

Protestantism: biblical and Protestant churches, governed by biblical and Protestant principles, with members convicted of biblical and Protestant truth, so that glory is given to the Triune God alone in Jesus Christ!

Third, Protestants and Protestant churches protest against the lie and for the truth. The history of faithful Protestantism is a history of the church militant. This is what has happened over the last 500 years, going back to the Diet of Speyer (1529), and Martin Luther's "Here I stand" at Worms (1521) and his *Ninety-Five Theses* (1517).

In reality, though not in terminology, the faithful witnessing of Protestantism goes back to Jan Hus in Bohemia, John Wycliffe in England, the Waldensians in and around the Alps, Gotschalk in various parts of Europe, Augustine in North Africa, etc.

This same fight for the faith is evident in the pages of the Bible in the battles of the apostles against the Sadducees and Judaizers in Acts and the epistles, in the ministry of the Lord Jesus versus the scribes and Pharisees in the gospel accounts, and in the labours of the faithful prophets, like Elijah, in the Old Testament.

In our day, out of love for the truth and in order to gain others to it by God's grace, faithful Protestant people and churches protest against apostasy: liberal theology, Arminianism, women in church office, false ecumenism (with Roman Catholicism, other false or departing churches and the cults), sodomy and lesbianism in church office-bearers and members, syncretism with pagan religions, etc.

The child of God also has a right and a calling to protest unbiblical teaching and practice in his own church because of his office of believer, for he is a prophet, priest and king through sharing in the spiritual anointing of Jesus Christ. His protest should be made in an orderly, ecclesiastical fashion, according to the Reformed confessions and the church's code or church order. Such a protest should be made humbly and yet boldly, with much prayer and fortified with the Holy Scriptures to God's glory.

Psalms 119 superbly sums up the spirit of biblical Protestantism: "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (104); "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (127-128).

Next time, we shall conclude by considering some of the major ethical teachings of Protestantism, DV.

Rev. Stewart

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Covenant Reformed News

October 2017 • Volume XVI, Issue 18

What Is a Protestant? (4)

After summarizing the origin and the meaning of the name Protestant, and briefly explaining the biblical and Reformation truth that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone through grace alone to the glory of God alone according to Scripture alone (the Five Solas), in the first three articles, we now need to fill out other important aspects of Protestantism.

First, Protestantism is creedal. This is a much misunderstood issue in our day. The popular misconception is that, since Protestants believe in *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone), they do not hold to the creeds. Wrong! It was the Anabaptists, whom the Protestants opposed just as much as the Roman Catholics, who believed that *sola Scriptura* meant no creeds.

At the Diet of Speyer in 1529, the first Protestants protested (hence their name) against the ungodly decisions of the Roman Catholic majority on the basis of Scripture alone. In 1530, the very next year, they agreed to the *Augsburg Confession*—a creed!

In the specifically Reformed (rather than Lutheran) branch of the Protestant Reformation, many more creeds were written by those who held *sola Scriptura*. In fact, the four volumes of James T. Dennison, Jr.'s *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries in English Translation* contain 127 creeds in the 173-year period from 1523 to 1695. That is a new creed on average every 16 months or so!

So here we have two facts regarding the foundational period of Protestantism: first, it contains the clearest statements of Scripture alone in church history and, second, it has the highest rate of production of confessions in church history. How are these two things to be reconciled and understood?

It is not difficult. *Sola Scriptura* means that the Bible alone is the written Word of God and is, therefore, the supreme judge of faith and morals. The creeds summarize what the inspired, infallible and supremely authoritative Word of God teaches.

Not only do faithful Protestants today have confessions; they also maintain and uphold them, and teach the biblical doctrines that they summarize.

Second, Protestants are true churchmen and love Christ's church. Protestants are not individualistic, with everyone going off on his own and doing his own thing.

The Protestant Reformation was the reformation of an organization or body of believers, the church. This means it was a reformation of church doctrine (including the Five Solas), church creeds, church preaching, church sacraments, church discipline, church government and church worship. This is the desire, goal and result of godly

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Emotions

A reader writes, “I have a question concerning love and emotions. I have read some materials on the topic, including Herman Hoeksema’s explanation of God’s love. He defines love as a ‘bond’ and he also speaks of it as a ‘desire.’ Some argue that love is a feeling, while others that the nature of love is volitional. My question is: What is the relation between love and feelings or emotions? By feelings or emotions, I mean affective states of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate or the like is experienced, as distinguished from cognitive and volitional states of consciousness?”

This question from a reader of the *News* in Hungary taps into a long debate that has been ongoing in the church ever since the time of Augustine (354-430). The discussion concerns the feelings or emotions and how the emotions of a person relate to his mind and his will. The debate has, for the most part, revolved around the question whether the emotions are a separate faculty of the soul or are a part of another faculty.

This presupposes, of course, that man has a soul and is not merely the product of blind evolutionary processes. The soul in man is immaterial and pervades the whole of man’s being. The Bible itself speaks of the soul or spirit.

The faculties of the soul are the *facultas intelligendi* and the *facultas volendi*—the faculty of the mind and the faculty of the will. The debate has centred on the question whether the emotions (if such exist) are a separate power of the soul or belong to one of the two faculties, that is, to the mind or to the will.

The issue is an interesting one and it is also an important one. Herman Bavinck wrote a book entitled *Biblical and Religious Psychology*. Unfortunately, it is written in Dutch. I translated it into English for a theological class I taught and the Protestant Reformed Seminary in Wyoming, Michigan, produces copies of it.

Bavinck is adamant that the emotions are part of the activity of the will. He points out, and correctly so, that, if the emotions are a separate faculty, and are thus outside the intellectual and volitional life of a man, emotions are outside man’s moral responsibility.

What I have to say about the emotions, I learned chiefly from Bavinck, although Hoeksema in his instruction would refer from time to time to the emotions, as the questioner pointed out.

We live in a world in which people seem to think that emotions are the dominant psychical activity in our lives. Many wrongly reckon that feelings that arise out of nowhere drive everyone to do what they do. The idea is that, because emotions are independent of our minds and wills, we have no control over them. It is all summed up in the terrible motto, “If it feels good, do it.”

The fact is that the emotions are part of the will. The will is dependent, in turn, on the mind. God has so created us that we stand in relation to the creation around us, primarily with our minds. We know the creation. We also know the Bible, God’s inspired Word. The will cannot act upon that which the mind does not know.

The emotions are one aspect of the activity of the will that chooses between various

options which a man confronts. I hope no one deduces from this remark that man can choose for God or Christ without irresistible grace. Man is totally depraved. But he retains the power of choice in natural things. For example, he chooses the road on which to drive to his destination. Life consists in making choices every moment of the day. What a man chooses depends on what he likes or dislikes, what he wants or despises, what he loves or hates. Without faith, all a man’s choices are sinful (Rom. 14:23) but some decisions are more sinful than others.

Man is neither the master of his fate nor the captain of his soul. God determines the path that he walks. Things happen to him that he hoped would never happen, like being diagnosed with cancer. In his heart, he knows that he cannot control his life. There are even atheists in fox holes, who, through fear of death, have a sudden inclination to pray. Yet they cannot really pray, for true prayer comes only from a regenerated heart and must be offered on the basis of Christ’s substitutionary death and intercession.

A man’s emotions are his reactions to the totality of his experiences in life. He likes them or he dislikes them. Every emotion is a sense of like or dislike.

Bavinck points out that some emotions are very strong and some relatively weak. He gives different names to different emotions, depending on their strength.

The eternal and unchangeable God has, according to Scripture, emotions. God perfectly loves His people and hates the wicked (e.g., Ps. 5:5; Prov. 3:32-33). How the eternal God can have emotions is far beyond our understanding. But He does and for this we must be thankful. He is not cold, impersonal or unmoved by anything in this life. He is not the Mohammedan’s Allah.

It seems to me that love and hate are the most basic emotions. This is certainly true from an ethical viewpoint, for the moral law is summed up in the command to love God and our neighbour. God loves His people with an eternal love and hates the wicked with an eternal hatred. He does not love them all and bend every effort to save them, only to hate them at the end of their life and cast them into hell.

So with man: man’s most basic emotions are love and hate. The elect love God and their neighbour; the wicked hate God and their neighbour.

The believer still has a depraved nature. God is pleased to send him many afflictions. He may dislike intensely the fact that he has cancer, but he receives it from the Lord and in humble submission to His will. He loves his God and willingly submits to His way, although there remains the battle between his old man and his new man in Christ.

Man is responsible for his emotions. He must answer for them before Christ’s judgment throne. The believer is called to live a life of temperance, self-discipline and self-control by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). This is part of the kingly office of the Christian: his ruling over himself by God’s grace. He never simply has emotions that overcome him. He must not live by the slogan, “If it feels good, do it.” The child of God is the object of Jehovah’s mercy, love, grace and longsuffering. He is moved by this to bring to his heavenly Father a humble prayer of thanksgiving, all the while weeping for his sins.

Prof. Hanko