

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION AND MODERN SOCIETY¹

Or

How May We Confess Christ In a Twentieth-Century Expression of the Westminster Confession of Faith To a Changing Hostile Society?

By

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Is the man in the pew “called” according to his God-given gifts to a vocation other than “full-time” professional Christian work? May an employee honour Christ as Sovereign King while employed by a company practising unethical labour-management relations or producing a slip-shod product? Do twentieth-century Christians have the obligation to form “Christian” labour organisations²? What is the

¹ This is a slightly revised form of an address that Dr. Lee delivered to the Faculty and students of Faith Theological Seminary, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in March of 1968, during a Conference on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

² When this address was delivered, the author had not that long removed from his land South Africa in order to become a member of the Faculty at Shelton College in Cape May, New Jersey. Therefore, he had not yet made a complete transition to the use of the American forms of English. The South African forms of English are therefore retained throughout the paper as they were originally written.

Christian idea of work? Is the Christian calling only to “preach the Gospel”?

These and many other problems are so involved that the completely satisfactory solution to some of them almost baffles the human intellect. I will try to introduce these issues by rigidly adhering to try to answer the main question posed me and given me as the title.

My given title, then, is: “How may we confess Christ in a twentieth-century expression of the Westminster Confession of Faith to a changing hostile society?”

Now although Christ, Who is the Truth, as such never changes, and although the truth expressed in the Westminster Confession cannot change, society nevertheless changes. Our twentieth-century society is indeed becoming increasingly hostile to the confession of Christ, as the prescribed title of my address indeed indicates.

Let us then first of all discuss this twentieth-century society which is becoming increasingly hostile to the confession of Christ. After that, let us proceed to examine the way in which the Westminster Confession confesses Christ, to Whom twentieth-century society is becoming increasingly hostile. And, finally, let us consider whether we as twentieth-century Christians may and should confess Christ today differently from the way in which the Westminster Confession did in the seventeenth century.

Increasing Hostility of Twentieth-Century Society.

First, let us examine the increasing hostility of *twentieth-century society* to our confession of Jesus Christ.

I think we should never forget that the confession of Christ is always a stumbling block to those that believe not the Gospel. It was a stumbling-block to man in the first century; a stumbling-block to man at the time the Westminster Confession was framed in the seventeenth century; and is also a stumbling-block to man and his hostile society in the twentieth century.

I think we must further recognize that the offence of the cross is increasing in our present world, as the apostasy deepens. So from this point of view, there is a limit to what we can do to stem the rising tide of society's hostility to our confession of Christ as such -- and of the things which directly pertain to Christ, such as: His virgin birth, crucifixion, atonement, resurrection, and ascension *etc.*

However, what we can do is to confess Christ clearly and relevantly to this increasingly hostile society. Our confession of Christ must be clear! We cannot afford to allow society to misunderstand the claims of Christ with which we are to confront it. And our confession of Christ must also be *relevant* – relevant to the specific needs of twentieth-century man.

What, then, are the needs of twentieth-century man, to whose situation our confession of Christ must be relevant? What are the

characteristics of this twentieth-century society which we are to confront?

The *basic* needs and characteristics of man are, of course, the same in every century – needs such as sustenance and salvation. But these needs take on different nuances in each nation and during each epoch. Confining ourselves to modern Western society, what, then, are its characteristics?

First, then, I would say that modern Western society is very *affluent*, and is becoming increasingly more and more so. Living standards are at an all-time high. Even amongst the poorer strata of Western society, there must be few indeed who – like the masses of Asia – really and sincerely and deeply have to pray: “Give us *this day* our *daily* bread.”

Second, it is *highly mechanised*. This has not merely tended to lead to over-specialisation and a consequential encyclopaedic superficiality, an inability to see the woods for the trees. But technological automation has also led to the five-day week and even the four-day week, secured by powerful labour unions which demand for their members the maximum pay for the minimum work, while millions of labourers are becoming more and more idle and spending more and more time looking at low-grade television programmes and pursuing other time-wasting pleasures.

Third, and perhaps partly as a result of this, it seems to me that Western society is rather *undisciplined*. This may not only have been brought about by affluence and by mechanization. But it may perhaps even more basically be a widespread tradition of anti-

covenantal hyperindividualism. At any rate, I notice a strong anti-authoritarian trend in the home, the school, the church, the army, public life, society as a whole, race relations, and last, but by no means least, even in personal life.

And, fourth, Western society seems to be rather *Godless*. By this I do not mean that it is totally evil. Indeed, the Western heritage of freedom – embracing, amongst other things, private enterprise, the right to bear arms, *etc.* – is certainly an example for the rest of the mature world to follow. But by “Godless,” I merely mean “without God” -- that is, without the true God, the only God.

For *God is dead* . . . dead in most of the churches that a segment of our Western people still attend Dead when the television comes to life each night in millions of homes from coast to coast. . . . Dead in business transactions where the end pragmatically justifies the means Dead in the hearts of very many Sabbath-desecrating Christians, and even of some supposedly bible-believing Christians who ruthlessly trample God’s holy day under their feet

Dead in Christian separatists’ smugness as to the ill-assumed health of their own spiritual condition Dead in the barren speculations of Christ-denying liberalism and apostate modernism.... Dead in the hearts of the cosmopolitan one-world advocates of the United Nations on the one hand. But dead also in the hearts of the “my country, right or wrong” superpatriotic chauvinists on the other.

So, then, my admittedly incomplete, yet honest impression of Western society’s present general condition and increasing hostility toward the Gospel, is that this society is *affluent, highly mechanised,*

over-specialised, undisciplined, and Godless – and is becoming progressively more so. In short, it is a society which is becoming more and more indifferent to all the claims of Christ.

It seems to me, then, that our confession of Christ in modern society must -- without in any way compromising the unchangeable truths of Christianity -- also take account of these characteristics of our society. Our affluent society must be confronted with the greater affluence of Christianity to make it realize its own relative poverty.

Our society's over-specialisation must be challenged by Christianity's even greater capacity for detail yet overriding and unified life and world view. We must confront society's increasing decay with the benevolent discipline yet perfect freedom of Christianity. And by this rich and relevant manner of confessing Christ, we must show society the irrelevant poverty of its own Godless smugness.

Can the Westminster Confession help us to do this? Is the Westminster Confession sufficiently relevant to the special problems of twentieth-century man?

Confession of Christ in the Westminster Confession.

This brings me to the second section of my address. *Viz.*, the way in which the *Westminster Confession* confesses Christ Whom hostile, modern society increasingly rejects.

For an ecclesiastical confession – as opposed to, say, the charter of a Christian philosophic society – the thirty-three chapters of the Westminster Confession are amazingly comprehensive.

Chapters I-VII are not only of general theological interest, but also of general philosophical interest and are even useful in determining the presuppositions for the Christian development of the arts and sciences. Chapter I deals with the doctrine of Scripture; Chapter II with the Triune God; Chapter III with God's Eternal Decree; Chapter IV with Creation; Chapter V with Providence; Chapter VI with the Fall; and Chapter VII with the Covenant.

Chapters VIII-XVIII are largely of soteriological significance. Chapter VIII presents Christ as the Mediator between God and man; Chapter IX deals with the later Unregenerate Bondage of the Will; Chapter X with Effectual Calling and Common Grace; and Chapter XI with Justification;

Chapter XII deals with Adoption; Chapter XIII with Sanctification; Chapter XIV with Saving Faith; Chapter XV with Repentance unto Life; Chapter XVI with Good Works; Chapter XVII with the Perseverance of the Saints; and Chapter XVIII with the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

Chapters XIX-XXIV are of great *social* importance, and of particular importance to our confession of Christ in a changing hostile society. Chapter XIX deals with the Law of God; and Chapter XX with Christian Liberty.

Chapter XXI deals with Worship and Sabbath Observance; Chapters XXII with Lawful Oaths and Vows; Chapter XXIII with the Civil Magistrate; and Chapter XXIV with Marriage and Divorce.

Chapters XXV-XXXI deal with ecclesiastical matters. Chapter XXV deals with the Church; and Chapter XXVI with the Communion of the Saints;

Chapter XXVII deals with the Sacraments; Chapter XXVIII with Baptism; Chapter XXIX with the Lord's Supper; Chapter XXX with Church Censures; and Chapter XXXI with Synods and Councils.

Finally, the Westminster Confession concludes on an eschatological note. Chapter XXXII deals with the State of Man after Death and the Resurrection of the Dead, and Chapter XXXIII with the Last Things.

From this analysis it can be seen that the Westminster Confession is primarily that of a Church with an ecclesiastical and theological emphasis (as opposed to, say, the charter of a Christian political party with a socio-economic emphasis). So it is especially the theological and ecclesiastical thrust of the Confession which must be upheld in the Twentieth Century, and in a twentieth-century expression of the Westminster Confession. This would obviously differ but little from a seventeenth-century expression of the Westminster Confession.

However, there is not much *general* theological or ecclesiastical interest in the heart of twentieth-century man. Yet he *is* interested in non-theological and non-ecclesiastical matters. And fortunately these are matters about which the Westminster Confession also has something to say. So, while upholding the primary theological and ecclesiastical emphasis of the Confession, I would further attempt to apprehend twentieth-century man with the non-theological and also the non-ecclesiastical emphases of the Westminster Confession and its sister document the Westminster Larger Catechism.

Let us, then, now take a more detailed look at some of the chapters of the Confession and at some of the questions of the Catechism. Particularly as they relate to socio-economic problems, our references to “chapters” are in respect of the Confession -- and our references to “questions” are in respect of the Catechism.

As a basic guideline, we would do well to remember that God’s Moral Law or the Ten Commandments is given not only to Jews and Christians, but also to all men (Chapter XIX and Question 93). Furthermore, the Law is given not only to individuals -- but also to the family, the Church, the government or civil magistrate, and all other societal spheres.

Now the Ten Commandments teach us the principle of dependence. The first four of the Commandments teach us our absolute dependence on God. And the last six of the Commandments teach us, in addition, our relative dependence on one another under God -- that is to say, our mutual interdependence (*cf.* Galatians 3:21 & 6:2-10).

In the Church, believers are to serve one another with their own gifts and possessions -- and in mutual interdependence. There they have “communion in each other’s gifts and graces,” being “obliged to the performance of such duties -- public and private -- as do conduce to their mutual good.” And “also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities” (Chapter XXVI: 1-2).

Now it seems to me we may legitimately extend this principle of mutual interdependence to all the fields outside the organised Church too – to the areas of the family, industry, society, politics, etc. After all, God not only gives a special revelation and special grace to His Church. He also gives His general revelation and His general or common grace to all other societal spheres outside the Church.

The Confession refers at least five times to the “light of nature” which is given to all men (Chapters I:1 & I:6 & X:4 & XX:4 & XXI:1). It twice implies that even the wicked have received God-given gifts (Chapters V:6 and X:4). It seems clear, then, that even those spheres which do not consist exclusively of believers are still mutually interdependent -- and therefore also relatively dependent on one another and on the Church. And similarly, the Church in its turn on them.

For example, although the Church is to be kept separate from the State (Chapters XX:4 & XXIII:3-4 & XXXI:4), the State nevertheless has a duty to protect the Church (Chapter XXIII:3). And the Church in its turn has a duty to obey the State (Chapter XXIII:4), and to pray for it (Question 183.)

In the light of all this, let us now see what the Confession and the Catechism have to say in respect of the *affluence, mechanisation, over-specialisation, undisciplinedness, and Godlessness* which we previously found to be characteristic of our increasingly hostile society.

It will be remembered we saw that our society is *affluent*. It seems to me we should stress two things here when we confess Christ in this affluent society. We should stress that all (material) affluence comes from God. But also that most modern men are anything but affluent in the spiritual realm.

We must therefore emphasise that God is the Giver of every good gift, even of every good material gift (cf. Chapters V:6 & X:4 and XXI:1). Each person is entitled to affluence by enjoying the private possession of his goods, but each Christian is required to serve all his brethren therewith (Chapter XXVI:1-3) -- "giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others" (Question 141). But, in addition, we must not cease to emphasise the spiritual poverty of all those who are materially affluent yet have not received the saving grace of God (Chapter XVI).

It will be recalled we also found that modern society is a *mechanised* society, and that such mechanisation necessarily leads to changing labour relations. Here, too, the principle of mutual interdependence is applicable.

This principle is valid irrespective of whether the employer or the employee is a Christian or not. For as the Confession correctly teaches, *all men are subject to God's Moral Law* (Chapter XIX:5-6 and Question 93). This Moral Law is, of course, not merely our guide for

individual sanctification -- but also for socio-economic action and justice as well.

For example, the Catechism not only requires us to keep the Sabbath ourselves, but also to labour for six days -- whether for ourselves, or for an employer (Question 117). It also requires employers to pay their employees enough to exist on, in return for their labours; and to permit them not to work on the Sabbath, as well as to care for both their bodily and their spiritual welfare (Questions 118, 119, 120 & 129).

It seems to me that a good case for various employee fringe benefits can be made out on this basis. Such as sick leave pay, and workmen's compensation

Again, although an employee is to accept the authority of his employer as a supervisor (Question 124) -- the employer should aim at moderate prosperity and not absolutise the profit motive. The Catechism also stresses the employee's contractual equality with the employer -- and condemns all usury, false weights and measures, and false misrepresentation such as is not infrequently found in much of our modern advertising (Questions 141-142).

The Catechism enjoins both contentment on the part of the employee, as well as striving for "the common good of all" on the part of the employer (cf. Questions 147 and 151:2). For one is *called* to trade, just as one is called to preach (Question 141).

We also saw modern society is becoming more and more *undisciplined*. As far as the Church is concerned, although it will

always be imperfect until the Lord comes (Chapter XXV: 5), it must still maintain ecclesiastical discipline (Chapter XXX: 3).

As regards marriage, engaged couples should remember that they have solemnly contracted to join in wedlock (Chapter XXIV: 5). This is a *calling* just as sacred as is the calling to preach (Question 138 and *cf.* I Corinthians 7: 15-24).

Authority and discipline are to be maintained also in the family, the Church, and the State government, *etc.* (Question 124f). In short, discipline must be applied in each societal sphere totally (Questions 191-192).

Socio-political pressure should, in my opinion, be applied by God's people to attain certain minimum objectives. For example. There should be national, county and/or municipal laws against blasphemy (Questions 104 and 109); and atheists should be isolated and rendered harmless (Question 190).

Slander of one's fellow man should be punished juridically (Questions 145), and God should be called upon to witness the truth of a Christian's declarations under oath in a court of law (Questions 112).

Christians should promote public health by advocating liquor and drug control and maximum labour requirements of employees (Questions 135-136). And it is the Christian's duty not to be found "allowing, tolerating (or) keeping . . .stews" or brothels and "lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings (and) stage plays" (Question 139).

But modern society, as we saw, is also *Godless*. It is a society without God – for God is dead, we are told.

Over against this blasphemy, only the very highest form of Calvinism will triumph. Not only must the modern Christian assert the fact that God is very much alive -- but also that He is truly very God of very God. We must let God be *God!*

We must not be ashamed of the “L” in “TULIP,” but we should – nay we *must* – preach “*limited* atonement” in the midst of a society of almost unlimited wickedness. And this message must come through loud and clear.

We must not make a god of Godless man by falsely flattering him and telling him that he can accept or reject God’s offer of salvation just as he pleases. To the contrary, we must preach the unlimited sovereignty of God -- and avoid all the adulterations of Arminianism and Amyraldianism as well as the apostasy of modernism and atheism.

We must exalt the Lord alone as the great and terrible God, and make the wicked tremble! We must tell them that God is “most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin. He is the one “Who will by no means clear the guilty.”

Indeed. “He is the alone fountain of all being -- of Whom, through Whom, and to Whom, are all things.” He “hath most sovereign dominion over them -- to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever Himself pleaseth” (Chapter II).

“God, from eternity, did -- by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will -- freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.” So that “some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death” (Chapter III). Even original “sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit -- having purposed to order it to His own glory” (Chapter VI).

How can we best apprehend modern man and his society in all its affluence, mechanisation, over-specialisation, undisciplinedness and Godlessness? Perhaps by upholding a truly relevant *covenant theology* as never before.

If we do this, we will tell modern man that God “created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls -- endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness -- after His own image.” Thus men “have the Law of God written in their hearts,” and had “power to fulfill it” (Chapter IV:2).

“God gave to Adam (this) Law, as a *covenant of works* -- by which He bound him and *all* his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and *perpetual* obedience.” This “Law, after (man’s) fall, *continued* to be a perfect rule of righteousness.”

It was, as such, “delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in Ten Commandments.” This “doth for ever bind all, *as well justified persons as others*, to the obedience thereof.” Indeed, “the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God revealed in the Law requireth to be done” (Chapters XIX and XVI).

Now God incorporated this perpetual Moral Law into a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam and in him to his posterity upon condition of perfect and personal obedience” (Chapter VII: 2). This covenant of works is sometimes called “the cultural mandate,” simply because the covenant’s very execution by keeping the Moral Law involved cultivating and subduing the cosmos.

Even as God commanded our first parents, *viz.*: “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth!” (Genesis 1:28). Indeed, if we study the Catechism’s exposition of the implications of the Moral Law given to Adam and all his descendents in perpetuity -- we will see that our very obedience to this Moral Law requires just such a subduing of the entire earth under man’s dominion.

For example. Question 17 tells us that the man and the woman had “the Law of God written in their hearts and power to fulfill it, with dominion over the creatures.” And Question 20 adds that God placed man “in paradise; appointing him to dress it; giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth; putting the creatures under his dominion and ordaining marriage for his help . . .; instituting the Sabbath, entering into a covenant of life with him upon condition of personal [and] perfect and perpetual obedience.”

In “ordaining marriage for his help,” God gave Adam and his entire posterity the substance of the seventh Commandment (*cf.* Question 137*f*). In giving man “liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth” and in “putting the creatures under his dominion,” God enjoined the

positive observance of what is now the sixth Commandment (Questions 99 and 134f). In placing man “in paradise (and) appointing him to dress it,” as well as in “instituting the Sabbath,” God required man to keep the fourth commandment (Question 117f). And so it is clear that really keeping the Moral Law (the Ten Commandments), *requires* man to subject the entire earth and to dominate it to God’s glory.

It is perfectly true that man, as a result of the fall into sin, can now no longer execute this covenant of works by himself as an able prophet, priest and king (Chapter IV:2 and VI:2-4; *cf.* Hosea 6:7 *margin*). But the covenant of works was never abolished. It must still be kept by man, and was so kept by the Son of Man.

Yet, although Christ has kept this covenant of works for us as our second Adam and thus imputed its benefits to us (Chapters VII and VIII and Questions 43-45), we are still required to keep it today in the power of His Holy Spirit (Chapters XVI and XIX; Questions 32; *cf.* Genesis 9:1-6; Psalm 8; First Corinthians 15:22-49; Hebrews 2:6-4:11 and 12:1-3, etc.). In other words, even we Christians are *still* to dominate the *earth* and all its fulness to the glory of the Lord God of the covenant.

Indeed, “the meek shall inherit the *earth*” (Matthew 5:5), on which earth we shall reign as kings together with Christ and in our “self-same bodies and none other” (Chapter XXXII: 2-3). Let us note that it was God the Son or the *Word of God* Who spoke to our first parents and their posterity and *said* unto them: “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of

the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth!" (Genesis 1:28).

Let us also note that it was this same God the Son, or the *Word of God*, Who later spoke to His disciples and said unto them in the words of His great commission: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost – teaching them to observe *all things whatsoever I have commanded you!*" (Matthew 28:18f). *All things*, including the cultural mandate I commanded you in the garden of Eden!

By now, the *relevance* of all I have just been saying should be clear. The great commission presupposes and requires the execution of the previously enjoined cultural mandate; and the cultural mandate cannot be executed in this world of sin without the prior execution of the great commission.

Actually, the two processes should now be simultaneous. Christ must be confessed to a changing, hostile society which is apostately³ engaged in subduing the earth to the glory of some or other idol.

Society must be *turned* from its idols to Christ the Lord, and then it must continue to subdue the earth – but henceforth for *His* sake and to *His* glory alone! Society's affluence and mechanisation and specialisation must be subjected to His Lordship, and society's undisciplinedness and Godlessness must be crucified and subjected to the discipline of true Godliness.

³ As an aside, Dr. Lee suggested that society might now even be described as "katakata" -- the preposition *kata* amplifying the force of the preposition *apo*.

Should Christ Be Confessed Differently Today?

This brings me to the final section of my address, namely whether we as twentieth-century Christians may and should confess Christ today *differently* from the way in which the Westminster Confession did in the Seventeenth Century. This is really a double enquiry.

The first question amounts to whether we *may* change our confession, and the second question amounts to whether we *should* do so. Let us then take a closer look at each of these.

Certainly we *may* change the Westminster Confession, and indeed we *should* change it if it should prove to be an inaccurate or inadequate statement of Scripture. After all, a confession, although normative, is still only a *fallibly* normative attempt to express the truths of Scripture which alone is *infallibly* normative.

Scripture alone is normatively normative, is *norma normans*. A confession is only normatedly normative, is *norma normata*. That is to say, infallible Scripture is not subject to a fallible confession, but a merely normatedly normative confession is always subject to normatively normative Scripture.

Indeed, the Westminster Confession has in fact been changed a number of times by some of the Presbyterian Churches which have subscribed to it. This has been done, in order to bring it more into line with what some of those Presbyterian Synods -- after mature reflection -- have considered to be the true teaching of the Word of God.

For example, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland's "Declaratory Act" of 1879 amended the Westminster Confession to teach universal atonement and to mitigate the doctrine of total depravity and to soften the compelling power of the civil magistrate to promote the true religion. Again, in the United States -- after the Revolutionary War -- the Synod of Philadelphia of 1788 changed Chapters XX & XXIII: 3 & XXXI:1-2 as regards church polity and the separation of Church and State.

The U. S. Cumberland Presbyterian Church in 1813 (unfortunately!) somewhat Arminianised Chapter III of the Confession. And even more unfortunately, I understand that the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. recently dropped the Westminster Larger Catechism as one of its official confessional standards.

A Church, then *may* alter its own confession. But this necessarily leads to the second question. Namely, *should* the Westminster Confession be altered today in order to confess Christ better to an increasingly hostile twentieth-century society?

Now it should be appreciated it is a very serious thing indeed to revise a Church's confession. For this does, in fact, imply that previous generations in the Church either incorrectly or at least inadequately confessed the teachings of Holy Scripture.

It is true that no confession is *norma normans*, is an infallible norm. Only Scripture is that. But fallible though every confession is, it is nevertheless *NORMA normata*. Though fallible, it is still a *norm* and therefore normative.

Accordingly, no mere congregation and still less an even merer individual Christian should tamper with the Confession. For “it belongeth to *synods* . . .to determine controversies of faith. . .and authoritatively to determine the same. Which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission” -- as we read in the Westminster Confession itself (Chapter XXXI: 3).

Hence it is quite proper that every candidate for ordination in a truly Presbyterian Church be required inevasively to answer a solemn question. Such as: “Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?”

Now it is true that “all synods or councils since the Apostles’ times...may *err*. And many have erred,” as the Confession declares in Chapter XXXI: 4.

However, I am not aware that the Westminster Assembly erred in its establishment and adoption of its Confession and Catechism more than three hundred years ago. And so I do not recommend any material alteration of the Westminster Confession or Catechism from the form in which we presently confess them.

A good argument could perhaps be advanced to replace certain obsolescent words and phrases in the Confession by more understandable current terminology. And, in the light of modern problems of society, to put more stress than is often done at present on the socio-economic teachings of the Confession -- in the way I have indicated above under the second section of my address.

But I must nevertheless conclude that apart from such matters -- I personally see no merit at all in the organised Church of the Twentieth Century confessing Christ fundamentally differently from the way the organised Church of the Seventeenth Century did in the Westminster Confession which it then wrote. I myself unequivocally reject the anti-historical or liberal *quatenus* point of view, fine though it sounds.

I do not merely accept the Westminster Confession *quatenus*, IN SO FAR as it agrees with Scripture -- as does the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in its apostate new Confession of 1967. I myself accept the Westminster Confession *quia*, BECAUSE it wholly agrees with Scripture.

Let the *quatenus* theologians demonstrate where the Westminster Confession is unscriptural, if they can! Until then, I will defend it as it is. And I will continue to assert that it is an accurate expression of the basic teachings of Scripture just as it stands.

One last point must still be clarified. Man is not only prophet, but also priest and king -- according to the Confession (Chapter IV: 2) and the Catechism (Questions 42-45).

Now this implies the formation of a plurality of societal structures. Although all Christians are called to faith in Christ, only some are called to be preachers. Others are called to be husbands and wives; others are called to trade; and yet others are called to serve God in politics -- according to the Catechism (Questions 138 and 141) and the Confession (Chapters XIX: 4; XXI: 6; and XXIII: 2).

Excellent though the Westminster Confession is, it must be remembered that it is still only a Church confession. And the Church constitutes only *part* of the Kingdom of God, of which *all* Christians are citizens.

Great though the Church's role in the progressive coming of the Kingdom unquestionably is, its role is nevertheless only partial. God was King even before the fall. But there was then still no blood-bought Church in Eden.

Again, God will also reign as King with power and great glory on the new earth -- and still more gloriously in the New Jerusalem . But no temple will be there (Revelation 21).

Indeed, God is -- less apparently and less spectacularly -- reigning even now as King. For He is reigning even between the fall of the first Adam and the coming again of the Second Adam. And He is reigning particularly since the Latter's heavenly session, since His royal *Thronbesteigung* or ascent of the throne.

Thus He is reigning even now. For He reigns not merely in a general sense throughout the universe and over the unbelieving masses, but also in a special sense in His earthly body and in the hearts of His believing elect.

Indeed, He is reigning not merely in the *hearts* of His children -- but also in their whole lives;. And so He cannot merely reign in the organised Church, but He must also reign outside the organised Church.

For God's children live also *outside* the Church: as individuals, in families, in schools, in nations, in businesses, and in cultural

associations. God also reigns in the whole of the lives of Christian individuals; and He further reigns in the Christian family, the Christian school, the Christian nation, the Christian business, and the Christian cultural association.

Furthermore, He also reigns in the whole life of the Christian individual -- even where the latter functions inside a non-Christian family, a non-Christian school, a non-Christian nation, a non-Christian business and a non-Christian cultural association. Even though such non-Christian spheres are, of course, much less desirable than are their Christian counter-parts.

But even when he only functions in such *non*-Christian societal spheres, the Christian should nevertheless do everything in his power to christianise them. For they need to be turned more and more into a Christian family, a Christian school, a Christian nation, a Christian business, and a Christian cultural association – rather than be barricaded up, inside the safer retreats of the Christian Church.

Should it ultimately prove totally impossible to christianise such non-Christian spheres of society, the Christian should separate from them all as much as he can. And then start a new and more truly Christian school, nation, business, cultural association, *etc.*

From all this, it will be seen that the Church is only *one* sphere of the Christian's activity, and only of the many fields in which Christ must be confessed. Albeit a very important one.

The individual who upholds the Westminster Confession in the sphere of the Church is indeed the same individual who must confess Christ also in his family, school, nation, business and cultural

association. So that although the Westminster Confession is preeminently a Church confession, the Christian will live according to its teachings in the non-Church spheres too -- especially in respect of those parts of the Confession which relate to our activity outside the Church, as detailed above in our second section.

Yet even though the Westminster *Church* Confession will influence our confession of Christ outside of the Church in the other societal spheres, these other spheres are in no way subordinate to the Church -- as in Romanism. But, like the Church, they are subject only to Christ Himself.

All the spheres -- including the Church -- are relatively independent of one another, and none of them may encroach on the territory of any of the others. After all, the Church must remain the Church, and may not venture into politics and do the work of a political party -- not even the work of a Christian political party.

Neither is the organised Church a philosophic society -- no, not even a Christian philosophic society. And neither may the Christian political party and the Christian philosophic society attempt to do the work of the Church.

Yet they all need one another, even though none of them is absolutely dependent on any other. That is, they are all relatively dependent on one another -- simply because they are all absolutely dependent on God Who created and sustains them.

From this it follows that the Christian family, the Christian school, the Christian nation, the Christian business, and the Christian cultural association are not merely influenced by the Church and *its* confession

– and the Church in its turn by them. But all of them are free to form their *own* Christian confessions specifically for their own spheres, just as the Church did when it formed the Westminster Confession for the Church sphere. Such non-Church Christian confessions will then not at all contradict the Westminster Confession, but supplement it in the non-Church fields.

I close with a few examples of this. It is truly an excellent thing for a Christian State to draw up a Christian confession in the field of government, as was done in the 1961 Preamble to the Constitution of my own country, the Republic of South Africa.

Again, it is wonderful when a Christian political party draws up a Christian Programme of Principles, as the Anti-Revolutionary Party of the Netherlands has done. And further, it is an excellent thing when Christian labourers throw off the shackles of socialistically-dominated labour unions and organise their own on a Christian basis -- as the *Patrimonium* labour union did in Holland.

I may also cite the case of the recently formed Christian Art Association in South Africa. This has been organized to combat pornography and to exalt our Saviour as the Lord of art.

Then again, I myself have been a member of the South African Association for the Promotion of Christian Scholarship, the Graduates' Christian Fellowship of South Africa, the South African Association for Christian Higher Education, the International Association for Calvinist Philosophy -- and of the American-launched International Christian Youth.

In all these cases, what are God's people doing other than taking the Westminster Assembly's Confession and the Westminster Larger Catechism's detailed exposition of the covenant and of its Ten Commandments very seriously indeed -- and applying all this to *every* field of Christian endeavour? Both inside as well as outside of the organised Church!

I was asked to address you on how we may confess Christ in a twentieth-century expression of the Westminster Confession of Faith to a changing, hostile society. I have given you some of my ideas. And I sincerely trust that they may be found useful and helpful to God's twentieth-century people.
