

# DAILY MEDITATIONS ON THE BELGIC CONFESSION

by pastors of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America  
MIC (P) 178/07/2013



FEB  
Articles 7-9

## Article 7: The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to be the Only Rule of Faith.

*We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures; nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden to add unto or take away any thing from the Word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.*

*Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.*

February 5 – The Sufficiency of the Bible as a Rule of Faith  
by Rev. J. Kortering

II Timothy 3:15, "...from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation . . ."

We now focus our attention on a new article of this confession, Art. 7. It is one of the most detailed descriptions of the value and usefulness of the Bible in our daily life of faith. Because of this, we will devote 14 meditations to explore its depth.

As we read the entire article, we notice that one word stands out in bold relief; it is the word "sufficient," as, "whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein."

Paul expressed to Timothy that the value of the Holy Scriptures was that from childhood on, they were able to make him "wise unto salvation". This is something every one of us desires. We desire salvation not only but we desire the wisdom that is necessary to save us.

To express this differently, the Bible functions as a rule of our faith. We considered this before, it functions as the ruler whereby we can know what is true and what is false.

Now, this article adds that the Bible alone is sufficient to function as such a ruler for what we believe and how we are to live.

Think of that for a moment.

Where do you turn for instruction? You have questions about doctrines or teachings of the church. You wonder out loud how you are to conduct yourself as a young Christian.

Your resource is the Word of God, the Bible.

Do you need other books or helps? They are available and useful. Yet, if all you had was your Bible, it is sufficient alone to make you wise unto salvation. The reason for this is obvious; God is the God of our salvation. God is the One Who has written the Bible. He gives us all that is necessary for us to know in order to be saved in the Bible. That makes the Bible so special and different from every other book.

Treasure your Bible and read it regularly. Meditate upon it. Turn to it for answers to your questions. It is able to make you wise unto salvation.

February 6 – The Bible and the Will of God  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Acts 2:27, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

The opening sentence of this article of faith reads, "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God."

We want to focus on those words, "will of God".

The quotation from Acts 2 above, gives us a clue. Peter quotes David, who prophetically states that Jesus will not remain in the corruption of the grave, but will arise from the dead. He uses the word "will" which refers to God's sovereign will, for when God acts according to His eternal will and good pleasure it is established as certain and true. God planned for Jesus to enter the grave and arise from the dead as His will for Jesus and hence, it is recorded that Jesus will not remain in the grave but will arise from the dead.

The Bible is the revelation of God's will and fully reveals to us what God wants us to know.

The idea of God's will is used in two ways.

First, it is God's eternal good pleasure, which includes all His decrees that form the basis of His program for history. It includes whom He wills to save (election); what is the basis for our salvation (cross and resurrection of Jesus); the method of salvation (faith through the preaching of the gospel); and the purpose of salvation (godly living and thankful worship). The Bible spells this out in detail.

Second, God's will is that, that pleasure of God be communicated to us with authority and compassion. The Bible does not come to us as a dogmatic book of information. It comes to us as a boundary within which we obtain favor with God and outside of which is judgment and wrath.

To be in the will of God is important for us, both as regards our belief and our life of service.

We learn this will of God in the Bible. Isn't this wonderful? As we said, God doesn't tell us every detail of His will for us, only what He deems necessary for our faith and life of obedience. That is sufficient to guide us daily so that we may be certain we walk with God.

Do you read your Bible with this in mind? It is a treasure!

February 7 – The Bible Tells us What to Believe  
by Rev. J. Kortering

II Timothy 3:15, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

“Whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein,”  
Art. 7.

Here, our attention is directed to those few words, “what to believe”. Brief as they may be, yet they contain the most important words imaginable. What must I believe to be saved? Where do I turn? How can I learn about salvation?

Paul approached young Timothy as a spiritual father and reminded him that “wise unto salvation” was the most important thing for him. Salvation can be viewed in different ways, one of my favorites is the figure of God reaching down into hell and graciously picking me up and taking me out of that abyss and lifting me powerfully into His presence in heaven. The knowledge and experience of that salvation is the most blessed event a person can enjoy. I trust that as you read this brief meditation, you can say in your heart, “Thank God, I am saved”.

This confession and the writing of Paul to Timothy tell us certain things are necessary for me to believe in order to be saved. These things are written upon the pages of the Holy Bible. That is not a surprise for the Bible is God’s written Word and in His writing, He tells us what salvation is, how it began in eternity past, is confirmed upon the cross of Jesus, and made alive in our hearts by faith. It is important for us to know the way of salvation in order to be certain that we have walked that way. It is important for us in order to guide others to become saved.

Now, the point of this meditation is this: we can be sure we are saved, and we can be sure that we lead other people in the way of salvation, when we follow the Bible as our guide. Nothing can take the place of our open Bibles.

Is it any wonder then that we must take advantage of every opportunity to learn more from the Bible? The Word is explained for us in our Sunday worship, the Word is discussed at our Bible studies, we meditate upon the Word in our own devotions. Treasure that Word.

February 8 – The Bible Fully Contains the Will of God  
by Rev. J. Kortering

John 15:15, "...all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

We now begin to consider why the Bible is sufficient for our faith and practice. The opening sentence of this article states, "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God."

Notice that the article does not say that all there is to know about God is comprehended in the Bible. God has chosen to manifest Himself also in the realm of creation and history. The point that is important for us to remember is that the Bible is the sufficient source for our belief. It is the inspired source and on that basis what we learn of God from His creation is not on a par with what the Bible teaches and may never be used to contradict the Bible. Rather, it amplifies and verifies what God says in His Word. We do not need creation or history to verify our faith. Our faith is firmly founded on the Word of God because that Word fully contains God's will for our belief and life of service. Jesus said, "all things I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."

The reason for this is that the Bible is not an accident of history but God planned everything written in the Bible and providentially arranged for its inclusion by inspiring the authors to write what they did and when they did it. This explains how the Bible could be written over a period of 900 years by some 40 authors and never contradicts itself. There is really one Author, the God of the Holy Spirit. This was not a surprise that resulted in the quirks of time but rather: the God Who predestinated a people unto Himself; determined before the foundation of the world that His Son would be the redeemer of these people; and, gathers this same people unto Himself HAS provided for us at this date in history a record that is sufficient for our faith.

What an amazing thought!

You see how important it is to believe the Bible is God's inspired Word.

God planned it, arranged its writing, and made sure it includes all that is necessary for our faith.

The Bible is an amazing gift of God and source of our surety of faith.

February 9 – Men Ought to Believe what the Bible Teaches  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Proverbs 30:5, “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”

This is a compelling conclusion from what the article has said so far. If it is true, as we believe it is true, that the Holy Scriptures fully contains the will of God and salvation is sufficiently taught therein, then man ought to believe this.

We live in an age in which a person’s faith is considered personal, and he has a right to believe whatever he wants. This has become the postmodern gospel, both in the church and in the world. No one has the right to impose on anyone a faith that is not acceptable to him. This is due to the absence of all authority. Modern man treats parents this way, government this way, and the church this same way. Who are you to tell me what I ought to do?

This article differs from such an approach.

“Men ought to believe what the Bible teaches”.

This seems to be an imposition from without, someone making me believe what I ought to believe. If we approach faith this way, we naturally resent it, we harden ourselves against it. So how ought we to approach the Bible? It must be from hearts that have been touched by the Holy Spirit. The Author of the Bible is our heavenly Father whom we love and trust. We are willing to put our future into His hands. Since He wrote the Bible, yes, we feel a certain obligation to believe it, but most of all a delight to know His way.

Prov 30:5 expresses it well - every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. That is a conclusion that is taken from the Bible because the Word of God bears the mark of the Author, it is PURE. Such purity functions as a shield in this wicked and abominable world of sin.

The Bible does not allow you to have a “take it or leave it” attitude towards its teachings. God’s love in dealing with His children is deeper than that. It is our rule of faith and when we have this faith, we understand.

Our response is, yes, I must believe all that the Bible teaches. I do this from a heart that loves God.

February 10 – The Manner of Worship  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is . . .”

This article now adds that the Bible also is sufficient to instruct us in the “whole manner of worship which God requires of us.”

What is meant by worship?

As we focus on the idea of worship, we must be careful not to make that too general.

It is true that our whole life is one of thankful praise and service of God. We can even say that we worship God in our entire life of reverence and obedience. We do pray without ceasing. We worship God with our personal devotions and family worship. This is a beautiful thought.

Yet, we must not take this statement of Art. 7 out of its historical context. The Reformers directed their attention to the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers taught that the Written Word of God was the only source of truth. They applied this truth both to the teaching of the church and the worship of the church.

The worship addressed in this article is mainly corporate worship of the church on the Lord’s Day. The text above refers to this as “the assembling of ourselves together”. By this, it is meant that every Christian ought to participate in the worship of God as part of the body of Christ. It is terrible to worship alone; God has provided for us a way to worship Him by being part of the church, that church is the local assembly of believers of like precious faith. By belonging to such a congregation as members, we express our delight in God providing us such a church and making worship a delight.

We are told here, that the manner of this worship is clearly given in the Bible and God requires it of us.

Pause a moment to reflect on the manner of your worship of God in church on Sunday. Is it man-centered, determined by what man wants? Do you church hop to try to find a church that meets your standard?

Here we are told that this is wrong. The important question we face is, do we worship God as He instructs us in His Word? The God we worship cares about how we worship Him and He gives clear direction in His Word. True faith reverences this  
7 God in worship.

February 11 – The Manner of Worship includes the Elements  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I Corinthians 15:3, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures."

Let's expand a bit on what is included in the manner of worship mentioned in Art. 7, "For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them (Bible)." We believe that "the whole manner of worship" includes what we call the "elements of worship". These are enumerated in the Bible as follows:

Reading of the Word of God and preaching, Jesus did this in the synagogue, Luke 4:16-21, he read from Isaiah and expounded what he read. As Reformed churches, we include in our public worship on the Lord's Day the reading of the Bible and preaching of the gospel.

Prayer and singing, Eph 5:18-19, "...be filled with the Spirit speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Also in I Tim 2:1, the exhortation is given by Paul to Timothy to offer prayers for "all men," that is, for all classes of men for God will have all kinds of men saved. Hence we also have congregational prayers in our worship.

Receiving offerings, I Cor 16:1-2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints...upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered." During every service the deacons receive the offerings, with special emphasis on the poor.

Sacraments, Acts 10:48, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..." We do this with both infants and adults during our worship. In I Cor 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." We follow this instruction because we read in I Cor 15:3, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received..." We read this during the Lord's supper.

All these elements of worship are clearly taught in the Bible and must be viewed as a manner of worship which is required. God tells us to practice this.

Is this true of your worship? Each element is given us by divine instruction. As we make use of them we may rest assured God will bless them to us.

February 12 – The Manner of Worship is from the Heart  
by Rev. J. Kortering

II Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

We now focus on another aspect of the manner of worship. Not only must our worship include all the elements given to us in the Bible, but we must worship God in a spiritually correct way. This article speaks of "the whole manner of worship" that is required of us in the Bible. God is not pleased simply with formal worship, something we all must admit is the greatest threat to our spiritual life. You know how that goes, we read the Bible, listen to preaching, sing and pray, take collection, and observe the sacraments; and do that so mechanically that we leave church as empty as when we came. The answer to this is to worship in a spiritually correct manner. The text above is an illustration of when we contribute to the Sunday offering. If anything can be done wrongfully, it is our giving money during worship. Putting money into the offering bag seems no big deal. Yet you note from the above text, it is our attitude and heartfelt response, it must be done cheerfully and not grudgingly.

Let's direct our attention to three such attitudes.

First, we must be reverent in our worship. Heb 12:28, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Our hearts must be overwhelmed with the majesty and holiness of God that from the heart we bow humbly and obediently before Him.

Second, we must appear before God in confession and repentance of sin. Ezek 33:11, "...I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This is a call to deal with our sins by confessing them before God and forsaking them.

Third, we come with joy, Psa 98:4, "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise."

Wonderful qualities and so often absent. Heartfelt worship is so desirable.

It comes in the way of spiritual preparation, prayer and meditation at home and at church.

February 13 – Unlawful to Teach Anything Contrary to the Scripture  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Here we are taught carefulness as we assess our worship. Since both what we believe and how we are to worship God is dictated to us in the Bible, we must use the Bible as our rule. This is emphasized in Art. 7 this way, "it is unlawful for anyone, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures". Then the quotation of Gal 1:8 quoted above follows.

Think on these words, "For, since it is *forbidden to add unto or take away anything from the Word of God*, it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects."

This is a direct quote from Rev 22:18-19, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life..." These are sobering words.

The Belgic Confession takes the positive approach, "the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects." This is very heartwarming for any Christian whether young or old.

We face many challenges in our faith and practice. There are those who believe and practice things very different from us and that forces us to ask, who is right? In addition, many attack us for what we believe and practice; they ridicule it and openly charge us with being "unchristian" with our belief and practice.

Are you shaken by this? Do you begin to doubt?

The rock foundation of our belief and worship is upon the Bible. This is what God instructs us and as long as we are obedient and faithful to God's Word, we are right and in God's favor.

Along with our forefathers, we say it is unlawful to contradict or replace the teaching of God's Word.

This is not our "opinion". It was the conviction of the church leaders at the time of the Reformation. It is our conviction of faith as well.

February 14 – The Doctrine of the Bible is Most Perfect and Complete  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I Peter 4:11, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

There are two ways to deal with error.

First, we are to expose the lie and see it for what it really is.

Second, we are to meditate upon the truth and extol the God Who revealed to us that truth.

We want to briefly meditate upon this aspect now.

When we use the Bible as a rule of faith and believe that it is sufficient to determine our doctrine and our practice, it is more than a way to expose error. The positive side is that it defines for us the content of our faith and assures us that our practices are in truth the will of God.

We have viewed this in both the area of teaching and worship.

Let's give a bit more attention to the use of the Bible to enhance our faith positively.

According to the quotation above, when we worship on the Lord's Day and the pastor speaks, we may conclude that he speaks as the oracle of God. When the pastor, elders, or deacons minister to us the Word of God to help us personally and individually, we may receive them as from God and glorify God through their actions. I ask you whether you actually do this. Are you tempted to argue with them? Do you resent it that they come with authority that compels you to listen and conform your way to their teaching? There is only one right way and that is to receive them as speaking the "oracles of God". That is pretty clear. It is good that the above quote warns the church leaders that they don't let this get out of hand. "If any man minister, let him do it as of ability which God gives."

We refuse to compare the Bible to any other "holy book". It is the only revelation from the true God which is most complete and perfect. It is true, reliable, and all sufficient.

Just think, you hold that book in your own hand.

Pray that its truths may be in your hearts.

February 15 – The Bible and Other Writings  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I Corinthians 2:4, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

We come to the part of Art. 7 which makes a comparison between the Bible and other human writings, "Neither do we consider OF EQUAL VALUE any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures".

These human writings are listed: councils (church meetings which consider issues), decrees (doctrinal conclusions arrived at by these councils), statutes (conduct regarding our behavior arrived at by these councils).

The values of these human writings are also listed: custom (behavior which has become commonplace), great multitude (majority of people believe and practice these things), antiquity (faith and practice goes back a long time in history of church), succession of times (been embraced for many years), persons (often times leaders of great learning and fame).

All these things may not influence us in comparing these writings with the Bible, and may not be considered, "OF EQUAL VALUE with the truth of God".

The difference between them is the author. Even though church fathers and councils were often guided in their writing by the Holy Spirit, yet the Holy Spirit's influence in writing the Bible is different. None of these writings may be called, INSPIRED, in the sense the Bible is inspired. The Bible was inspired in such a way that the product was without sin and perfect. Other writings were inspired but yet the product of sinners. Hence the article says, "for all men are of themselves liars and more vain than vanity itself". This referred to many claims by the Roman Catholic Church of the infallibility of theologians and church councils.

In no way does this article make disparaging remarks towards the writing of godly men and church councils. We all grow spiritually through their maturity of faith and ability to explain the Bible clearly. This is on two levels, individual men of God who contribute their skills towards the explanation of truth and church councils who have contributed creeds.

Yet, they must never be placed on a level with the Bible. Even Paul knew that his preaching was not with enticing words of men, but their value was in their conformity to the Bible, "a demonstration of the Spirit of power."

<sup>12</sup>The Bible stands apart from all human writings.

February 16 – Try the Spirits  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I John 4:1, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

Because the human heart is desperately wicked, also in the realm of spiritual writings, Art. 7 of the Belgic Confessions states, “Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God.”

Because all men are liars by nature and more vain than vanity itself, it is little wonder that even men who claim to be Christians can write some bad things. Some of them are not motivated by the one holy desire that we ought to have and that is to write in agreement with all the Bible teaches for our belief and worship. They have many wrong motives, it could be the desire to have their writings accepted by the populous (fame); or it may be money, to profit from their writings (greed); in the history of the Christian Church it was to avoid rejection and persecution (conformity to the crowd). This was true at the time of the Reformation, it is also true today. These wrong motives are not far from any of us. So our opposition is not only from the world of unbelief and ungodliness, it is also from the church. We are literally surrounded by evil spirits, we can easily become involved in “fellowship with devils...and the table of devils”, I Cor 10:20,21.

There is only one good response to this: “try the spirits”.

You are called upon by God not to be naïve, gullible, and trusting everyone who poses as a Christian. Your goal is to mature and be discerning. We know all about the truth of human depravity because we know our own. I know the cunning of the human heart because my nature is the same. The evil one uses this.

You have the most important weapon in this spiritual battle, “take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” Use your Bible as the standard of right and wrong. Seek good instruction and council from church leaders you know to be people of God. Measure all human writing, reject the lie and extol the truth.

The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to convict you, it also convicts others.

February 17 – Receive Him not into your House  
by Rev. J. Kortering

II John 10, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

Not only are we to try the spirits, we are also to know how to handle the persons of those who bring the lie, "Likewise, if there come unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." This is a direct quote of the verse quoted above.

We ought to remind ourselves that not all Christians agree on what this doctrine is. Here we have to make a careful distinction between "erring brothers and sisters in Christ" and "heretics". The distinction is important because we must not treat them all alike.

There are Christians who err in doctrine and practice which do not contradict the gospel, and do this with the conviction that their teaching is faithful to the Bible and they must be viewed as erring brothers and sisters. They still believe that salvation is through the blood of the atonement and salvation is God's wonderful work, but may differ in other areas. You find such in Bible-believing churches all over the world.

In distinction, there are many who pose as Christians but deny the gospel and their error is a blatant disregard for the teaching of the Bible (even if they claim otherwise), such must be viewed as heretics and enemies of the faith. These are found in liberal churches who have abandoned the gospel. They may appear at your door-step in the form of a cult, Jehovah's Witnesses come to mind.

To the latter group, the words quoted above and in the Article apply. We must not associate with them nor pretend that they are our Christian friends. There must be a rejection of their person because their teaching and practice contradicts what a Christian may believe or how he is live. They reject the Word of God.

If you stop to think of it, your Christian forefathers had to do this over against the followers of the Chinese religion. Some of you may know the pain of separation over false religion.

Same is true for you today regarding your peers who may claim to be Christians, but are not.

Be careful in making this distinction and exercise love to all your enemies. The goal is to gain them for Christ.

February 18 – Embrace the truth  
by Rev. J. Kortering

John 4:23, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

This is a good summary of what we have been considering in Art. 7 of our Belgic Confession.

We have focused on God as our Father. We have looked at the Holy Scriptures which is His gift of the Spirit to us. We have concluded with this confession that the Bible contains everything necessary for our faith and worship. We have been instructed to reject all that contradicts the Bible’s teaching and those who bring such teaching. The writings and practices of men may never be considered of equal value to the Bible.

What better way to conclude this article but to say, “The hour now is when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

I sincerely pray that this may be your portion.

A true worshipper is one who has a heart for God, is drawn into His holy presence in contrition and confession of sin, desires to praise God in song and prayer, rejoices to be with the congregation to contribute to the needs of the poor, and is blessed by the sacraments as they confirm our faith by water, bread, and wine.

How wonderful it is that we can still do this at this late date in history with the conviction that our faith and worship is acceptable to God because we do it in the manner God wants.

Our conviction is founded upon our knowledge of the Word of God. Objectively, the Bible is the most comprehensive standard for everything we believe and all our behavior as Christians. We have the Bible which includes everything necessary for our salvation. God has graciously provided that by His Holy Spirit. We must hasten to add, we also have subjectively, the application of all of this by the Holy Spirit Who works grace in our hearts to accept the Bible as the Word of God and all its teachings.

This amazing grace is truly amazing. Never take grace for granted. Always humbly pray to God that He will give to you this amazing grace to be the Christian He wants you to be.

Thank God for all these blessings come from Him. To Him alone be the glory.

## Article 8: God is One in Essence, Yet Distinguished in Three Persons.

*According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is the cause, origin and beginning of all things visible and invisible; the Son is the word, wisdom, and image of the Father; the Holy Ghost is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost have each His personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God.*

*Hence then, it is evident, that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed; for the Father hath not assumed the flesh, nor hath the Holy Ghost, but the Son only. The Father hath never been without His Son, nor without His Holy Ghost. For they are all three coeternal and coessential. There is neither first nor last; for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.*

February 19 – God is One and Not Three  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

The Belgic Confession has set forth that our knowledge of God is acquired by means of His creative work and written Word. We have considered the unique character of the Bible as God's Word.

As we now turn to the content of the Bible, the Confession indicates that the Bible's central message is the knowledge of God Himself. Of the many truths God reveals about Himself, the first and most significant is that of the trinity, God is one Being and three in Persons.

We begin by stating briefly that on the basis of God's self revelation, we believe there is ONE God, not three.

There are many religions that hold to many gods, Hinduism, for example, believes there are millions of gods. Islam holds to one god, Allah. We use the terms polytheists (many gods) and monotheists (one God).

The Christian Church is accused of being polytheists because of the trinity; they claim that if God is three Persons, there are three Gods. Even the cults accuse us of this. We can appreciate the problem they raise because a person is connected with a being, nowhere do we encounter one being and three persons. This defies even our wildest imaginations. The only claim to such a trinity of persons is in Jehovah, the Christian God.

The answer to this is that God has revealed Himself as only ONE Being; if we hold to THREE beings, then we could rightly be accused of trusting in three gods.

The text quoted above makes this clear, there are three Persons and those three are ONE. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." God is three persons in one divine being.

Art. 8 states, "we believe in one only God, who is one single essence, in which are three persons...."

What a blessing for us to know this one God. He is all that is necessary for our faith, for beside Him, there is no other. All our salvation is in Him alone.

May God help us to keep our eyes of faith upon Him.

February 20 – God is the ONLY God  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I Corinthians 8:6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

We must make a distinction between the fact that God is ONE and that He is the ONLY God.

We have explained that when we say God is one, we say that He possesses one being, not three. This is important for we must be clear in our minds that the God of the Bible is one in His nature. An example of this is that God possesses a mind and with it the ability to think and reason. God does not have three minds, but only one.

Now we must add, this one God is the ONLY God.

Art. 8 expresses it this way, "According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God". Later in the same article we read, "God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost have each His personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God."

To put it simply, we believe that our God is the only God there is.

Because we believe this, we Christians are hated and accused of being egotists and non-conformists. In our post-modern world, there is no standard for truth, so everyone claims the right to believe and understand anything of religion, including who God is. The emergent church openly teaches this in the name of Christianity. No one, not pastors, not members, can claim they have the exclusive understanding of anything religious. It does not impress them at all if we claim the authority of the Bible because they reject this as well.

Yet, in obedience to Christ and His Word, we say, the ONLY true God is the God of the Bible and the only way of salvation is in Jesus Christ, His Son. I Cor 8:6 says this, "But to us there is but one God" and He is the ONLY God.

Be careful that your knowledge of the only God does not make you proud. Humbly bow before Him and thank Him for revealing Himself to you.

Do you have these convictions? Are you already suffering for them?

February 21 – God possesses One Single Essence  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.”

We have stated this briefly before in our consideration of Art. 8 of the Belgic Confession, but now we can expand on this a bit more.

We use the word, “essence” interchangeably with “being” as it relates to God. They are the same and describe something of the nature of who God is.

We speak of “human nature” when we refer to ourselves. It is our make-up as we came forth from the creator. Our human nature was subsequently changed as the consequence of God’s sentence of death. Even then, our human nature distinguishes us from the plants and animals or from the angel world. We are “soul creatures” drawn from the dust of the earth, we have the capacity to think and reason, we have desires and can project them into the future, we show emotions, we are spiritual creatures in the sense that we have the capacity to love and hate.

Similarly, we can speak of God’s “divine nature”, or “being”, or “essence”. If we remember that man was made in the image of God, then certainly God possesses the ability to think, to reason, and this He does as God in the divine “mind”. He expresses His will and good pleasure because He possesses the ultimate “will”, His will is sovereign over all creatures. He expresses deep emotions of joy and displeasure. His heart is perfect love and from it flows forth the divine “good pleasure to save” in contrast to His hatred which burns towards the wicked.

The point of Art. 8 is that God possesses ONE mind, ONE will, ONE emotion, ONE heart, and we know this because He has revealed Himself in this manner throughout all history. Though there are three PERSONS, yet God is one being and all three Persons express themselves in the one nature of God. Three Persons think in one mind, three Persons will in one will, three Persons expressing divine emotions, and three Persons love from the one heart of God.

“Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” God is one single essence. The heathen that surrounded Israel had many gods. Paul faced a multitude of gods on Mars’ Hill as he stood before the Athenians. So also today, we are surrounded by polytheists.

We have one God, powerful, loving, and mighty to save.

Meditate on this and marvel.

February 22 – The Three Divine Persons  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Matthew 28:19, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

We said last time, there are three Persons who think in the one divine mind. A person is one who has the capacity to think, to desire, to love. A person is one who can say, “I” and be the subject of the action. Hence an animal is not a person, it acts on instinct. Angels are persons, humans are persons, and now God is Personal. He possesses three Persons, each has the capacity to reason, to will, to love, to express emotions.

What Art. 8 does for us, and we focus briefly on this, is that it tells us that these three Persons are equal in everything as they function in the divine nature. Later, we will focus on the individual personality and activity.

Art. 8 states that the three Persons have their own personality, distinguished by their properties, “but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God....For they are all three coeternal and coessential. There is neither first nor last; for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.”

There is no rank as if the Father is more important or takes priority over the Son, or that the Son is more important than the Holy Spirit. If that were true, then the three persons would be superior or inferior one to the other. They are all equal. They all possess the attributes of God, eternal, omnipresent, holy, and love. Each of the Persons of the Trinity possesses these attributes of God equally, there is no superiority of one over the other. We must quickly add as well that neither are God’s virtues split up into three parts as if one third of His power or love is in the Father, another third in the Son, and still another third in the Holy Spirit. Even though we cannot understand this, yet it is important because each of the Persons functions in a special way in the work of God.

Baptism is an example, it places us into fellowship with God as each of these three Persons has a role, the Father in nurturing us, the Son in redeeming us, and the Holy Spirit in our sanctification.

Each Person is almighty God. Baptism is the sign and seal of God’s work of salvation.

February 23 – The Person of the Father  
by Rev. J. Kortering

I Corinthians 8:6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

It is humanly impossible for us to comprehend the trinity. Example: how can one Person be called Father and not exist before Son and Holy Spirit? All our ideas of father have to do with conceiving that which was not yet born. Here Art. 8 says, "The Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible." By distinction the Son is "the word, wisdom, and image of the Father." The Holy Ghost is the "eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son." We get into serious trouble if we think in terms of time, historical events, a succession of moments. If we think this way, we have to conclude that the Father existed, even in eternity, before the existence of the Son. This is not true. All the Persons are eternal, none existed without the other, and yet each Person has its own property and activity.

The Father is said to be "the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible". The passage quoted above states this. He is called Father because in the divine being, outside of time, He is the source of all things.

I trust that the mere mention of father arouses in you a deep sense of love and understanding. Some of you may not have had a father even close to the biblical description, since your father was not a Christian. Even if such is true, you can understand the role of a Christian father given in the Bible. It is beautiful and precious. For a father is not only the author of life, but the provider and protector of his family. In an earthly way, we see a little something of God the Father.

This helps us to understand a little how the triune God is a covenant God. God the Father speaks to God the Son, He is the originator of those thoughts and the Son receives these thoughts as the Word of God. The role of the Holy Spirit is to breathe forth these words to both Father and Son. In summary, God holds conversation within Himself and talking together is what the covenant is all about.

God's covenant with us originates in Himself.

February 24 – The Person of the Son  
by Rev. J. Kortering

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

There is a very close relationship between God the Son (the second Person of the Holy trinity) and the Son of God (Jesus). Sometimes in Scripture it is hard to distinguish, yet it is important to keep this in mind.

The text from John 1:1 illustrates this: Is the Word referred to here, Jesus or the second Person of the trinity? Actually they are both included, the Word is a name for Jesus, but notice, the Word was God. How was Jesus God? He was the second person of the trinity.

Art. 8 describes God the Son this way, "the Son is the word, wisdom, and image of the Father." All three have their own "personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God." It adds, "Hence then, it is evident, that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father....the Father hath not assumed the flesh, nor hath the Holy Ghost, but the Son only."

God the Son is the second person of the holy trinity. In eternity He enjoyed fellowship with the Father and the Holy Ghost. We are told in John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." He is called the Word because already in the creation, God the Father called out to the Son, and through the Son the call echoed forth in the heavens and the earth which the Holy Spirit used to bring creation into existence. Gen 1:3 indicates, "And God said...". John 1:3 reflects, "All things were made by him; (the word), and without him was not anything made that was made." Turning back to Gen 1:2, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." You see how the three Persons of the trinity were involved in creation, each in His own Personal way.

Even more significant for us lost sinners is the truth that God the Son took on flesh to redeem the lost creation. As the second person of the trinity, being God and divine, He was qualified to accomplish the redemption necessary through his descent into hell and resurrection from the dead.

All this is sealed in that God the Son became the Son of God.

February 25 – The Person of the Holy Ghost  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Matthew 12:28, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

Even as we made a distinction between God the Father and the fatherhood of God, God the Son and the Son of God, we must make a distinction between God the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. God the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the holy trinity, the Spirit of Jesus is the third Person of the trinity given to Jesus upon the completion of His earthly ministry and as a reward for the atonement accomplished. Even though we make this distinction, we must keep in mind that the Holy Spirit given to Jesus, and in turn given to the church on earth at Pentecost, is in truth the third Person of the trinity.

The Holy Ghost is a divine Person. Art. 8 states, "the Holy Ghost is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son". The Holy Ghost has His personality, distinguished by his properties. "The Father hath never been without His Son, or without His Holy Ghost. For they are all three coeternal and coessential. There is neither first nor last; for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy."

Spirit means breath, energy, and that describes the work of the third Person. He brings to pass all that the Father wills, whether creation, incarnation, or salvation. Though He is involved in all three areas of divine work, it is to the latter, our sanctification and salvation that He plays His key role. As the Father does in creation, and the Son in redemption, so the Holy Ghost does in sanctification.

He possesses all the power and majesty of the triune God.

In the quote above, Jesus asserts, "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." Jesus demonstrated this by his miraculous power over demons. As is true with all the miracles which Jesus performed, they are object lessons of salvation. Jesus made the blind to see, the dead to arise, the sick and lame to walk. The devil represents our ultimate enemy and hindrance to salvation. With him defeated, our salvation is sure.

The Holy Spirit is abundantly qualified to perform His role in our salvation.

All our salvation is from above.

## Article 9: The Proof of the Foregoing Article of the Trinity of Persons in One God.

*All this we know, as well from the testimonies of Holy Writ as from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves. The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures that teach us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament, which are not so necessary to enumerate as to choose them out with discretion and judgment.*

*In Genesis 1:26, 27, God saith: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, etc. So God created man in His own image, male and female created He them. And Genesis 3:22: Behold, the man is become as one of us. From this saying, "Let us make man in our image," it appears that there are more persons than one in the Godhead; and when He saith "God created," He signifies the unity. It is true He doth not say how many persons there are, but that which appears to us somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New. For when our Lord was baptized in Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son; the Son was seen in the water; and the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove. This form is also instituted by Christ in the baptism of all believers. Baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. Likewise, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you. And: There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.*

*In all which places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence. And although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless, we now believe it by means of the Word of God, but expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in Heaven.*

*Moreover, we must observe the particular offices and operations of these three persons toward us. The Father is called our Creator, by His power; the Son is our Savior and Redeemer, by His blood; the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier, by His dwelling*

*in our hearts.*

*This doctrine of the Holy Trinity hath always been defended and maintained by the true Church since the times of the apostles to this very day, against the Jews, Mohammedans, and some false Christians and heretics, as Marcion, Manes, Praxeas, Sabellius, Samosatenus, Arius, and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers.*

*Therefore, in this point we do willingly receive the three creeds, namely, that of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius: likewise that which, conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers.*

February 26 – God Has Revealed Himself as Triune  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Genesis 17:1, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.”

If you are like most people, your faith in God as three Persons in one Being is vexing. It is so because we cannot fathom it, cannot explain it, and for most people, cannot convincingly prove it. The one great relief is that we conclude with personal conviction, I know God is triune because He has revealed Himself as such in His Holy Word. That is it! We need no more nor less.

This is significant because faith in God is beyond reason. That is not to say, there are no elements of our faith that can be explained and we can talk reasonably with people. We console ourselves when we stand before this amazing truth about God, we do not have to be able to understand nor explain in human reasoning to convince everyone. Our belief in God is exactly that, FAITH which is based upon Divine revelation.

This is how God stood before Abraham, “I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect”. Notice how simple, I AM THE ALMIGHTY GOD! I identify myself, I reveal myself, I tell you who I am. And our response must be, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”

Are you ready to listen to God?

We have struggled our way through the articles of faith which describe for us how God is three Persons in one Being. We learned that as Father, He is precious to us, for all things have their origin in Him. As Son, He comes to us as our Savior and Lord, and as Holy Spirit, He assures us that He is not dependent upon human strength to accomplish His purposes. Remember, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit”, Zech 4:6. Now we must reflect a bit more on this one additional aspect, all of this is true because God has told us that this is true about Him.

This calms our hearts.

For my personal faith, for my answer to all doubters, and for those who want to argue in resistance to the great truth that God is triune, my one reply is, God has so revealed Himself to me in His Word.

Art. 9 expresses this, “All this we know...from the testimony of Holy Writ.” May God show that to each of us.

February 27 – Old Testament Evidence of the Trinity  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Genesis 1:26,27, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;...so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

We have come to the part of the Belgic Confession where the author sets out to demonstrate that God has revealed Himself as three Persons in one Being. Art. 9 states, "All this we know, as well from the testimonies of Holy Writ as from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves. The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures that teach us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament, which are not so necessary to enumerate as to choose them out with discretion and judgment."

The two passages they refer to are the one quoted above and in addition, Gen 3:22, "Behold, the man is become as one of us."

You might ask, how does this prove the trinity? The reference is to the plural pronouns used, "Let US make man," and "Behold, the man is become as one of US."

There is only one convincing explanation, God is speaking to Himself. I know people who talk to themselves have problems, because they are ONE person; we are to speak to others. With God, it is different; He is three Persons in one, so when He speaks to Himself, there are three Persons involved in this conversation. Thus God could say, "Let US make man". The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are involved in this creative process.

As Art. 9 says, "From this saying...it appears that there are more persons than one in the Godhead".

If you meditate on this thought: the plurality of persons, it says something about God that is wonderful. From all eternity, God was never lonely, never silenced; rather He experienced friendship in the highest and most perfect sense of the word. Theologically, this means that God is a covenant God, a God of friendship. His decrees are not a dead blue-print for history, but a living thought and purpose within the Godhead. We were in the eternal mind of God in His good pleasure of election. All things are in the eternal presence of God, a living God of personal friendship.

From the very beginning of revelation, God said, "I am a triune God."

February 28 – New Testament Evidence of the Trinity  
by Rev. J. Kortering

II Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

The Confession now turns to the New Testament for proof of the trinity.

It refers to the baptism of Jesus, "the voice of the Father was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son; the Son was seen in the water; and the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove."

This was incorporated into the baptism formula, Matt 28:19, "Baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In connection with the conception and birth of Jesus, the "power of the Highest" is the Holy Spirit sent of the Father, He shall overshadow the virgin and therefore, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

A reference is made to the apostolic blessing, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you," II Cor 13:14.

Finally, the summary given in I John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one."

The grand summary is given, "In all which places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence. And although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless we now believe it by means of the Word of God, but expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in heaven."

I like that last statement; it demonstrates the humility of faith. I cannot rationally explain the meaning of the trinity, I cannot demonstrate it from nature. Some try for example, water, vapor, and ice which are all forms of one chemical, yet that is wholly inadequate. It comes down to our accepting the Bible as God's revelation. If God tells us He is three Persons in one Being, by faith, my response is to bow before this God. I may not adequately understand it now, but there is a future life in glory where I will have a greater capacity for understanding. In heaven I will see more of the revelation of the triune God when I look into the face of my Savior.

Faith relies upon God. Keep doing this.

March 1 – We Experience the Operations of the Trinity in Ourselves  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Galatians 4:6, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

You recall that we said awhile back that the Belgic Confession states that we know of God Triune through the Bible and from "their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves."

Feelings of faith are of value and we recognize this. We need not go to the extremes of the Pentecostals or Charismatics, nor ought we to deny our Christian experience. We ask, how do we experience or "feel the triune God"?

Let's look at the Person of the Father first of all. Art. 9 states, "The Father is called our Creator, by His power". He is the originator of our life. We could not even be born into this world without Him. Even more so, we could never become Christians without our Heavenly Father giving us spiritual life. From all eternity God as Father elected us, gave His Son to redeem us, sent His Holy Spirit to regenerate us. We experience God the Father in a mighty way. To put it differently, we could never be born or saved without Him. You say, "How do I know God is Father?" Look at yourself, you could not be who you are without Him. We rejoice in faith to believe this.

Now we turn to the Person of the Son. Of Him is said, "the Son is our Savior and Redeemer, by His blood". Doesn't that make the Second Person of the Holy Trinity close to our hearts? He went to the cross for us and in His human nature suffered the curse of God upon our disobedience. The Father received His obedient work on the cross, declared us to be righteous in Him and raised Him from the dead to demonstrate His approval. This same Son ascended into heaven and applies to us the benefits of His death and resurrection.

And of the third Person, the Holy Spirit, the article states, "The Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier, by His dwelling in our hearts." Certainly, He can't get any closer to us than that. We experience repentance from sin and the joy of forgiveness as He works salvation in our hearts and lives.

Yes, the doctrine of the trinity is profound.

Yet it is close to our hearts. Our faith is the evidence of His work.

March 2 – The Truth of the Trinity Defended by the Church  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Galatians 3:3, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

Two things are impressive when we look at the history of the church and how the church dealt with the doctrine of the trinity.

First, from the very beginning of creation, through the New Testament era and all the way to the present time, the universal church of Christ embraced the doctrine of the trinity. That says something to us as the Spirit of Christ dwelt in His church this way.

The second thing is that this doctrine was attacked from without and within and yet the faithful church maintained her confession of the trinity. Art. 9 gives some details on this.

“This doctrine of the Holy Trinity hath always been defended and maintained by the true Church, since the times of the apostles to this very day.” Then it lists some of the opponents which were, “justly condemned by the orthodox fathers.” Let’s say a brief word about each.

The Jews rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Divine Son; the Mohammedans insisted Allah was one only god and Jesus was a prophet subjected to Mohammed; Manes believed that Jesus failed in the crucifixion to give light but was semi-god who salvaged his ministry through Manes and his followers; Praxeas said there were no three persons but modes of revelation: Christ on the cross was the Father suffering for sin; Sabellius also taught three modes of revelation, not persons; Samosatenus taught that the man Jesus was adopted by God and not truly God; Arius taught that Jesus was created by God and less than God. All these men taught their lies during the first 3 centuries of the early Christian church.

These few sentences do not adequately explain their heresy; I quoted the above from the book, *With Heart and Mouth* by Daniel Hyde. He has a more detailed chapter on the Trinitarian controversies which is helpful to read.

There are a few things to conclude from this early controversy over the trinity.

The devil attacked the fundamental doctrine of the trinity. How smart of him. A church that denies the trinity loses the gospel, it’s that simple.

God saw to it that His church understood clearly this cardinal truth and expressed it well in her early confessions. It stands to this very day.

March 3 – The Church Confesses the Truth of the Trinity  
by Rev. J. Kortering

Galatians 3:3, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

I want to make a comment on this verse. Paul admonished the Galatians for allowing the Judaizers to take from them the joy of salvation in Jesus when they insisted that new converts had to keep the law of Moses. They were foolish. In many ways, the early Christian church faced this same issue when they had to deal with controversy over the doctrine of the trinity. All of salvation is joined to God triune.

Thanks be to God; they began in the Holy Spirit and continued in the Spirit by defending and confessing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This they did in the confessions written by the early Christian church. They are listed in Art. 9. “Therefore, in this point we do willingly receive the three creeds, namely, that of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius; likewise that which, conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers.”

We call these three creeds listed here as the Ecumenical Creeds. The Apostle's Creed was the summary of the teaching of the apostles and was written in the early second century. The Nicene Creed was the summary of the church's teaching of the trinity after they answered many attacks; it was adopted by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. The Athanasian Creed goes beyond the doctrine of the trinity and includes a good defense of the Deity of Christ through His incarnation and union of both divine and human natures. Athanasius was a strong defender of these truths during the fourth century, yet this confession was a summary of his teaching and included in the church's confession around the seventh century.

Not only did the devil attack the fundamental truth which would successfully destroy the gospel of salvation, but the Holy Spirit used this attack to enable the church to formulate their understanding and they gave biblical defense of these doctrines in a clear manner. As you know, controversy can be painful, yet God uses it to advantage. The church grows in understanding and by the Holy Spirit's work, makes perfect the doctrines begun in simple form.

The statements of faith contained in these ecumenical confessions have stood the test of history.

Rejoice! God is the God of history and all things work for good.

March 4 – The Believer Embraces the Truth of the Trinity  
by Rev. J. Kortering

John 20:31, “But these are written, that, ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

We close our consideration of the trinity itself with a more personal response. The next two articles focus upon the divinity of Jesus and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. These are two crucial areas affected by our understanding of the trinity.

Before we get into this aspect, I want to pause and reflect upon our own personal response to what we have considered. I ask you directly, do you believe that God is triune and how important is that to you?

The Apostle’s Creed is mentioned in this article as a wonderful statement of the church’s confession. All three of the ecumenical confessions are included in the Belgic Confession and it in turn was adopted along with the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt as the Three Forms of Unity by the Reformed Churches in 1618-1619 at the Synod of Dordt.

No wonder we recite the Apostles Creed in our worship services.

The articles of this creed follow carefully the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The Heidelberg Catechism describes it as our “catholic undoubted Christian faith”. It adds that it is a summary of what is necessary for us as a Christian to believe. The articles are divided into three parts, “the first is of God the Father and our creation; the second, of God the Son and our redemption; the third, of God the Holy Ghost and our sanctification.” (LD 7 Q&A22, LD 8 Q&A24)

The point I want to make is this, all our Christian faith is intricately woven by the doctrine of the trinity. Think about that for a moment. Father—creation, Son—redemption, Holy Ghost—sanctification. Deny any one of these Persons and you deny your salvation.

No teaching is more difficult to understand and hence to accept than that of the trinity.

No teaching requires of us humble submission to God and His Word than this teaching.

In response, the Christian says, “I believe”. I accept this as truth, I embrace the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as my God and Father.

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name.

<sup>32</sup>God give us humility to bow before Him.

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Christian Literature Ministry

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