Protestants and Roman Catholics have very different answers to that question. Protestants look to the Bible alone for the answer to that question. I encourage you to take up yours and read it and study it. May God give us the grace and love to point those whom we know and care about to the Gospel found in Scripture!

Grace & Peace,
Tim

In The Sweet by and by

Sanford Bennett (1836-98), a music leacher and instrumentalist owned a drugstore in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. His friend, Joseph Webster, who had frequent bouts with depression, would often come to the store. Together they would compose songs that helped Webster come out of his melancholy.

One day Webster, obviously despondent, came to the store. His friend Bennett inquired what was wrong. “It’s really nothing. It will be all right by and by.” This reply sparked Bennett’s reply: “The sweet by and by. That would make a good hymn.

Sitting at his desk in the drugstore, Bennett wrote the words quickly and handed the sheet of paper to Webster, who brightened quickly, reaching for his violin, he began to compose a melody for the lyrics. In less than thirty minutes they were heartily singing the new song! It was published in 1868, and was our prelude music. The words are:

There's a land that is fairer than day, And by we can see it afar;
For the Father waits over the way to prepare us a dwelling place there.

We shall sing on that beautiful shore the melodious songs of the blest;
And our spirits shall sorrow no more, not a sigh for the blessing of rest.

In the sweet by and by we shall meet on that beautiful shore
In the sweet by and by we shall meet on that beautiful shore.

Our lives are so geared to this earth that we rarely think of heaven and what God is preparing for us. When discouragement would overtake us, let us look from the worldly to the eternal, from what earthly circumstances may inflict to what God is doing within and for us. Let us remember that God has prepared what "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived ... for those who love Him" (1 cor. 2:9). This hymn was born in a drugstore as a prescription for depression. May its message of comfort and joy, and the knowledge of Christ's love for you, lift spirits this day.

Keep a song in your heart, Melba Sipriano

Dates to Remember for October

October 4 Communion

October 10 Women are invited to the Grace Presbytery 48th Annual Fall Convocation, Sat. Oct 10. Hosted by New Covenant Presbyterian Church, Natchez, MS. Registration, no cost, begins at 10am, program 10:30am. Business meeting and new officers installed, Guest speaker, Robin Stevens, PCA Mid-South regional Advisor, Due to Covid, no refreshments or lunch provided. RSVP by Oct 5 to Tammy Turney, 228-273-9086, tammyturney@hotmail.com. Nursery available, contact Roberta Duhs, 601-201-4044, robertaduhs@gmail.com.

Birthdays for October

Sally Ann Jones 13th

Harvel Jackson 17th

Ann Pringle 19th

Tricia Gauthier 20th

Frank Genzer 24th