

Personal Confession notes, version 1/16/21

- pp196-197: Personal Confession.
- As you are reading thru the WCF, create a Word Document that contains the parts you agree with, and the parts you disagree with. This will make writing your own confession much easier.
- This essay will be in outline format rather than the traditional 5-9 paragraph prose we normally use.
- This assignment is broken up into five weeks. You will turn in one section per week. Each section is an expansion of previous section. Each week, you must correct the previous section and add new sections.
- Each week is graded.
- **I WILL DOUBLE THE POINTS OFF ERRORS THAT ARE IGNORED IN THE WEEKS AFTER I INITIALLY MARK THEM**
- **So, watch out for errors that begin with something like "-4c." The first week that is four points off. Next week, if not corrected, the same error will begin with "-4cx2," which means you lose 8 points. "-4cx3" in the following week is 12 points off, etc.**
- **If you will make an honest attempt at fixing an error, I will not continue to multiply points-off. I might still have to mark some points-off, but no "x2" or "x3." However, if you don't try any corrections on the error, each time I see the same error in later weeks, I will increase the "x2" to "x3" or even "x4."**
- The Syllabus WCF does not contain all the chapters in the complete WCF. Your own confession only needs to have the same chapters as the syllabus WCF plus six extra: XXV - XXX. These chapters are in the complete WCF found at <http://www.opc.org/documents/CFLayout.pdf>, but were not included in the Syllabus WCF. You do not have to include any other missing chapters.
- Use the format from the document at <http://www.worldviewclasses.com/public/dltemp/256MGD1016.pdf>. This is a PDF document that is an example of what your own confession must look like.
- Personal confession must be in format that is shown in the above PDF. For example, the white space shown in the example must be used in your confession. Part of the reason is that if you turn this in to some other organization – say a Christian college – they are not going to read a block of dense text. This is especially a problem when writing resumes'. If you write a dense paragraph the boss is not going to read it, and you won't get the job.
- Note that the example confession contains the text of the WCF. In your confession, only the chapter titles will come from the WCF. The actual explanation of each chapter must be in your own words.
- Spell each chapter the same as the WCF (including capitalizations).

- Make a minimum of two statements under each heading (each of these will be at the “capital letter” level of the outline) and support each statement with at least two scripture references. More statements and references may be used if you desire.
- Each of the “capital letter” sections must be at least 4 lines. It will be difficult to give sufficient explanation of the chapter topic if your section is shorter than this.
- Pick two of the WCF subsections that best express your position and use them to help you.
- The contents of your confession (the subsections under the title) must be your own. It must be in your own words; you may NOT copy the WCF even if you agree with it.
- **Your confession is not a dissertation on what you don’t believe, but what you do believe.** If a chapter primarily contains what you disagree with concerning the topic, I will count off. Focus on what is true, not on what is false. You may contrast falsehood against truth, but do not make it the focus of the section.
- If there is a chapter of the WCF that you disagree with (for example, “Of Effectual Calling”), you still must include the chapter. However, you will change the title and explain it as you understand it.
- Be careful about colloquial (informal) language usage. For example, rather than “Providence is a tricky term; some confuse it with ...,” say this: “Some confuse providence with ...”
- Make clear statements so you don’t become an “inadvertent heretic”.
- Scriptures will not be footnoted, nor even referenced. You must actually quote Scripture in text of the subsection.
- Do not put “I believe...”. Must state truth, not you believe truth.
- Must be consistent – can’t claim one thing and then later contradict it.
- Scripture verse may not contradict your point. It also may not be completely off topic.
- Will have 33 Roman numerals in your outline of your confession. Each Roman numeral is based upon a chapter of WCF. Each Roman numeral will contain at least two paragraphs (based upon articles in the WCF’s chapter).
- Shortest paper ever turned into McKinney WV class was 14 pages. This is your longest essay of the four years.
- If the confession is in the incorrect format, it will be returned w/o grading. You will be required to reformat (paper is too big for grader to try to fix). Paper will be marked late. Inconsistent Bible version will be returned w/o grading.
- Use same numbers as in WCF. When you skip a section, just put “skip” in that section.
- STAY ON TOPIC.
- **STUDENT ALERT** are notes to take especial notice of.
- Chapters:

- (added) (week 1) Introductory paragraph
- [Chapter I.](#) (week 1) Of the Holy Scripture
- [Chapter II.](#) (week 1) Of God, and of the Holy Trinity
- [Chapter III.](#) (week 2) Of God's Eternal Decree
- [Chapter IV.](#) (week 2) Of Creation
- [Chapter V.](#) (week 2) Of Providence
- [Chapter VI.](#) (week 2) Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof
- [Chapter VII.](#) (week 2) Of God's Covenant with Man
- [Chapter VIII.](#) (week 2) Of Christ the Mediator
- [Chapter IX.](#) (week 2) Of Free Will
- [Chapter X.](#) (week 3) Of Effectual Calling
- [Chapter XI.](#) (week 3) Of Justification
- [Chapter XII.](#) (week 3) Of Adoption
- [Chapter XIII.](#) (week 3) Of Sanctification
- [Chapter XIV.](#) (week 3) Of Saving Faith
- [Chapter XV.](#) (week 3) Of Repentance Unto Life
- [Chapter XVI.](#) (week 3) Of Good Works
- [Chapter XVII.](#) (week 3) Of The Perseverance of the Saints
- [Chapter XVIII.](#) (week 3) Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation
- [Chapter XIX.](#) (week 3) Of the Law of God
- [Chapter XX.](#) (week 4) Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience
- skip [Chapter XXI.](#) Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath-day
- skip [Chapter XXII.](#) Of Lawful Oaths and Vows
- [Chapter XXIII.](#) (week 4) Of the Civil Magistrate
- skip [Chapter XXIV.](#) Of Marriage and Divorce
- added [Chapter XXV.](#) (week 4) Of the Church
- skip [Chapter XXVI.](#) Of the Communion of the Saints
- added [Chapter XXVII.](#) (week 4) Of the Sacraments
- added [Chapter XXVIII.](#) (week 4) Of Baptism
- added [Chapter XXIX.](#) (week 4) Of the Lord's Supper
- added [Chapter XXX.](#) (week 5) Of Church Censures
- [Chapter XXXI.](#) (week 5) Of Synods and Councils
- [Chapter XXXII.](#) (week 5) Of the State of Man After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead
- [Chapter XXXIII.](#) (week 5) Of the Last Judgment
- Introductory paragraph
 - May use first or second person.
 - State which Bible version you will use in rest of statement.
 - Must be at least six lines.
- Chapter I (week 1): Of the Holy Scripture
- Chapter II (week 1): Of God, and of the Holy Trinity:

- Must say He is infinite and Trinity. If you use "omni-" words, elaborate.
- Love: Focus on other attributes rather than this.
- Chapter III (week 2): Of God's Eternal Decree.
 - This chapter in the personal confession must include two issues:
 - (1) Whether all things that come to pass are decreed by God or just some things.
 - (2) Whether God decrees who will be saved and not (both men and angels).
 - If you believe that God decided ahead of time only certain things and not everything:
 - What are those things? For example, since the birth, life, and work of the Messiah are predicted in the Old Testament, God decides at least some things ahead of time. Anything else?
 - Include a discussion on God's foresight (what He sees in the future) and how that differs from predestination.
 - Elect:
 - Must explain since this is in Scripture.
 - Reformed: Those whom God chose before foundation of earth.
 - Armenian: Those in the church.
 - If you don't want to use this term, substitute "believer".
 - Do not use terms from other side of argument to explain your own. Don't redefine terms.
- Chapter IV (week 2): Of Creation
 - Must include how long you believe God took to create the world. Day-age? 24/7? Gap theory (gap of time bet 1:1 and 1:2)?
- Chapter V (week 2): Of Providence
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** God's execution of His decree
- Chapter VI (week 2): Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and Punishment Thereof:
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Must have 3 sections in this chapter.
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Must define original sin and its effect today.
- Chapter VII (week 2): Of God's Covenant with Man
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Explain covenant itself, then covenant of works and covenant of grace.
 - See Galatians, especially chapter 3.
 - At least two scriptures must mention covenant.
- Chapter VIII (week 2): Christ the Mediator:
 - Must include verse on Christ being mediator!
 - Must also define what a mediator does. Don't just say that Jesus saves us, explain the role of a mediator and how Jesus fulfills that role.
- Chapter IX (week 2): Of Free will
 - Very Important.

- In innocence, man had free will. Now, fallen, we cannot choose God to be saved. After conversion, we are able to choose God.
- Actual desire to follow God is Holy Spirit's drawing of us. From human perspective, it appears we choose God, but from His perspective He first regenerated us.
- As Christians we have the ability to choose God's will, but never perfectly on earth bec of our sin nature.
- Must explain if we use our free will to choose God for salvation, or if God chooses us apart from our free will.
- Chapter X (week 3): Of Effectual calling
 - If you don't believe in irresistible grace, then don't call this section "Effectual calling"; call it "Prevenient Grace", or "Prevenient", or "Calling".
 - Both Calvinists and Armenians believe in prevenient grace. This is God's favor and help that comes to us before our salvation.
 - Calvinist view:
 - Prevenient grace is irresistible for the elect.
 - It decides for you because you are incapable of deciding for yourself (you are dead in your trespasses and sins).
 - Means: Those whom God predestined to save, He saves. We have no choice bec we are dead.
 - 5 points: Irresistible Grace.
 - The way God calls is thru Word of God. Ro 10:8-10
 - Armenian view:
 - Prevenient grace is resistible by anyone.
 - In the hearing of the word, God allows you to execute your free will and believe.
 - It's grace that comes ahead of your decision and gives you the power to accept Christ.
 - But you can resist it.
 - You can choose to be saved or not, and you can choose to stay saved or not.
 - This will be the dividing point in the free will/predestination debate.
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Can God's call to salvation for the elect be resisted?
- Chapter XI (week 3): Of Justification
 - Will count off if you define justification as being justified. This is not a definition.
 - Forgiveness is a "taking away"; justification is an "adding" (imputation).
 - Legal term.
 - You are guilty, but Christ's obedience is credited to your account.
 - Since we cannot do anything to get it, it must be given to us.
 - Must mention imputation of Christ's righteousness when explaining this. Also, my sins imputed to Christ and He is punished for them.

- Past tense “saved” is always a reference to J.
- An act in the past.
- **STUDENT ALERT:** Must distinguish between God *making* us righteous and God *declaring* us righteous. Simul iustus et peccator. Rome: Not until purged in Purgatory (“mountain quake” a la Dante).
- Chapter XII (week 3): Of Adoption
- Chapter XIII (week 3): Of Sanctification
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** *Process of God making us righteous.*
 - Being made holy. A process. Process consists of obedience.
 - Sanctuary: Meeting room for most churches (Baptist, Presbyterian, etc). Episcopal: Altar and clergy area. Nave is where people are.
 - Sanctuary: Place set aside for special use.
 - Saint: In Bible, this is not people who have done miracles. This is a Christian, a person set aside by God for Himself.
 - Both Reformed and Armenian: Sanctification: Obedience can now use free will to obey.
 - Glorification: Completion of sanctification
 - II Pet 1:2-8: All things given to us pertaining to life and godliness (thus what is missing?). But you must add a decision of the will.
 - Virtue: Honorable, pure.
 - God gives faith. Add virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness (even to siblings), love. This is process of sanctification.
 - v9-10: Do these things and you will never stumble.
 - A decision we have to make 100s of times a day.
- Chapter XIV (week 3): Of Saving Faith
 - What is it we need to have faith in? Just God (remember that James says the devils believe in God)? What is faith, and what must we have faith in?
 - Does faith alone save, or is it faith and works?
- Chapter XV (week 3) Of Repentance Unto Life
 - What is repentance?
 - What role does it play in forgiveness of sins? Of the Christian life?
- Chapter XVI (week 3): Of Good Works
 - Explain connection between faith and good works. Don’t just put this in the negative, but make a positive statement.
- Chapter XVII (week 3): Of the Perseverance Of the Saints
 - If you disagree with the Perseverance of the Saints, rename this to “Not Completely Secure” and explain what measure of safety the Bible says we do have, and what we could do to lose our salvation.
- Chapter XVIII (week 3): Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** This is not about salvation or perseverance (that we will continue in faith), but can we know that we are saved.

- The Roman Catholic position is that we can never know if we will be finally saved since God has not told us. If we knew we were saved, then we would get cocky and not listen to Him.
- The Reformers thought otherwise.
- There are two parts to cover in this section: Objective and Subjective assurance.
 - Objective: What God tells us in Scripture is true about assurance whether we feel assured or not. Can anyone know that they are saved, or do they have to just hope they are? What basis do we have for knowing, if we can know? Does it depend upon how well we repent and obey?
 - Subjective: Whether we feel the assurance that God promises us or not.
- Chapter XIX (week 3): Of the Law of God
 - Bring out the difference between the moral Law (10 commandments) and the ceremonial Law of the Old Testament.
 - Are we still under the Law? In what way “yes” and in what way “no”? Adultery’s not legal now, is it?
- Chapter XX (week 4): Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Note: There are two ideas here, *Christian Liberty* and *Liberty of Conscience*. The first asserts the idea that regenerate man is now free and enabled to obey God’s Law. The second means that no civil authority can force us to believe or not believe something; we are free to believe what we want, even if it is damning. Even church officials are only allowed to enforce restrictions on conscience by appealing to Scripture; no man-made law (church or civil) can bind conscience (force us to believe or deny something). One of the points you need to make in this chapter is that only Scripture can bind our conscience; other authorities can command obedience for good order, but only Scripture can tell us what is or is not sin before God.
- Chapter XXI: Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath-day
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Skip
- Chapter XXII: Of Lawful Oaths and Vows
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Skip
- Chapter XXIII (week 4): Of the Civil Magistrate
- Chapter XXIV: Of Marriage and Divorce
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Skip
- Chapter XXV (week 4): Of the Church
 - Not in syllabus, but must include in your personal confession; may get info from http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Usually, the visible church is defined as the churches we can see – Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, etc. They contain both

Christians and non-Christians. The invisible church is defined as just believers – it does not include those who “come to church” but don’t really believe. There are some problems even with this definition, but you should mention these, and then either agree or disagree with the way this distinguishes between two definitions of the church

- Chapter XXVI: Of the Communion of the Saints
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Skip
- Chapter XXVII (week 4): Of the Sacraments
 - If your church prefers the word *Ordinances* to *Sacraments*, you may change this title to reflect that. But you must explain the difference – what is an ordinance and how does it differ from a sacrament?
 - Not in syllabus, but must include in your personal confession; may get info from http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs
 - What is the purpose of the Sacraments?
 - Give a good definition.
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** Very important: How many are there, and what are they called?
- Chapter XXVIII (week 4). Of Baptism
 - Not in syllabus, but must include in your personal confession; may get info from http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs
 - Focus on water baptism and its effect and purpose. Explain what actually happens physically and spiritually.
 - Is it allowed to baptize infants of Christians? Required?
 - Immersion required? Sprinkling ok?
- Chapter XXIX (week 4): Of the Lord's Supper
 - Not in syllabus, but must include in your personal confession; may get info from http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs
 - Explain what actually happens physically and spiritually.
 - Who can take communion? Just older children and adults? Unbaptized but believing people?
- Chapter XXX (week 4): Of Church Censures
 - Not in syllabus, but must include in your personal confession; may get info from http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs.
 - **STUDENT ALERT:** To censure means to discipline. Note that the main thrust of this chapter is what to do with church members who fall into gross sin. It’s not so much about how to punish leaders that go astray. Who has the power in the church to censure its members? What can the church do if a member is living in open sin? What is excommunication?
- Chapter XXXI (week 5): Of Synods and Councils
- Chapter XXXII (week 5): Of the State of Man After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead

- Must explain difference of what happens to man at death, and what happens to him at the resurrection.
- Why is the resurrection important if man is already with Christ when he dies?
- Chapter XXXIII (week 5): Of the Last Judgment
 - Be clear what you say here. Christ's death was payment for our sins; don't imply this is now somehow ineffective and we have to pay for them.
 - If the payment for our sins was on the cross, then what kind of judgment is meant for us? Is it the same kind of judgment for Christians and non-Christians?
 - Must include here whether a person can be saved at one point while on earth, but eventually lose his salvation and be damned on Judgment Day.