

Study of Concordia - The Lutheran Confession of Faith

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Week 13 - Articles XI, XII & XIII - The Means of Grace Part II



Review/Summary:

The Augsburg Confession is the specific Lutheran confession of the Christian faith which we believe, teach, and confess in our churches according to God's Holy Word. It was written by Philip Melancthon in consultation with Luther and others and presented to the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530 AD. The aim of the confession was to present as fully as possible the doctrinal articles of the Orthodox Christian faith, as taught in Scripture and the "Church catholic" (universal). Rome had charged Luther and "the Lutherans" of teaching heresy. The Lutherans presented their case before Emperor Charles V, and the confession was accepted making it "legal" to be Lutheran Christians because our teachings did not dissent from the Orthodox Christian teaching of Scripture.

It consists of 28 articles of which the first 21 deal with the "chief articles of faith"— most following the model of Thesis-Antithesis. That is each states the belief we hold and then states the false beliefs which are condemned (as heresy). The last 7 articles are the abuses which had been corrected by the Lutherans, showing why Rome was actually guilty of heresy and justifying the changes made by the Lutherans with regard to customs and ceremonies.

Article I: Of God— This article proceeds from the creeds (especially the Nicene council) and teaches that there are three persons in the God-head who are of the same essence and power and who are co-eternal.

Article II: Of Original Sin— All men are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence (desire for sin); and this disease, or vice of origin is truly sin.

Article III: Of The Son of God— Christ Jesus, true God and true man, suffered and died to reconcile the Father unto us and be a sacrifice for all sins of men. He sends the Holy Spirit.

Article IV: Of Justification— The righteousness of Christ is imputed to those who believe.

Article V: Of The Ministry— In order that we may be brought to faith in Jesus Christ the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted by God.

Article VI: Of New Obedience— Faith must bring forth good fruits/works.

Article VII: Of The Church— There is one holy Church. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered. It is enough for the true unity of the Church to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments (primary marks).

Article VIII: What the Church Is— Though the Church is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless there are many hypocrites and evil persons in its midst. The sacraments and the Word are effectual by reason of the institution and command of Christ even if they be administered by evil men.

Article IX: Of Baptism— Baptism is necessary to salvation. Children are to be baptized and through baptism they are received into God's grace.

Article X: Of The Lord's Supper— The body and blood of Christ are truly present in, with, and under the bread and wine in the sacrament.

Article XI

Confession

Note: By the time of the Reformation, the practice of confessing sins privately and confidentially to a pastor had been a well-accepted church practice for over a thousand years. Private Confession and Absolution was never something Lutherans wanted to get rid of. As time went on, the practice fell into disuse, but clearly Article XI assumes that private Confession and Absolution will take place in the Lutheran Church. The problem addressed by this article is that the Roman Church demanded every sin be recalled and confessed. Clearly, this is humanly impossible and makes our forgiveness dependent on our work. Such teaching is certainly dangerous to repentant consciences, which need firm assurance that Christ forgives all sin. (See also Ap XI; SA III VIII; Appendix B, An Exhortation to Confession.)

¹ Our churches teach that private Absolution should be retained in the churches, although listing all sins is not necessary for Confession. ² For, according to the Psalm, it is impossible. “Who can discern his errors?” (Psalm 19:12).

Article XII

Repentance

Note: The Roman teaching about repentance was the spark that ignited the Lutheran Reformation. When Luther learned his congregational members were buying indulgences, hoping to avert God’s punishment for sins by paying money, he was incensed. Repentance is not about “paying off” God or making some satisfaction for our sin. Repentance is recognizing the reality of our sin and turning to God in faith for His mercy. God reveals our sin through His Law; He forgives our sin and restores us to a right relationship with Him through His Gospel. While we affirm there is fruit of repentance, the focus of the Gospel must be clear: our sins are forgiven only because of Christ. Our lives in Christ are lives of repentance, returning again and again to the fount and source of all mercy, our Savior. Notice that this article rejects any teaching that implies our works of satisfaction are part of true repentance. Article XII strikes a fatal blow at the very heart of the Roman sacramental system. (See also Ap XII; SA III III; Appendix B, An Exhortation to Confession.)

¹ Our churches teach that there is forgiveness of sins for those who have fallen after Baptism whenever they are converted. ² The Church ought to impart Absolution to those who return to repentance [Jeremiah 3:12]. ³ Now, strictly speaking, repentance consists of two parts. ⁴ One part is contrition, that is, terrors striking the conscience through the knowledge of sin. ⁵ The other part is faith, which is born of the Gospel [Romans 10:17] or the Absolution and believes that for Christ’s sake, sins are forgiven. It comforts the conscience and delivers it from terror. ⁶ Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruit of repentance [Galatians 5:22–23].

⁷ Our churches condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that those who have once been justified can lose the Holy Spirit. ⁸ They also condemn those who argue that some may reach such a state of perfection in this life that they cannot sin.

⁹ The Novatians also are condemned, who would not absolve those who had fallen after Baptism, though they returned to repentance.

¹⁰ Our churches also reject those who do not teach that forgiveness of sins comes through faith, but command us to merit grace through satisfactions of our own.

They also reject those who teach that it is necessary to perform works of satisfaction, commanded by Church law, in order to remit eternal punishment or the punishment of purgatory.

Article XIII

The Use of the Sacraments

Note: God gives the Sacraments to His people for their forgiveness, life, and salvation, and this happens as they call forth trust and confidence in Christ, the Savior. By the sixteenth century, the Roman Church had developed a complicated sacramental system that had transformed the Sacraments into meritorious works performed by priests. This was especially evident in the Mass, where priests “sacrificed” Christ again and again on behalf of the living and the dead. The Bible, however, reveals the key to the Sacraments: the promises of God. God attaches His Word of promise to the element of the Sacrament—water, wine, or bread—and gives and strengthens the faith of those receiving them. (See also Ap XIII.)

¹ Our churches teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but even more, to be signs and testimonies of God's will toward us. ² They were instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Therefore, we must use the Sacraments in such a way that faith, which believes the promises offered and set forth through the Sacraments, is increased [2 Thessalonians 1:3].

³ Therefore, they condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify simply by the act of doing them. They condemn those who do not teach that faith, which believes that sins are forgiven, is required in the use of the Sacraments.

McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (p. 35-38). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

Outline of the Article:

XI. Confession

- A. Private absolution should be retained. (1)
- B. It is not necessary to enumerate all sins. (2)

XII. Repentance

- A. Those who sin after Baptism receive forgiveness of sins whenever they come to repentance. Absolution should not be denied them. (1,2)
- B. True repentance means having contrition (terror smiting the conscience with a knowledge of sin) and believing the gospel (absolution—that sin has been forgiven through Christ). (4,5)
- C. This faith will comfort the heart. (5)
- D. The fruits of repentance (amendment of life and forsaking sin) should follow. (6)

E. Rejected (7-10)

- 1. That persons who have once become godly cannot fall again (Hans Denck)
- 2. Novatians—denied absolution to those who had sinned after Baptism
- 3. Those who teach that forgiveness is obtained through the satisfaction made by man

XIII. The Use of the Sacraments

- A. The sacraments are not only signs which identify us as Christians, but also signs of God's will toward us for awakening and strengthening our faith. (1)
- B. The sacraments require faith. (2)
- C. They are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith. (2)

Terms Defined:

Confession— The word confession comes from the Latin, *confiteri* or *confessio* which simply means "acknowledge" — "to agree"

Salvation— God's deliverance of humans from the power and effects of sin and the Fall through the work of Jesus Christ so that creation in general and humans in particular can enjoy the fullness of life intended for what God has made.

Sacraments— The Word and promise of God given with a physical sign (a natural element). For Lutherans, something is called a sacrament only if it was commanded by Christ and conveys His grace and forgiveness.

Absolution— refers to the forgiveness of sins declared as a direct promise from God through the words of another human being.

Contrition— the recognition and sense of one's own sinfulness and need of forgiveness, usually described as "feeling guilt." (See reference in Psalm 51:18 to a "contrite heart")

Novatians— name given to a group of 3rd century heretics who said that if a person sinned or fell away after being saved, that person could never be restored to faith.

Satisfactions— to do what is necessary to address, fulfill or pay for sins.

Purgatory— a place imagined by the medieval Church (Rome) where those going to heaven had to first be "purged" of their sin, by "paying for" or "working off" their debt to God. The concept was based on a belief in salvation by human merit (work).

Questions:

Upon first reading, is there anything in these article that you are not sure that you believe? Or that you are not sure is "Lutheran"?

Is private confession and absolution Biblical? (John 20:22-23, James 5:15-16)

In what ways does private confession and absolution compare to the Roman Catholic practice?

Where or when should private confession and absolution take place in the Church?

How would you respond to someone who sees no need for confessing one's sins before another human being? (Romans 10:14)

According to Article XII, what are the two parts of repentance?

Is repentance the necessary condition for forgiveness?

Why does this Article speak of our good works as the "fruit of repentance"?

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. How does this passage distinguish "godly grief" from "worldly grief" and what effect does each have?

How does Paul himself exemplify this in his words here to the people of Corinth?

Some denominations (especially the Reformed traditions, Calvin & Anabaptist after Zwingli) teach "once saved, always saved." But in Article XII Lutherans use the phrase "those who have fallen after Baptism." On what basis do we disagree with the other reformers?

For what expressed purpose does God use the Sacraments?

What is God's goal?

How does Titus 3 tie together sin, grace, faith, and works?

Scripture Passages Cited:

John 20:22–23 (ESV)

²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”

James 5:15–16 (ESV)

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Romans 10:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

2 Corinthians 7:8–10 (ESV)

⁸ For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹ As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Titus 3:1–11 (ESV)

Be Ready for Every Good Work

3 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. ³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.

From the Small Catechism: V: Confession

How Christians should be taught to Confess

What is Confession?

Answer: Confession has two parts: the one is that we confess our sins; the other is that we receive Absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor, as from God Himself, and in no way doubt, but firmly believe that our sins are forgiven before God in heaven by this.

What sins should we confess?

Answer: Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even of those that we do not know, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the confessor we should confess only those sins that we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these?

Answer: Here consider your calling according to the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, a manservant or maidservant. Consider whether you have been disobedient, unfaithful, or slothful. Consider whether you have grieved anyone by words or deeds, whether you have stolen, neglected, wasted, or done other harm.

Please Give to Me a Brief Form of Confession

Answer: You should speak to the confessor like this, "Reverend and dear sir, I ask you to hear my confession, and to pronounce forgiveness to me for God's sake."

Proceed!

I, a poor sinner, confess myself guilty of all sins before God. I especially confess before you that I am a manservant (a maidservant, etc.). But, unfortunately, I serve my master unfaithfully. For in this and in that I have not done what has been commanded me. I have provoked him and caused him to curse. I have been negligent in many things and permitted damage to be done. I have also been immodest in words and deeds. I have argued with my equals, grumbled, and sworn at my mistress, and so forth. For all this I am sorry, and I pray for grace. I want to do better.

A master or mistress may say this:

In particular I confess before you that I have not faithfully trained my children, domestic servants, and wife family for God's glory. I have cursed, set a bad example by rude words and deeds. I have done my neighbor harm and spoken evil of him. I have overcharged, sold inferior products, and have given people less than they paid for.

And whatever else he has done against God's command and his calling, and such.

But if anyone does not find himself burdened with these sins or greater sins, he should not trouble himself or search for or invent other sins, and thereby make confession a torture. He should mention one or two sins that he knows. Say, "In particular I confess that I once cursed. Further, I once used improper words. I have once neglected this or that, and so on." Let this be enough.

But if you don't know of any sins at all (which, however, is hardly possible), then mention none in particular, but receive the forgiveness upon your general confession that you make before God to the confessor.

Then the confessor shall say:

God be merciful to you and strengthen your faith! Amen.

Furthermore:

Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness?

Answer: Yes, dear sir.

Then let him say:

As you believe, so let it be done for you. And by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Depart in peace.

But for those who have great burdens on their consciences, or are distressed and tempted, the confessor will know how to comfort and to encourage them to believe with more passages of Scripture. This is supposed to serve as a general form of confession for the unlearned.



McCain, P. T. (Ed.). (2005). [*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*](#) (pp. 341–342). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

From the Large Catechism: A Brief Exhortation to Confession

Note: Luther was very concerned to purge false notions about private Confession, but he never intended the practice itself to fall into disuse. He laments that since private Confession is no longer mandatory among Lutherans, people neglect it. In addition to private Confession to a pastor, there are two additional kinds of confession. One is confession to God alone; this is practiced throughout one's life. There is also the confession of sins one Christian makes to another. Christians are to confess their sins to one another and forgive one another openly and publicly without hesitation. Christians absolve one another of sins because of the gift of Absolution Christ has given to the Church, commanding us to absolve one another. In his exhortation Luther admonishes Christians to privately confess their sins so that they will hear the Lord's absolving Word from the lips of another human being. God's Word applied in this very personal way is another great treasure, which is so great and precious we should be willing to run more than a hundred miles to receive it. (See AC XI, XII and XXV; SA III III and VIII.)

The Exhortation first appeared in the 1529 revised edition of the Large Catechism. However, it did not appear in the original 1580 German and 1584 Latin editions of the Book of Concord; therefore, it was not included by Dau and Bente in the *Concordia Triglotta*. We have included it here since readers are used to having it from other editions of the Book of Concord. The following text is adapted from *Luther's Large Catechism: A Contemporary Translation with Study Questions*, tr. F. Samuel Janzow (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), pp. 122–27.

¹ Here now follows an exhortation to Confession.

We have always urged that Confession should be voluntary and that the pope's tyranny should cease. As a result we are now rid of his coercion and set free from the intolerable load and burden that he laid upon Christendom. ² As we all know from experience, there had been no rule so burdensome as the one that forced everyone to go to Confession on pain of committing the most serious of mortal sins. ³ That law also placed on consciences the heavy burden and torture of having to list all kinds of sin, so that no one was ever able to confess perfectly enough. The worst was that no one taught or even knew what Confession might be or what help and comfort it could give. ⁴ Instead, it was turned into sheer terror and a hellish torture that one had to go through even if one detested Confession more than anything. These three oppressive things have now been lifted, and we have been granted the right to go to Confession freely, under no pressure of coercion or fear; also, we are released from the torture of needing to list all sins in detail; besides this we have the advantage of knowing how to make a beneficial use of Confession for the comfort and strengthening of our consciences.

⁵ Everyone is now aware of this. But unfortunately people have learned it only too well. They do as they please and apply their freedom wrongfully as if it meant that they ought not or must not go to Confession. For we readily understand whatever is to our advantage, and we find it especially easy to take in whatever is mild and gentle in the Gospel. But, as I have said, such pigs should not be allowed near the Gospel nor have any part of it. They should stay under the pope and let themselves continue to be driven and pestered to confess, to fast, and so on. ⁶ For whoever does not want to believe the Gospel, live according to it, and do what a Christian ought to be doing, should not enjoy any of its benefits either. Imagine their wanting to enjoy only the benefits without accepting any of the responsibilities or investing anything of themselves—what sort of thing is that! We do not want to make preaching available for that sort nor to grant permission that our freedom and its enjoyment be opened up to them. Instead, we will let the pope and the likes of him take over and force them to his will, genuine tyrant that he is. ⁷ The rabble that will not obey the Gospel [2 Thessalonians 1:8] deserves nothing else than the kind of jailer who is God's devil and hangman. But to others who gladly hear the Gospel we must keep on preaching, admonishing, encouraging, and coaxing them not to forget the precious and comforting treasure offered in the Gospel. Therefore, we here intend to say also a few words about Confession in order to instruct and admonish the uninformed.

⁸ In the first place, I have said that besides the Confession here being considered there are two other kinds, which may even more properly be called the Christians' common confession. They are (a) the confession and plea for forgiveness made to God alone and (b) the confession that is made to the neighbor alone. These two kinds of confession are included in the Lord's Prayer, in which we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" [Matthew 6:12], and so on. ⁹ In fact, the entire Lord's Prayer is nothing else than such a confession. For what are our petitions other than a confession that we neither have nor do what we ought, as well as a plea for grace and a cheerful conscience? Confession of this sort should and must continue without letup as long as we live. For the Christian way essentially consists in acknowledging ourselves to be sinners and in praying for grace.

¹⁰ Similarly, the other of the two confessions, the one that every Christian makes to his neighbor, is also included in the Lord's Prayer. For here we mutually confess our guilt and our desire for forgiveness to one another [James 5:16] before coming before God and begging for His forgiveness [Matthew 5:23–24]. Now, all of us are guilty of sinning against one another; therefore, we may and should publicly confess this before everyone without shrinking in one another's presence. ¹¹ For what

the proverb says is true, "If anyone is perfect, than all are." There is no one at all who fulfills his obligations toward God and his neighbor [Romans 3:10–12]. Besides such universal guilt, there is also the particular guilt of the person who has provoked another to rightful anger and needs to ask his pardon. ¹² So we have in the Lord's Prayer a double absolution: there we are forgiven both our offenses against God and those against our neighbor, and there we forgive our neighbor and become reconciled to him.

¹³ Besides this public, daily, and necessary confession, there is also the confidential confession that is only made before a single brother. If something particular weighs upon us or troubles us, something with which we keep torturing ourselves and can find no rest, and we do not find our faith to be strong enough to cope with it, then this private form of confession gives us the opportunity of laying the matter before some brother. We may receive counsel, comfort, and strength when and however often we wish. ¹⁴ That we should do this is not included in any divine command, as are the other two kinds of confession. Rather, it is offered to everyone who may need it, as an opportunity to be used by him as his need requires. The origin and establishment of private Confession lies in the fact that Christ Himself placed His Absolution into the hands of His Christian people with the command that they should absolve one another of their sins [Ephesians 4:32]. So any heart that feels its sinfulness and desires consolation has here a sure refuge when he hears God's Word and makes the discovery that God through a human being looses and absolves him from his sins.

¹⁵ So notice then, that Confession, as I have often said, consists of two parts. The first is my own work and action, when I lament my sins and desire comfort and refreshment for my soul. The other part is a work that God does when He declares me free of my sin through His Word placed in the mouth of a man. It is this splendid, noble, thing that makes Confession so lovely, so comforting. ¹⁶ It used to be that we emphasized it only as our work; all that we were then concerned about was whether our act of confession was pure and perfect in every detail. We paid no attention to the second and most necessary part of Confession, nor did we proclaim it. We acted just as if Confession were nothing but a good work by which payment was to be made to God, so that if the confession was inadequate and not exactly correct in every detail, then the Absolution would not be valid and the sin unforgiven. ¹⁷ By this the people were driven to the point where everyone had to despair of making so pure a Confession (an obvious impossibility) and where no one could feel at ease in his conscience or have confidence in his Absolution. So they not only rendered the precious Confession useless to us but also made it a bitter burden [Matthew 23:4] causing noticeable spiritual harm and ruin.

¹⁸ In our view of Confession, therefore, we should sharply separate its two parts far from each other. We should place slight value on our part in it. But we should hold in high and great esteem God's Word in the Absolution part of Confession. We should not proceed as if we intended to perform and offer Him a splendid work, but simply to accept and receive something from Him. You dare not come saying how good or how bad you are. ¹⁹ If you are a Christian, I in any case, know well enough that you are. If you are not, I know that even better. But what you must see to is that you lament your problem and that you let yourself be helped to acquire a cheerful heart and conscience.

²⁰ Moreover, no one may now pressure you with commandments. Rather, what we say is this: Whoever is a Christian or would like to be one is here faithfully advised to go and get the precious treasure. If you are no Christian and do not desire such comfort, we shall leave it to another to use force on you. ²¹ By eliminating all need for the pope's tyranny, command, and coercion, we cancel them with a single sweep. As I have said, we teach that whoever does not go to Confession willingly and for the sake of obtaining the Absolution, he may as well forget about it. Yes, and whoever goes around relying on the purity of his act of making confession, let him stay away. ²² Nevertheless, we strongly urge you by all means to make confession of your need, not with the intention of doing a worthy work by confessing but in order to hear what God has arranged for you to be told. What I am saying is that you are to concentrate on the Word, on the Absolution, to regard it as a great and precious and magnificently splendid treasure, and to accept it with all praise and thanksgiving to God.

²³ If this were explained in detail and if the need that ought to move and lead us to make confession were pointed out, then one would need little urging or coercion. For everyone's own conscience would so drive and disturb him that he would be glad to do what a poor and miserable beggar does when he hears that a rich gift of money or clothing is being handed out at a certain place. So as not to miss it, he would run there as fast as he can and would need no bailiff to beat and drive him on. ²⁴ Now, suppose that in place of the invitation one were to substitute a command to the effect that all beggars should run to that place but would not say why nor mention what they should look for and receive there. What else would the beggar do but make the trip with distaste, without thinking of going to get a gift but simply of letting people see what a poor, miserable beggar he is? This would bring him little joy and comfort but only greater resentment against the command that was issued.

²⁵ In just this way the pope's preachers kept silent in the past about the splendid gift and inexpressible treasure to be had through Confession. All they did was to drive people in crowds to Confession, with no further aim than to let them see what impure, dirty people they were. Who could go willingly to Confession under such circumstances? ²⁶ We, however, do not say that people should look at you to see how filthy you are, using you as a mirror to preen themselves. Rather, we give this counsel: If you are poor and miserable, then go to Confession and make use of its healing medicine. ²⁷ He who feels his misery and need will no doubt develop such a longing for it that he will run toward it with joy. But those who pay no attention to it and do not come of their own accord, we let them go their way. Let them be sure of this, however, that we do not regard them as Christians.

²⁸ So we teach what a splendid, precious, and comforting thing Confession is. Furthermore, we strongly urge people not to despise a blessing that in view of our great need is so priceless. Now, if you are a Christian, then you do not need either my pressuring or the pope's orders, but you will undoubtedly compel yourself to come to Confession and will beg me for a share in it. ²⁹ However, if you want to despise it and proudly continue without Confession, then we must draw the conclusion that you are no Christian and should not enjoy the Sacrament either. For you despise what no Christian should despise. In that way you make it so that you cannot have forgiveness of your sins. This is a sure sign that you also despise the Gospel.

³⁰ To sum it up, we want to have nothing to do with coercion. However, if someone does not listen to or follow our preaching and its warning, we will have nothing to do with him [1 Corinthians 5:11], nor may he have any share in the Gospel. If you were a Christian, then you ought to be happy to run more than a hundred miles to Confession and not let yourself be urged to come. You should rather come and compel us to give you the opportunity. ³¹ For in this matter the compulsion must be the other way around: we must act under orders, you must come into freedom. We pressure no one, but we let ourselves be pressured, just as we let people compel us to preach to administer the Sacrament.

³² When I urge you to go to Confession, I am doing nothing else than urging you to be a Christian. If I have brought you to the point of being a Christian, I have thereby also brought you to Confession. For those who really desire to be true Christians, to be rid of their sins, and to have a cheerful conscience already possess the true hunger and thirst. They reach for the bread, just as Psalm 42:1 says of a hunted deer, burning in the heat with thirst, ³³ "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God." In other words, as a deer with anxious and trembling eagerness strains toward a fresh, flowing stream, so I yearn anxiously and tremblingly for God's Word, Absolution, the Sacrament, and so forth. ³⁴ See, that would be teaching right about Confession, and people could be given such a desire and love for it that they would come and run after us for it, more than we would like. Let the papists plague and torment themselves and others who pass up the treasure and exclude themselves from it. ³⁵ Let us, however, lift our hands in praise and thanksgiving to God [1 Timothy 2:8] for having graciously brought us to this our understanding of Confession.