

Confession, 1 & 2

“But with respect to the *time*, certainly **most men in our churches use the Sacraments, absolution and the Lord’s Supper, frequently in a year**. And those who teach of the worth and fruits of the Sacraments speak in such a manner as to invite the people to use the Sacraments **frequently**.... But a fixed time is not prescribed, because all are not ready in like manner at the same time. Yea, if all are to come at the same time, they cannot be heard and instructed in order [so diligently].” (Ap XI, 60, 62).

Confession or (re)Pen(t)ance is a Return to Baptism

“And here you see that Baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third Sacrament, which has been called **repentance**, 75] as it is really nothing else than Baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man [that his lusts be restrained] and entering upon a new life? Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in Baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. 76] For therein are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong.” (LC IV 74-75).

Psalms 51:17, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.”

The Biblical word “Repentance”

- 1) Broad Sense = contrition worked by the Law and faith worked by the Gospel
- 2) Narrow Sense = contrition only.

“Likewise **the term repentance also is not employed in the Holy Scriptures in one and the same sense**.

- 1) For in some passages of Holy Scripture it is employed and taken for **the entire conversion of man**, as Luke 13, 5: Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. And in 15, 7: Likewise joy shalt be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. 8]
- 2) But in this passage, Mark 1, 15, as also elsewhere, where repentance and faith in Christ, Acts 20, 21, or repentance and remission of sins, Luke 24, 46. 47, are mentioned as distinct, **to repent means nothing else than truly to acknowledge sins, to be heartily sorry for them, and to desist from them. 9] This knowledge comes from the Law**, but is not sufficient for saving conversion to God, if faith in Christ be not added, whose merits the comforting preaching of the holy Gospel offers to all penitent sinners who are terrified by the preaching of the Law. For the Gospel proclaims the forgiveness of sins, not to coarse and secure hearts, but to the bruised or **penitent**, Luke 4, 18. And lest repentance or the terrors of the Law turn into despair, the preaching of the Gospel must be added, that it may be **a repentance unto salvation**, 2 Cor. 7, 10.”

The Roman Sacrament of Penance

Medieval definition of Penance: (also see Catholic Catechism, §1448)

- 1) **Contrition** – sorrow over sin either out of love(perfect) or fear(attrition, imperfect). Contrition remits venial sins, if you intend to go to 2.
- 2) Sacramental **Confession** – disclosure of sins before a priest is essential. All mortal sin must be confessed.
- 3) **Satisfaction** – doing something more to make amends for sin.

The Lutheran Sacrament of Absolution/Repentance

- 1) **Confession** – sorrow over sin(contrition)
- 2) **Absolution** – forgiveness from Christ
(Good works do follow faith)

“**Now, repentance consists properly of these 3] two parts: One is contrition**, that is, 4] terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; **the other is faith**, which is born of 5] the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for Christ’s sake, sins are forgiven, comforts 6] the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance” (AC XII, 2b-6).

“Wherefore the voice of the one absolving 41] must be believed not otherwise than we would believe a voice from heaven. And absolution [that blessed word of comfort] properly can be called a sacrament of repentance, as also the more learned scholastic theologians speak” (Ap XII, 40-41).

“And the command of God is that the ministers of the Gospel should absolve those who are converted, according to 2 Cor. 10, 8: The authority which the Lord hath given us for edification” (Ap XII, 177).

John 20:23, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Matthew 18:18, “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Three Kinds of Confession

“To begin with, I have said that in addition to the confession which we are discussing here there are two other kinds, which have an even greater right to be called the Christians’ common confession. I refer to the practice of

- 1) **confessing to God alone** or
- 2) **to our neighbor alone**, begging for forgiveness.... Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession,
- 3) there is also the **secret confession which takes place privately before a single brother**” (Brief Exhortation, 8, 13).

1 John 1:8-9, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

James 5:16, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

SIMPLE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

For children and a short order for those experienced in making confession.

The penitent, who may kneel, says:
Dear pastor, hear my confession.

The pastor responds:

P. In the name of the Father and of the ☐ Son and of the Holy Spirit
R. AMEN.

The pastor says:

P. What is your confession?
R. I HAVE SINNED.

*Here the penitent may confess troubling sins,
which he knows and feels in his hearts.*

Whenever the penitent is done with his confession, he says:
I AM FINISHED.

*The pastor may offer words of admonition and comfort from Holy
Scripture.*

The pastor stands and says:

P. Do you believe that the word of Christ's forgiveness I speak to you
is from the Lord himself?
R. YES, I DO.

The pastor lays his hand on the head of the penitent and says:

P. As a called and ordained servant of the Word, I forgive you your
sins in the name of the Father and of the ☐ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
R. AMEN.

The pastor says:

Go in peace. You are free.

--MDH

Other available orders for confession:

“Individual Confession and Absolution,” *Lutheran Worship*,
p.310-311

“A Short Form of Confession,” *Lutheran Worship*, p.304-305
(taken directly from Luther’s Small Catechism)

Mutual Confession and Forgiveness, *Lutheran Worship*, p.264

General Confession and Absolution, *Lutheran Worship*, p.136-137,
158-159, 178-179.

“Service of Corporate Confession and Absolution,” *Lutheran Worship*, p.306-
307.

Concerning the Practice of Private Confession and Absolution

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XI. Confession

3 With regard to the time, it is certain that most people in our churches use the sacraments, absolution and the Lord’s Supper, many times a year. Our clergy instruct the people about the worth and fruits of the sacraments in such a way as to invite them to use the sacraments often....

Augsburg Confession, Article XI: Of Confession.

1] *Of Confession* they teach that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession 2] an enumeration of all sins is not necessary. For it is impossible according to the Psalm: *Who can understand his errors?* Ps. 19, 12.

Augsburg Confession, Article XXV: Of Confession.

1] Confession in the churches is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And 2] the people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there 3] was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, 4] and pronounced by God’s command. The power of the Keys is set forth in its beauty and they are reminded what great consolation it brings to anxious consciences, also, that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins. ...13] Nevertheless, on account of the great benefit of absolution, and because it is otherwise useful to the conscience, Confession is retained among us.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XI. Confession

6 With regard to the enumeration of sins in confession we teach men in such a way as not to ensnare their consciences. It is, of course, a good practice to accustom the unlearned to enumerate certain things so that they might be instructed more easily....
9 Good pastors know how profitable it is to examine the inexperienced.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VI: Of Confession and Satisfaction.

2] For we also retain confession, especially on account of the absolution, as being the word of God which, by divine authority, the power of the keys pronounces upon individuals. 3] Therefore it would be wicked to remove private absolution from the Church. 4] Neither do they understand what the remission of sins or the power of the keys is, if there are any who despise private absolution.

Office of the Keys, 1 & 2

“For since private absolution originates in the **Office of the Keys**, it should not be despised [neglected], but greatly and highly esteemed [of the greatest worth], as [also] all other offices of the Christian Church” (Smalcald Articles III, VIII, 2).

Pastoral Office, the Ministry, Divine Gift to the Church

“That we may obtain this faith, **the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments** was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ’s sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake” (AC V, 1-2).

Acts 20:28, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Ephesians 4:8,11, “Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave **gifts to men**.... And He{Christ} Himself gave ...**some (to be) pastors and teachers**....

Pastoral Office(of the Keys) is entrusted to Reliable Men

“Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should **publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments** unless he be regularly called” (AC XIV).

“In addition to this, it is necessary to acknowledge that **the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church**, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys adds, Matt. 18, 19: If two or three of you shall agree on earth, etc. Therefore **he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church**, just as also for this reason **the Church has principally the right of calling**. [For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the entire Church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the keys are nothing else than **the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it**, just as it is actually manifest that **the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church**. And Christ speaks in these words: Whatsoever ye shall bind, etc., and indicates to whom He has given the keys, namely, to the Church: Where two or three are gathered together in My name. Likewise Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church, when He says: Tell it unto the Church.]... (Treatise, 24). 2 Timothy 2:2, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit these to faithful men** who will be able to teach others also.”

1 Corinthians 4:1, “Let a man so consider us, as **servants of Christ and stewards** of the mysteries of God.”

The Work of The Ministry: Preaching the Word

“However, as to the declaration: Upon this rock I will build My Church, certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of man, **but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made**, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He accordingly addresses him as **a minister**: Upon this rock, i.e., **upon this ministry**. [Therefore he addresses him as a minister of this office in which this confession and doctrine is to be in operation and says: Upon this rock, i.e., **this preaching and ministry**.]

26] Furthermore, **the ministry of the New Testament** is not bound to places and persons as the Levitical ministry, but it is dispersed throughout the whole world, and is there **where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers**; neither does **this ministry** avail on account of the authority of any person, but on account of the Word given by Christ” (Treatise, 25-26).

Ephesians 4:11-13, “And He{Christ} Himself gave

some to be apostles,

some prophets,

some evangelists,

and some pastors and teachers, 12

for the equipping of the saints,

for the work of ministry,

for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13

till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (NKJV)

A Fourth Sacrament? Kind of

“But if ordination be understood as applying to **the ministry of the Word**, we are not unwilling to call ordination a sacrament. For the **ministry of the Word has God’s command and glorious promises**, Rom. 1, 16: The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Likewise, Is. 55, 11: So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please. 12] If ordination be understood in this way, neither will we refuse to call the imposition of hands a sacrament. For **the Church has the command to appoint ministers**, which should be most pleasing to us, because **we know that God approves this ministry, and is present in the ministry [that God will preach and work through men and those who have been chosen by men]**. 13] And it is of advantage, so far as can be done, to adorn the ministry of the Word with every kind of praise against fanatical men, who dream that the Holy Ghost is given not through the Word, but because of certain preparations of their own, if they sit unoccupied and silent in obscure places, waiting for illumination, as the Enthusiasts formerly taught, and the Anabaptists now teach (Ap XIII, 11-13).

1 Timothy 3:1, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires **the position of a bishop**, he desires **a noble task**..”

Office of the Keys, 3

The Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops

In the Confession and in the Apology⁹ we have set forth in general terms what we have to say about ecclesiastical power.

⁶⁰ The Gospel requires of **those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction**, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. ⁶¹ By the confession of all, even our adversaries, it is evident that **this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters,¹ or bishops.** ⁶² Accordingly Jerome teaches clearly that in the apostolic letters all who preside over the churches are both bishops and presbyters. He quotes from Titus, “This is why I left you in Crete, that you (^{tr-523}) might appoint presbyters in every town,” and points out that these words are followed by, “A bishop must be married only once” (Titus 1:5-7). Again, Peter and John call themselves presbyters. And Jerome observes: “One man was chosen over the rest to prevent schism, lest several persons, by gathering separate followings around themselves, rend the church of Christ. For in Alexandria, from the time of Mark the Evangelist to the time of Bishops Heracles and Dionysius, the presbyters always chose one of their number, set him in a higher place, and called him bishop. Moreover, in the same way in which an army might select a commander for itself, the deacons may choose from their number one who is known to be active and name him archdeacon. For, apart from ordination, what does a bishop do that a presbyter does not do?”

⁶³ Jerome therefore teaches that **the distinction between the grades of bishop and presbyter (or pastor) is by human authority.** The fact itself bears witness to this, for the power is the same, as I have already stated. ⁶⁴ Afterwards one thing made a distinction between bishops and pastors, and this was ordination, for it was decided that one bishop should ordain the ministers in a number of churches. ⁶⁵ But since the distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right, it is manifest that **ordination administered by a pastor in his own church is valid by divine right.** ⁶⁶ Consequently, when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel and are unwilling to administer ordination, **the churches retain the right to ordain for themselves.** ⁶⁷ **For wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists. Wherefore it is necessary for the church to retain the right of calling, electing, and ordaining ministers.**

This right is a gift given exclusively to the church, and no human authority can take it away from the church. It is as Paul testifies to the Ephesians when he says, “When he ascended on high he gave gifts to men” (Eph. 4:8, 11, 12). He enumerates pastors and teachers among the gifts belonging exclusively to the church, and he adds that they are given for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ. Where the true church is, therefore, the right of electing and ordaining ministers must of necessity also be. **So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another.** It is like the example which Augustine relates of two Christians in a ship, one of whom baptized the other (a catechumen), and the latter, after his Baptism, absolved the former. ⁶⁸ Here the words of Christ apply which testify that the keys were given to the church and not merely to certain individuals: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

⁶⁹ Finally, this is confirmed by the declaration of Peter, “You are a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9). These words apply to the true church which, since it alone possesses the priesthood, certainly has the right of electing and ordaining ministers. ⁷⁰ **The most common custom of the church also bears witness to this, for there was a time when the people elected pastors and bishops. Afterwards a bishop, either of that church or of a neighboring church, was brought in to confirm the election with the laying on of hands; nor was ordination anything more than such confirmation.**
From the “Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope,” paragraphs 59-70

Apology, XIII,

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⁹ Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII; Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. XXVIII.

¹ Cf. 1 Pet. 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1.