

“We Believe and Confess”

An Introduction to the Belgic Confession

Texts: Deuteronomy 6:1-19; Romans 10:1-18

We are pilgrims passing through a foreign land. Like Abraham, the father of the faithful, we too are looking for the promised land flowing with milk and honey, that place where at long last we will find rest for our weary souls. In Hebrews 11:10, Abraham is commended because even though the land of promise was not yet his, and even though he believed that God would keep his promise and give him the land, nevertheless Abraham was looking beyond that land lying between the Euphrates and the River of Egypt to that heavenly city whose builder and architect is God. Abraham did this, Scripture says, “by faith.”

One of the major redemptive-historical themes running throughout the Bible is that of an exodus of God’s people from a place of bondage to a place of blessing and promise. In the Gospel of Matthew and in the Book of Revelation, the theme of the exodus of the people of God resurfaces repeatedly.¹ The Exodus of Israel from Egypt and deliverance from her bondage to the cruel Pharaoh becomes a vivid picture of our redemption from sin and death throughout subsequent books of the Bible. This reminds us that through the work of Jesus Christ we have been set free from the greater tyrants of sin and death. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are on our way to the heavenly city where we will at long last enter our Sabbath rest and receive our promised inheritance.

Yet, in the meantime, we must pass through the wilderness of this present evil age (just as Israel wandered in the desert for forty years), where we must endure the hardships and trials of life, the struggle for faith and the uncertainty of doubt, along with disdain and persecution from those who do not know Christ. God will renew his creation and remove every hint and trace of sin from the cosmos (2 Peter 3:1-13), so like Abraham, we too are looking for a heavenly country because God is even now preparing such a place for us (cf. Hebrews 11:8-19). One day we will dwell in a land of righteousness, peace, and blessing. Until then, we are pilgrims passing through a foreign land.

A number of Reformed theologians of the seventeenth century spoke of a theology of pilgrims (*theologia viatorum*).² In using this phrase, they were describing the extent of our knowledge of God. We do not yet see face to face. At present, we see through a glass darkly (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12). Like Abraham, we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:17).

But our lack of a face to face knowledge of God is not due to any defect in God’s revelation. It is due to human sin. Unlike angels and those who have died in Christ and who now see face to face (the saints), we are pilgrims wandering in the midst of a fallen and sinful world, completely dependent upon God to

¹ See, for example, Meredith G. Kline, Structure of Biblical Authority (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 172-203.

² Richard Muller, Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: Vol. 1, Prolegomena to Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 127.

reveal himself and his will to us as a lamp unto our feet.³ The light of God's revelation is our only hope of finding our way through the dark night of human sin. Sadly, we become so used to darkness we forget that the darkness conceals a number of enemies and perils, which threaten to keep us from reaching our goal.

“What enemies and peril?” you might ask. If anyone thinks we live in a Christian nation and in a culture which is neutral towards Christianity and those who name the name of Christ, you are sadly mistaken. While some remnants of Christian influence remain in American life and a number of Christians still function as salt and light throughout American culture, it should be perfectly clear that we now live in a post-Christian age dominated by secularism, paganism, tribalism, and rising numbers of adherents of Eastern religions and militant Islam, all of which are diametrically opposed to a Christian world and life view.

This post-Christian age is not a phantom bogey-man invented by fearful fundamentalists. It is a reality. We must all live, work, love, and raise our families in a culture which hates that faith which we proclaim to be our only comfort in life and in death (cf. *Heidelberg Catechism* Q & A 1).

It is easy to catalogue some of the achievements of post-Christian culture. We live in a world in which our children cannot bring aspirin to a public school, but can have an abortion without notifying their parents. Fornication, adultery, same-sex relationships are commonplace, and are even regarded as virtuous rites of passage. More than 50% of marriages end in divorce and a significant number of American children are born out of wedlock. Over 25% of American men regularly watch pornography—the total is probably higher among professing Christians. Sexual abuse of children is rampant and aberrant sexual behavior which couldn't be mentioned even a decade ago has become the subject of virtually every crime-drama and sitcom on television. Homosexual marriage is now a reality. The advocates of libertine sexuality are often viewed as noble warriors, struggling against the Puritan and Victorian mores of a sexually repressed American past. Any Christian who dares to state that homosexual acts are sinful is regarded as a dangerous zealot, someone who is filled with hate, judgmental, and who seeks to force their narrow-mindedness upon others who are doing absolutely nothing wrong.

To stop the ever-rising waves of crime brought about by disrespect for law and authority, we pass more laws but in doing so only bury ourselves under an avalanche of intrusive and repressive government. In order to live under the delusion of security, we gladly give up many of our personal liberties. The sad fact is that nearly 3 million Americans are presently warehoused in countless state and federal prisons and the crime rate hasn't gone down, it has only stabilized. And I'm just scratching the surface. These are just some of the achievements of our post-Christian America, a land of spiritual darkness and which presents countless threats and perils to those who name the name of Jesus.

American culture exercises a powerful sway over all of us—sometimes we may realize just how much and exercise due diligence against its influence. But other times we do not and we let down our guard. It should be clear to all of us that it is increasingly difficult to believe and confess Jesus Christ when we are constantly bombarded by Anti-Christian influences from virtually every quarter. It is just easier to give up and go with the flow. Many of us do exactly that.

³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed., James T. Dennison (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1992), I.2.vi.

Lest you think the problem is that people don't vote the right way, consider that much of the rise of post-Christian culture has largely occurred under Republican presidents, with a Republican congress and with a "conservative court." The problem we face is not a political one—it is a theological matter stemming from Adam's Fall. While there are a host of complicated factors leading to the rise of a post-Christian age, surely one factor is the failure of the church to do the primary thing God ordained the church to do, to proclaim the law and the gospel to a world around us as witnesses of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

American Christians easily lose their nerve—more specifically our churches have lost confidence in the law to reveal the will of God, and in the gospel to reconcile sinners to a holy God as well as to each other. But these are the divinely-ordained means by which God restrains human sin and changes people from the inside out. This is how God restrains the evil inherent in this fallen world. This is how God brings sinners to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Without believing the law and the gospel to be the primary weapons used against unbelief, the church is reduced to either echoing the culture (entertainment based contemporary worship and seeker-driven services) or else feebly fighting back through self-righteous moral crusades bitter social media diatribes.

In the midst of this crisis, the church in America has largely abandoned its role as a witness and to speak courageously and prophetically to a culture which is Hell-bent on removing all traces of Christian influence. The reason for this meteoric rise of secularism and paganism is simple. People love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). People love their sin. They don't want to be confronted with the demands of a Holy God. They want to turn off the lights and pull down the shades and then do as they please.

Tell an ordinary American that the Bible calls something they are doing a sin and they'll erupt in anger. Tell them that they are sinners in need of a Savior and they will look at you as though you've committed an unpardonable *faux pas*.

The decline of American culture should come as no surprise—it is part and parcel of the ebb and flow of human history in which Christian influence on a given culture increases for a time, only to decline later on, perhaps to increase again at some point in the future. Many of our forebears basked in the light of a Christian influence which is for us is but a distant memory. Perhaps our grand kids will once again live in greater light. Only God knows the future.

But this is not the time to wring our hands and long for the good old days when America was supposedly a "Christian" nation. This is not the time to curse the world and hide in a monastery waiting for the rapture. No, this is the time for us to carefully consider what the Bible says God would have us to do in a time of great peril. This is the time for the church to bear witness to the world around us to the law (God's revealed will) and the gospel (what God does in Jesus Christ to save us from our sins). With the dawn of a post-Christian age, it is time for us to believe and confess that faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

This is the very thing—it seems to me—that evangelical churches and historic Protestant and Reformed churches in America are failing to do. More than one American theologian has exhorted evangelicals to make peace with modernity in order to survive the current crisis. Yet it is the exact opposite that is required. It is time for the church to wage war on post-Christian culture by using our God-given weapons of law and gospel.

Dorothy Sayers wrote of England during the Second World War, "the brutal fact is that in this Christian

country not one person in a hundred has the faintest notion of what the Church teaches about God, man or society or the person of Jesus Christ.”⁴ Surely the same must be said of America in the third decade of the 21st century. If you ask your Christian friends even the most basic questions about Christian doctrine, how many of them can they answer?

A number of years ago, the White Horse Inn conducted a series of interviews at the Christian Booksellers Convention. When asked, only one person in sixty was able to recount what the gospel was when asked. We didn’t ask such a question of non-Christians at a shopping mall. We asked those people responsible for selling books and Bibles to Christians. Those we interviewed could not begin to express their faith in words. They could only speak in clichés. When we asked, “what is the gospel?” we were given answers which sounded like the first “Christian” thing that came to mind. What is the gospel? “Living for the Lord.” “The good news” “Being born again.” “Having a personal relationship with Jesus.” Not even close. Only one person out of sixty could tell us what the gospel is—“the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8). You can bet it has only gotten worse since.

This is tragic. But this points out the nature of the problem—the impotence of a church without confidence in the law and the gospel, a church which no longer knows the law or the gospel, and which can do nothing to oppose the rising tide of unbelief. The church has already made its peace with modernity. But we cannot follow suit—we are called to wage spiritual war.

Granted, God does not expect his people to be theologians. He justifies even the guiltiest sinner who has faith in Jesus Christ as small as that of a mustard seed. But people who can’t articulate their faith because they’ve never been forced to think about what they believe and why they believe it, probably won’t survive for long in a post-Christian society such as ours which is increasingly pagan and with religions like Islam growing faster than anyone could imagine.

How on earth can Christians fulfill the Great Commission in such a situation if we don’t know what we believe or why we believe it? If we don’t know what we believe and *why*, how can we live as God would have us to live? How can we bear witness to the world around us, if we can’t even articulate our own faith or explain even our most basic beliefs to someone outside the church? How can we demand that our children resist the evils of the world, if we can’t tell them what worldliness is? How can we send them out into the world unprepared to deal with our three great enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil and then be surprised when they walk away from Christ and his church? We can’t insist they do the right things if they don’t know what the right things are or why such things truly matter. If we do so, we are hypocrites and our children can smell our hypocrisy a mile away. We’ll lose them.

The good news is that we are not left in the dark about what we should do. There is prescribed a course of action in the midst of this very serious situation. It was set forth for us by our fathers in the faith, who left us the great confessions of the Protestant Reformation. It has been said that Calvinists do not fear men because we fear God. As pilgrims in a foreign land, facing a rising tide of unbelief and increasing hostility towards Christianity, we must do what our own forbears have taught us to do. We must believe (trust) in the promises of God like never before. We must confess those things we believe before a watching world with unceasing courage and charity. We fight against the darkness of unbelief by believing and confessing. But what must we believe? How do we strengthen our faith? And what do we

⁴ Dorothy Sayers, Creed or Chaos? (Manchester NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1974), 31-32.

confess before our dying world?

This brings us to the subject of the sermons which follow, an exposition of the *Belgic Confession*, the confession of faith of the Reformed churches.

Before we go one step farther, one item must be addressed. “Why a confession of faith, especially at a time like this?” I grew up in a Baptist world which gloried in the fact that we had “no creed but Christ,” no doctrine but that of the Bible. While that sounds pious, it simply doesn’t work. The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim to believe the Bible and yet deny the deity of Jesus Christ. The Mormons love the King James Version of the Bible, but believe that Jesus and Satan are spirit-brothers and that men will become “gods” in the next life, while women will remain eternally barefoot and pregnant. If that isn’t a religion invented by a man, I don’t know what is! Roman Catholicism has always affirmed the authority of Holy Scripture, and yet at the Council of Trent in 1544, Rome officially rejected Paul’s doctrine of justification *sola fide*.

A creed is simply a statement of what someone believes. Even “no creed but Christ” is a creed. Some of the most dogmatic people I have ever met are the same people who deny any role for creeds or confessions. Such disdain allows those who don’t like doctrinal statements to remain invincibly ignorant. They can believe whatever they want without the even slightest possibility of being proven wrong. No creed is their creed. This is dishonest and cowardly.

In distinction from other monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Islam, Christianity is defined by the so-called ecumenical creeds—the *Apostle’s*, *Nicene* and *Athanasian Creeds*—which confess the Trinity and deity of Christ, two doctrines unique to Christianity. The historic Protestant confessions which date from the time of the Reformation, build upon these ecumenical creeds because a number of issues arose well after the ecumenical creeds were written and which require further elaboration. These issues included such things as the authority of Scripture, the nature of the gospel and how we receive the saving benefits of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of the church and the sacraments. All of the later are addressed in the confessions of the Reformation from Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and even from a Roman Catholic perspective in rebuttal. While foreign to many American evangelicals, creeds and confessions have historically been those documents which define what it is that Protestants believe in contrast to Romanism, Eastern orthodoxy and even so as to differentiate among themselves. But such distinctions no longer matter in our age, because to affirm that something is true is to affirm that the beliefs of others are false. Of course, the only accepted axiom of modern America is that no one can claim to have the truth, except, of course, the person who claims there is no truth.

All of the historic Protestant confessions are regarded as authoritative only in so as they summarize the teaching of the Bible. Our own confession of faith—the *Belgic Confession*—is not infallible, only the Bible is—but the *Belgic Confession* is considered to be a time-tested guide as to what the Scriptures actually teach about the most important and central doctrines revealed in God’s word. Our confession was never envisioned to address every possible area of controversy. Instead it was designed to provide a guide to the central teaching of the Scripture so that someone who knows the confession, knows what the Bible teaches about the most important subjects: Scripture, God, man, sin, salvation, the church and the sacraments. The Confession helps us define what we must believe and gives us a body of doctrine to confess to the watching world.

Lest we think that such confessions have no root in the Scriptures, consider that there are numerous “confessions of faith” found throughout the Old and New Testaments. In Deuteronomy 6:1-19, we find

that God commanded of his people through Moses,

“Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey (vv. 1-3).

Lying at the very heart of this command to pass along certain teaching to the generations to follow is the famous “Shema” or Israel’s confession of faith in the very next verse. *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”* In fact, this particular confession of faith becomes the basis for the commandments which follow in verse 5: *“you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* This faith is not only a personal expression of trust in God’s promise (i.e., saving faith), but expresses the content of our faith (doctrine) which is to be passed on to Israel’s children not only to help them remember what God has done so as to nurture their own faith, but to keep them safe from the influences of paganism.

Furthermore, the confession of faith lies at the very heart of the covenant principle of blessing and curse, as we read in verses 18-19:

And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers by thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has promised.

As many have pointed out, what we believe will certainly determine what we do. This is exactly what is in view in Deuteronomy 6—we cannot do the right things, until and unless we believe the right things. If we don’t know what we believe, how can we instruct our children?

There are a number of confessions of faith in the New Testament. In Ephesians 4:5, Paul speaks of *“one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”* In Colossians 1:15-20, we read of Jesus,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

In 1 Timothy 3:16, we read of Jesus, *“great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.”* There are many such confessions, but these examples should give us some sense of how prominent the idea is in the New Testament of a public confession of faith which serves not only as a personal profession of a believer’s faith in Jesus Christ, but also a public declaration by the church of what all Christians must believe about the person and work of Jesus.

Evangelicals often speak of a “personal relationship with Jesus,” while Paul speaks both of a personal faith and a very public proclamation of what it is that we believe. It is the latter act which is missing in many evangelical churches. Evangelicals understand that they must believe in Jesus. But they fail to understand the importance of confessing the specific doctrines given us by Jesus which we must proclaim as a witness to the world around us. This is why we need a confession of faith. Such a confession defines who we are and what we believe.

In Romans 10, we find such a pattern. Paul prescribes the act of not only believing something in our hearts—that God raised Jesus from the dead—but also confessing (or proclaiming) with our mouths that “Jesus is Lord,” i.e., that what we believe is to be publically declared. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a Christian with a so-called personal relationship with Jesus, which does not manifest itself in a public confession of faith. What is more, in Romans 10, Paul goes on to state that the proclamation of the gospel—the message of word of Christ—is the means by which God brings his elect to faith.

Believing certain doctrines with our hearts and proclaiming them with our mouths are necessarily connected. This is why the *Belgic Confession* repeatedly affirms that we believe certain things and that we must confess them before a watching world—*Nous croyons tous les couer et confessons de bouche*, i.e., “we believe with the heart and confess with the mouth.” The confession is not a document written only to ensure that we have our doctrine correct—all of our theological “i’s” dotted and our “t’s” crossed. The confession is much more. It sets forth the content of that faith which we not only believe, but which we confess before the watching world.

Following the biblical pattern of believing and confessing, the chief author of the confession, Guido de Bres organizes it as follows.

The topical order is traditional: God and how God is known (arts. 1-11); creation and providence (arts. 12-13); fall and election (arts. 14-16); salvation in Christ (arts. 17-21); justification and sanctification (arts. 22-26); the church (arts. 27-29); church order (arts. 30-32); sacraments (arts. 33-35); church and state (arts. 36); and last things (arts. 37). Distinctive Reformed emphases are: Scripture as normative; the sovereignty of God and God’s grace, [the gravity of human] sin, salvation in Christ alone, including sanctification and good works; the law of God as a help in Christian living; Calvin’s view of the sacraments; and the state as the instrument of God and vehicle of God’s grace.⁵

While we will talk about the history of the confession and the reason why its various articles are framed the way they are throughout this series, a brief history is order. One writer calls De Bres “A noble martyr and evangelist” of the Reformed church of the Netherlands. De Bres was born about 1523, and converted to Protestantism by a “diligent reading of the Scriptures.” Expelled from Holland, De Bres escaped to London and found refuge through the aid of Edward VI (the boy king of England). After preparation for ministry he returned to the continent and served as an evangelist throughout southwestern Belgium and Northern France. He was arrested and imprisoned, and was hanged on May 31, 1567. His crime was the distribution of communion to various Reformed congregations. Church historian Philip

⁵ Osterhaven, “Belgic Confession,” *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 31. According to Schaff, “The *Belgic Confession* contains thirty-seven articles, and follows the order of the Gallican [French] confession, but is less polemical, and more full and elaborate, especially on the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, and the Sacraments. It is, upon the whole, the best symbolical statement of the Calvinistic system of doctrine, with the exception of the Westminster Confession” (cf. Schaff, *Creeeds*, I.504).

Schaff says that De Bres met his death as if preparing for a marriage feast.⁶

The *Belgic Confession* was prepared in 1561 by De Bres, with the aid of several others.⁷ The goal of the confession was to “prove the Reformed faith from the Word of God,” in the French language, and to “show Spanish authorities that Reformed people were not rebels but law abiding Christians.” In this regard, “the confession sets itself against both Roman Catholic and Anabaptist doctrinal errors.”⁸ The confession was later revised by Francis Junius, who had been a student of Calvin, and also a professor of theology at Leyden. It was Junius who apparently abridged the sixteenth article on election, and who sent the confession on to Geneva, as well as other key churches, for approval. It was probably first printed in 1562, and soon translated into German, Dutch and Latin.⁹ The confession was first adopted at the *Synod of Antwerp* (1566), and finally by the *Synod of Dort* (1619) as the Confession of faith of the Reformed Churches. It is that confession of faith now affirmed by all United Reformed Churches (URCNA).

This confession not only unites us to other Reformed Christians around the world, but it unites us to Reformed Christians across the ages. I cannot tell you what an amazing thing it was to learn that my first ancestor in America (Christian Retelsberger) was one of the founding elders of the *Dissenting Protestant Church*, near Charleston, SC in 1742. The church’s confession of faith was the *Belgic Confession*. Thus when I believe and confess that faith set forth in *the Belgic Confession*, I am not only affirming a summary of biblical teaching as a witness to my own unbelieving age, I am affirming the faith of my fathers. All of you who have a Reformed heritage are doing the same.

Finally, I’d like to briefly state why, I think, it is so important to ground our faith in such historic confessions which ably summarize biblical teaching. Unless we know what we believe and why we believe it, we will certainly face an uphill struggle in this conflict with the spirit of the age. It was the prophet Hosea who declared that God’s people perish because of a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). We face the same problem today.

There are four main reasons why I think a confession of faith such as the *Belgic Confession* is absolutely essential if we are to survive in this post-Christian age.¹⁰

The first reason for a confession of faith is to bear witness before the world of what the Bible teaches and what Christians believe and confess about the doctrines in holy Scripture. It is not enough to say “we believe the Bible.” We must say, “the Bible teaches” and then lay it out, clearly and succinctly. A confession of faith not only declares the truth as a bright light in an age of darkness, it also exposes the error of non-Christian conceptions of God, sin, human nature and redemption. Part of what it means to be a witness to the world is to no longer let a non-Christian get away with creating “a god” in their own

⁶ Taken from Schaff, *Creeds*, I.504. ff.

⁷ Adrien de Saravia (a professor of theology at Leiden, and then at Cambridge), H. Modetus (chaplain to William of Orange) and G. Wingen.

⁸ Osterhaven, “The Belgic Confession,” *The Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, 31.

⁹ Schaff, *Creeds*, I.504. ff.

¹⁰ Taken, in part from Henry Beets, *The Reformed Confession Explained* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1929), 10-11, and P. Y. DeJong, *The Church’s Witness to the World*, (St. Catherine’s, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1980), 46 ff.

image and then living in the darkness of such error—deceiving and being deceived. If we truly love our non-Christian friends and neighbors, we must be willing to tell them the truth, especially when they are wrong. What do we believe and confess? Here it is, spelled out in our confession of faith!

Second, the confession summarizes the main teaching of the Bible, so that we can not only determine truth from error but so that we know what is central to biblical teaching. This enables us to grow in our own faith and understanding, and gain confidence about those things we must believe and confess to be effective witnesses to non-Christians. It also keeps us from going off on a tangent and spending all our time and energy on peripheral matters. It protects us from three of the most pernicious problems facing the church: rogue pastors, easily-influenced laymen and doctrinally ignorant elders. We need not start from scratch. The work has largely been done.

Third, our confession of faith not only exposes the errors of those who reject the Reformed faith, our confession serves a positive function. It creates unity among the churches. The confession defines what we believe and enables us to identify those of like mind. Our confession of faith does not belong to a single congregation or denomination. It is the confession of all the Reformed churches and therefore unites us to millions of our brothers and sisters around the world. We not only profess a common faith, we profess an historical faith. This faith has been professed before. Let us profess it again!

Finally, such a confession defines our faith in such a way that we can do what God commanded Israel to do, to pass this faith down to our children and to our children's children. Here is something which is not only a personal document ("we believe"), but a public document ("we confess"). The great truths of the Bible which are summarized in the *Belgic Confession* are those very things which we need to pass on to our families and to our children and our children's children, exactly as God commands us to do. This is how we protect our children from the perils of this evil age—we teach them what to believe and why they should believe it! We give them light so that darkness is no longer such a peril.

As we make our way to the heavenly city, and as we wander through the wilderness of this age, let us raise our confession of faith just as an army raises its flag of battle. Our confession tells people who we are and what we believe. It identifies our cause as that of Christ's church and tells the watching world that we are not a band of kooky zealots who are making things up as we go. It tells the world that we are justified sinners, rescued from our sins by none other than Jesus Christ himself, who has loved us and died for us. Thus let our confession of faith be our banner as we make our way to the heavenly city. Let us believe and confess this faith as God's witnesses before an unbelieving age. Let us rally behind those things God would have us believe in the face of unbelief. For these doctrines are our weapons in the war against the spirit of the age. They are set forth for all to see in our confession of faith!