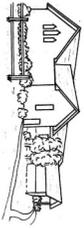


**NORTHWOODS
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**



**4723 GRIFFITH AVENUE
CHEYENNE, WY 82009**

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. JOHN 4:24



Give thanks unto the Lord,
for he is good for his mercy
endureth forever.
Psalm 107:1

THE NORTHWOODS NEWS

Orthodoxy & Schism

By
Rich Cesal

When I first became a Christian I felt deeply about the fractured situation of the protestant church. I felt that of all things, the differing of opinions on spiritual matters was an abomination to God. Why can't people agree on most things since they should all be coming from the same source, the Bible? Now, if a group decides that the Bible is not the actual Word of God, then what happens to their belief system is understandable. If man is going to form his own opinions as to what he thinks God is all about, then total chaos is bound to be the result. But what about those denominations which claim belief in the Bible as the Word of God and still deviate drastically from the orthodox reformed view?

Orthodoxy—the condition of being orthodox—which means conforming to established doctrine. Now, doctrine based on the Bible can be quite nebulous. There are some topics which are not clearly defined in the Bible and this can lead to differing denominations. For example, Luther could not come to Calvin's position on the Lord's Supper. Luther insisted that the bread and wine actually became the true body and blood of Jesus during the administration of the Lord's Supper (consubstantiation). A belief which is still held in most of the Lutheran denominations. Calvin's position is one that the elements in the Supper

are only symbols of the spiritual actuality of the sacrament. Another example is the mode of baptism. These are legitimate differences since the Bible does not speak to either of these issues with clarity. But what this means is after the Reformation which reemphasized the doctrines of Scripture and cost so many men to be burned at the stake, that there should have been only two or three denominations. Today there are hundreds. Obviously, there is an invasion of false suppositions which has corrupted the purity of the foundational beliefs taught in Scripture and rediscovered during the Reformation.

Did not the Word of God warn that such would be the case in the future? This is what Paul says to the early church in Ephesus in Acts 20:29-30, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." How true this has proven to be.

Also, there is the statement in 2 Pet 1:16 which is even more pointed towards addressing the issue of non-orthodox (non-biblical) positions, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

From the very beginning, saints of old were writing against those who would pervert the biblical record. Athanasius (293-373), Ambrose (340-397), John Chrysostom (345-407), Augustine (354-430), and Anselm (1033-1109) to name a few. These men felt they had to uphold the purity of the church and to put down heresy.

The Bible is a remarkable book which has proven itself to be true among such a crowd of witnesses as spoken of in Heb 12:1 over the millennia. Testimony after testimony in support of the Biblical promises made and enacted. Such an overwhelming history cannot be put aside. For three hundred years after the Reformation things remained fairly pure in the most influential denominations in America.

Even the Baptists held to beliefs paralleling the Westminster Confession of Faith. In fact the Baptist Confession of 1689 is practically word for word with the Westminster Confession of Faith. Which shows that even the separatists were based on the same fundamentals. This should not be surprising since the beliefs emphasized during the Reformation were all pretty much the same and all groups had the same base, the Holy Scriptures.

I am very glad to see that the Southern Baptist Convention has after a long trying time of purifying their beliefs in what is called the Southern Baptist conservative resurgence (1970—2000) from the many heretical beliefs which overcame the SBC during the years prior to 1970. After liberal Baptists took control of all things SBC, the SBC has cleaned house and replaced all in prominent positions with conservative

persons. And if you look on the internet for SBC statement of faith, you will find for example under the title of Salvation, Regeneration, Repentance, Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification stated in total agreement with Calvin. Under God's Purpose of Grace, you find the doctrine of Election which they state as "Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility."

Since I am not an expert in the historical record of Christianity, you must not take what I say as absolutely true. If you doubt any thing I say, there is plenty of information available on the internet to find the facts for yourself.

If you read the statements of faith of the various denominations, you find a basic similarity with Calvinism. However, there are many for which the whole purpose of a new statement of faith seems to disavow any connection with Calvinism. For example many evangelical churches today emphasize only one doctrine, that is the Arminian position of free will in choosing Christ. But when pressured on Christian beliefs with most other moderate or conservative Christian denominations they differ very little. These would include beliefs about one God, the virgin birth, the sinless life, miracles, vicarious atoning death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Christ, the Trinity (the divinity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, together with God the Father), the need for salvation (though the understanding of means for achieving salvation is usually following Arminianism), divine grace, the Church, the Kingdom of God, last things (Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge everyone in righteousness), evangelism and missions. Of course stating these beliefs and biblically supporting them are many times a different story. This is what led to my initial disgust with the number of denominations. Certainly the differences are not insurmountable and do not warrant the number of schisms.

In the late 1800's, major orthodox beliefs began to erode. You had the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. You had scientists beginning to be bold in their statements deviating from Scripture. You had professors of biblical studies inserting their own take on God's revelation. You had J. Nelson Darby coming to America with his dispensational doctrines readily absorbed by the itchy ears of so many at the time. And shortly thereafter, there was C. I. Scofield and his study bible. There was the Stone and Campbell movements. The Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists. Christian

Science and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Unitarian Universalism movement which includes atheists and all other forms of non-orthodoxy.

Except for Darby's doctrines, the other beliefs are not biblical. The deity of Christ was questioned. The virgin birth was questioned. And recently there is the matter of ordination of women, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and abortion. Those churches that allow these beliefs can no longer be referred to as legitimately Christian.

What is referred to as the mainline American churches are suffering huge defections from their membership because of these distorted views of the Bible or abandoning the biblical beliefs altogether. Recently in our newspaper they featured an article titled "Wyo. churches endorse science standards". The Wyoming Association of Churches said that it supports the Next Generation Science Standards because science should be taught openly and not based on any belief system. The Rev. Warren Murphy, a Cody-based Episcopalian minister, said, "None of us [The Wyoming Association of Churches] have any problem with understanding evolution. It does not interfere with faith." Murphy said, "Faith is a belief system; science isn't. Let's keep them separate." As if God is not to be reckoned with in all of life and is not the supreme scientist.

There was another article in the paper "Wyo. faith leaders push gay marriage". Thirty-one faith leaders in Wyoming signed a statement calling for the state to allow gay marriage. Who were these so-called faith leaders? Here is the denominational breakdown of the signees: 11 Episcopal ministers; 3 Unitarian Universalist Fellowship; 2 Church of Christ; 2 United Church of Christ; 1 Lutheran; 1 United Methodist; 1 Union Congregational; 1 Disciples of Christ; 1 Baptist; 1 Highlands Presbyterian PCUSA; and 7 unknown. Nineteen of the signees were women. One of the women said the Bible is just a source of ethics and stories. These are people wearing the cloth and who probably had some formal education in theological studies. How sorry is the status of the condition of the church in America.

How can a Christian minister say such things. Isn't God involved in everything that happens? Doesn't God govern all that Christians do? Isn't there a fundamental Christian position taught in the New Testament that if you deviate from this pattern you cannot legitimately be called a Christian?

Just this morning another article appeared stating the results of the PCUSA General Assembly (2014) held in Detroit. They agreed to recognize same-sex marriages and will allow their clergy to officiate at same-sex marriages. They long ago have allowed homosexuals to be ordained. The article said that 427 churches out of 10,000 in the denomination have bolted to more conservative denominations.

Purity of beliefs is very important starting with the absolute authority of the Bible as the Word of God and not just a book of ethics and stories. Once you convince yourself that the Bible cannot be taken as God's actual words, anything goes. Those mentioned articles bring up the point that the people making the statements do not interpret the Bible literally. This puts the Bible a little lower than Shakespeare. I might add that there are more ancient documents in existence of the Bible than there are of Shakespeare.

Our own General Assembly (The Presbyterian Church in America PCA) must continually put down attempts at heretical positions by someone in the pastorate. So far they have come down on the side of purity. The history of the PCA begins with the Southern Presbyterian Church (Presbyterian Church in the United States, PCUS). This Presbyterian denomination began as an offshoot of the Northern Church over the slavery question. Over the years as the Northern Church became more and more liberal, the Southern Presbyterian Church did not falter but held to the basic beliefs of Presbyterianism and the Reformation. But it too after a length of time was going badly astray causing many Presbyterian churches in the Southern United States to leave and form the PCA.

The forming of the PCA is given by this Wikipedia entry: On December 4, 1973, delegates from 260 congregations (over half of them from Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina) with a combined communicant membership of over 41,000, that had left the PCUS gathered at Briarwood Presbyterian Church in suburban Birmingham, Alabama, and organized the National Presbyterian Church — 122 years to the day after the founding of the Southern Presbyterian Church. The church called itself the Continuing Presbyterian Church because they wanted to continue the faith of the Presbyterian church in the United States. After protests from a UPCUSA congregation of the same name in Washington, D.C., the denomination at its Second General Assembly (1974) renamed itself the National Reformed Presbyterian Church, then adopted its present name the next day. At its founding, the PCA consisted of 16 presbyteries.

Within a few years the church grew to include more than 500 congregations and 80,000 members.

During the 1970s, the denomination added a significant number of congregations outside the South when several UPCUSA (United Presbyterian Church in the USA, now known as the PCUSA) churches in Ohio and Pennsylvania joined. This move was precipitated by a case regarding an ordination candidate, Wynn Kenyon, denied by the Pittsburgh presbytery because he refused to support women's ordination, a decision upheld by the General Assembly of the UPCUSA.

Dozens of churches from the Midwest became part of the Presbyterian Church in America leaving the Synod of the West of the

PCUSA. Dissenting conservative Southern Presbyterian Churches joined the PCA until the early 1990s. The PCA is one of the faster growing denominations in the United States, with over 1700 churches and missions throughout the USA and Canada. There were over 335,000 communicant and non-communicant members as of December 2000.

Many notable men are associated with the PCA.

- ◆ Francis Schaeffer of L'Abri (Huemoz, Switzerland)
- ◆ D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church (Coral Ridge, FL)
- ◆ Philip Ryken of Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL)
- ◆ R.C. Sproul of Ligonier Ministries (Sanford, FL)
- ◆ Dan Quayle, 44th Vice President of the United States
- ◆ C. Everett Koop, U.S. Surgeon General (1982-1989)
- ◆ George Grant (author), evangelical writer
- ◆ Ligon Duncan, Chancellor/CEO of Reformed Theological Seminary
- ◆ Sinclair Ferguson, Redeemer Seminary professor

The erosion of orthodoxy is a cycle which never seems to go away. There will be a renewal of orthodoxy followed by a denial only to be followed by a renewal followed by a denial . . . All deviations of orthodoxy can be traced back to the Garden.

Adam and Eve almost immediately decided to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. The serpent told Eve that she will not die if she eats. To paraphrase, God is acting selfishly in denying them the fruit. He does not want them to know as much as He knows. The serpent is telling Eve to doubt God's sovereignty. Go ahead, the serpent says, eat. Disobey God. That brought a solid rebuke from God. He essentially told Adam and Eve they would lead lives of toil and sweat instead of the paradise they had up to that time. Therefore, that sinful heart of disobedience was from then on passed to Adam and Eve's descendants.

God's sovereignty is the issue behind all sin. Everyone wants to do it their way instead of the way given by God. Arminianism, which was declared a heresy by the Council that met in Dordrecht in 1619 known as the Canons of Dort, declares all men created by God to have free will. The only way you can look at free will is to declare man's will above God's will. In other words to deny God's absolute sovereignty.

No matter what sin is being discussed, this is only a camouflage for wanting to be like Eve, doubtful of God's purposes and questioning God's sovereignty. This always results in schism. Satan is always enticing people to not believe God and do it their way. Ω

Important Things



Daylight Saving Time ends Sunday Nov 1st at 2:00AM. Turn your clocks back one hour or if you don't and you are not accustomed to attending Sunday School, you will miss this Sunday.

Men's Breakfast— At the church, Saturday Morning, November 21, 8:00 AM. What is God's providence for you on this day? We are on chapter 10, *Advantages of Meditating on Providence* in the study of the book *The Mystery of Providence* by John Flavel. We always have a hearty hot breakfast and a great fellowship time. See you there.

Men's Bible Study— November 9 & 23, 7:00 PM. Meet at the Norgauer home. We are beginning an in-depth study of Ephesians.

Women's Bible Study— The women are resuming their monthly Bible Study on Nov 10th and Nov 24th at 7:00 PM. The study book will be *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges.

Nursery Schedule for November



| | |
|-------|-------------------|
| 1st- | LAURA TWITCHELL |
| 8th- | KELLEIGH ANDERSON |
| 15th- | KIARA TUNNECLIFF |
| 22nd- | HEATHER NORGAUER |
| 29th- | BECKY SHWEN |

Please trade with someone if you are unable to do nursery duty on the assigned day.



| | | | |
|------------------|------|------------------|------|
| Kaira Tunnicliff | 1st | Mildred Christie | 24th |
| Amy Edmonds | 9th | Esther Davison | 24th |
| Janet Ramig | 11th | Dell Tunnicliff | 28th |
| Alex Ramig | 15th | Nic Church | 30th |

Luke & Kia Newsom Nov 17th



Session Report

November 2015 Session Report

Please take the opportunity to welcome Marie Newsom and Connie O'Conner as they have just become members of Northwoods.

Next month is our annual congregational meeting. Please plan to attend on December 7th following our fellowship meal after morning worship. It is a good opportunity to hear how the Lord has blessed us this past year and what is planned for the year to come. Please be in prayer for the session this month as we budget and plan for 2016.

Let us remember this month to give special thanks for the country we live in and our government. May we express thanks to God for our founding fathers and their wisdom under His care to provide our constitutional government. Also, we must pray that even though our Christian heritage in the United States is under duress, that God will keep us safe from tyranny and we will remain free to worship as we like.

Our constitution states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof". Today, we must wonder at the meaning of the clause "making no law prohibiting the free exercise [of religion] thereof" as the courts begin to not uphold the literal meaning of that clause forcing people in public situations to violate their religious beliefs to satisfy governmental regulations.

Truly Reformed

By
Ken Jones

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

She is from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed:
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song!

Reformed theology has an image problem among the ranks of evangelical Christianity. And anyone who has had the unfortunate problem of being either misunderstood or misrepresented knows that it is not an easy task to repair one's image. Other articles in this issue have taken on some of the most common misunderstandings (allegations and assumptions held by non-Reformed Christians about Reformed theology), and misrepresentations (inconsistent and imbalanced expressions of the Reformed faith by those who claim to be Reformed) associated with the negative image of Reformed theology. It is my task to challenge those who are in the wide circle of Reformed Christianity to do our part in fixing this marred image.

Misconceptions and misrepresentations aside, let us not allow our rich theological heritage to be obscured by external allegations or internal inconsistencies. Ours is a religion of both the head and the heart. Therefore, our engagement in theological debates, as we seek to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" should not preclude us from rendering our "bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God." Nehemiah 4 is a good illustration of what I mean. As the Israelites were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem they heard of a conspiracy by their enemies to attack and create confusion (v. 8). After praying and setting armed guards in strategic locations (vv. 9, 13-14), Nehemiah then describes those who worked on the wall in verse 17: "Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction and with the other held a weapon." I am not suggesting that we cease in our efforts to defend the Gospel. But as we do battle, let us follow the example of these ambidextrous builders — build and defend.

To this end, I first charge the preachers and pastors in Reformed churches to "preach the whole counsel of God" ([Acts 20:27](#)). Balanced, biblical preaching and teaching can go a long way in producing biblically-balanced Christians. What I mean by this is we must preach law and Gospel, the indicatives and the imperatives of Scripture. From talking to Reformed pastors I get the feeling from some that they are afraid that in preaching the apostolic imperatives they will be accused of preaching works righteousness. This is an understandable concern, but it doesn't change the fact of our obligation to preach the whole counsel of God. Preaching through whole books of the Bible is helpful in this regard, because in doing so we are able to delineate the categories more clearly. Paul's writings, in particular, are a good

example of this. He usually presents the indicatives of the Gospel in the opening chapters and then moves to the imperatives, in light of the indicatives. Reading one of Paul's epistles it would be impossible to conclude that Christianity is "just" a matter of right doctrine. Let's face it, one of the misconceptions about Reformed theology is that it tends to be long on doctrine and short on practice. Balanced preaching can offset this.

Secondly, I charge the members of Reformed churches to "be doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). On the whole there is no shortage of good preaching and teaching in Reformed circles. In addition, there are conferences, books, and a host of other resources out there disseminating good information. Granted, some of our conferences tend to focus on what is wrong with evangelicalism, but others expound various aspects of the faith.

We have heard and read about the importance of missions and evangelism from a Reformed perspective, but is reading and hearing enough? James warns us that hearing without doing produces self-deception. And certainly those that think knowing what's wrong with Arminian evangelistic methods excuses them from sharing the Gospel are deceived. Our catechisms provide rich expositions and applications of the doctrines we embrace, and if we do not seek to live them out it is to our shame. Personal piety is one subject in particular that tends to be a favorite target of some Reformed extremists. We know that quiet times, saying grace over our meals, and abstaining from alcoholic beverages are not the sum total of Christian piety; in fact, we are quick to point out the liberties we have in Christ, as well as the hints of legalism in contemporary evangelical piety. But as we hear the Word of God expounded in all of its fullness, should we not take heed to what we are told about our conduct and speech? Being Reformed does not mean being unconcerned about personal piety.

Thirdly, let us remember we have been left in this world intentionally (John 17:15-18). In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays specifically that God would not take His disciples out of the world. In fact, He says just as the Father had sent Him into the world, He had sent His disciples into the world. This fallen, sin-sick, crime-filled world is where we have been left, and it is where the Kingdom of God is being established. Whether it be through politics, the arts, or the academy, our doctrines exhort us to engage this present world.

In short, let those of us in the Reformed tradition strive to make our calling and election sure by living out our faith even as we engage in fierce theological debate. Let us be ambidextrous, building and defending, following the examples from our rich tradition. **Ω**

Protestants and Creeds

by Kim Riddlebarger

Q. What is then necessary for a Christian to believe?

A. All that is promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic, undoubted Christian faith teach us in sum. (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 22)

I'll never forget the first time I worshiped in a Presbyterian church. I had been raised in independent Bible churches where it was a given that Christians believed the Bible, while Roman Catholics relied on tradition. We had "no creed but Christ." You can imagine how I was taken aback when the Presbyterian faithful recited the Apostles' Creed with great gusto, including the line that, at the time, I could not bring myself to repeat: "I believe...in the holy catholic church."

I soon learned that many Pro-testants still recite this ancient creed. In fact, the creed serves an important purpose in many of those churches whose roots are deeply planted in the Reformation. The Heidelberg Catechism (the beloved catechism of the Reformed branch of the Christian family in which I am now a minister), even utilizes the Apostles' Creed as a basic summary of those things that every Christian must believe. If you were to ask, "What is it that defines Christianity?" the answer would be "the definition of Christianity is given us in the creed."

The articles of our "catholic, undoubted Christian faith," which question 22 of the Heidelberg Catechism introduces, are unpacked in questions and answers 23-58 of this catechism. This "unpacking" amounts to an exposition of the various doctrines set forth in the Apostles' Creed. Protestants do not believe that creeds, confessions, and catechisms are infallible — that can only be said of Scripture. But confessional Protes-tants do believe that creeds, confessions, and catechisms are authoritative insofar as they accurately summarize the teaching of Scripture, which is their primary purpose.

Zacharius Ursinus — the primary author of the Heidelberg Catechism — tells us why the Apostles' Creed was chosen for his own distinctly Reformed catechism as the summary of what it is that Christians must believe in order to be truly Christians: "It signifies a brief and summary form of the Christian faith, which distinguishes the church and her members from the various sects" (*Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, p. 117).

In other words, if you are to set out those things that differentiate Christianity from all other religions, including monotheistic ones

(for example, Judaism and Islam), the Apostles' Creed would provide an excellent summary of those doctrines unique to Christianity. The creed sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity. It sets forth the basic economy of redemption — the Father is the creator of all things, Jesus is the only Savior, and the Holy Spirit is the one who gives us faith and then unites us to Christ. The creed also affirms the basic historical facts of the gospel — our Lord's virgin birth, His suffering, death, and bodily resurrection. Furthermore, the creed affirms Jesus' descent into hell (which the Reformed believe refers to Jesus' suffering the wrath of God upon the cross), His bodily resurrection, and His ascent into heaven where Jesus now rules over all until He returns at the end of the age to judge the world and raise the dead.

Next, the creed affirms the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the existence of a "holy" (those whose only hope of heaven is in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ) and "catholic" church, a reference to the universal church (the body of Christ) that will exist from the time it was founded until Jesus returns. The creed affirms the communion of saints (the fellowship of justified sinners with the risen Christ), the forgiveness of sins (Christ's work in fulfilling all righteousness and dying for the sins of His people), the resurrection of the body at the end of the age (as Jesus was raised bodily on the third day, so will we when He returns) and life everlasting (new heavens and earth).

Ursinus chose the Apostles' Creed as the skeletal structure for the section of his catechism dealing with God's grace because the creed so effectively summarizes the basics of the Christian faith that no non-Christian could possibly recite it. In this sense, the creed defines what is Christianity and what is not.

But as Ursinus expounds upon the Apostles' Creed, he also endeavors to demonstrate how Reformed Christianity differs from Roman Catholicism on such essential doctrines as justification by faith alone, the nature of the work of Christ, as well as the sacraments. So, while the creed may set forth what is essentially and uniquely Christian, Protestants contend that the Roman Church sadly defaults on these same doctrines at a number of critical points.

Because there is great need to summarize the teaching of Scripture and to identify with the faithful who have gone before, many Protestant churches still recite the Apostles' Creed. This is why the Reformed churches consider the Apostles' Creed to be the best summary of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, and this is why an exposition of the creed lies at the heart of the Heidelberg Catechism. Ω

Have a Need? Contact one of the officers.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
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If you have a request for the prayer chain contact Branda Church 221-9206 and if not available, Kelleigh Anderson 635-2578.



**Enter into His gates with
thanksgiving, and into His courts
with praise. Be thankful to Him,
and bless His name.
Hallelujah, Amen.**