

# The Augsburg Confession of 1530

## Article XXVII: Monastic Vows



## Article XXVII: Monastic Vows

❖ “...<sup>1</sup> It will be easier to understand what we teach about monastic vows by considering the state of the monasteries and how many things were done every day contrary to canon law....”

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❖ “...<sup>2</sup> In Augustine’s time they were free associations. Later, when discipline was corrupted, vows were added for the purpose of restoring discipline, as in a carefully planned prison....”

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❖ “...<sup>3</sup> Gradually, many other regulations were added besides vows. <sup>4</sup> These binding rules were laid upon many before the lawful age, contrary to canon law....”

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❖ “...<sup>5</sup> Many entered monastic life through ignorance. They were not able to judge their own strength, though they were old enough....”

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❖ “...<sup>6</sup> They were trapped and compelled to remain, even though some could have been freed by the kind provision of canon law....”

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❖ “...<sup>7</sup> This was more the case in convents of women than of monks, although more consideration should have been shown the weaker sex [1 Peter 3:7] ...”

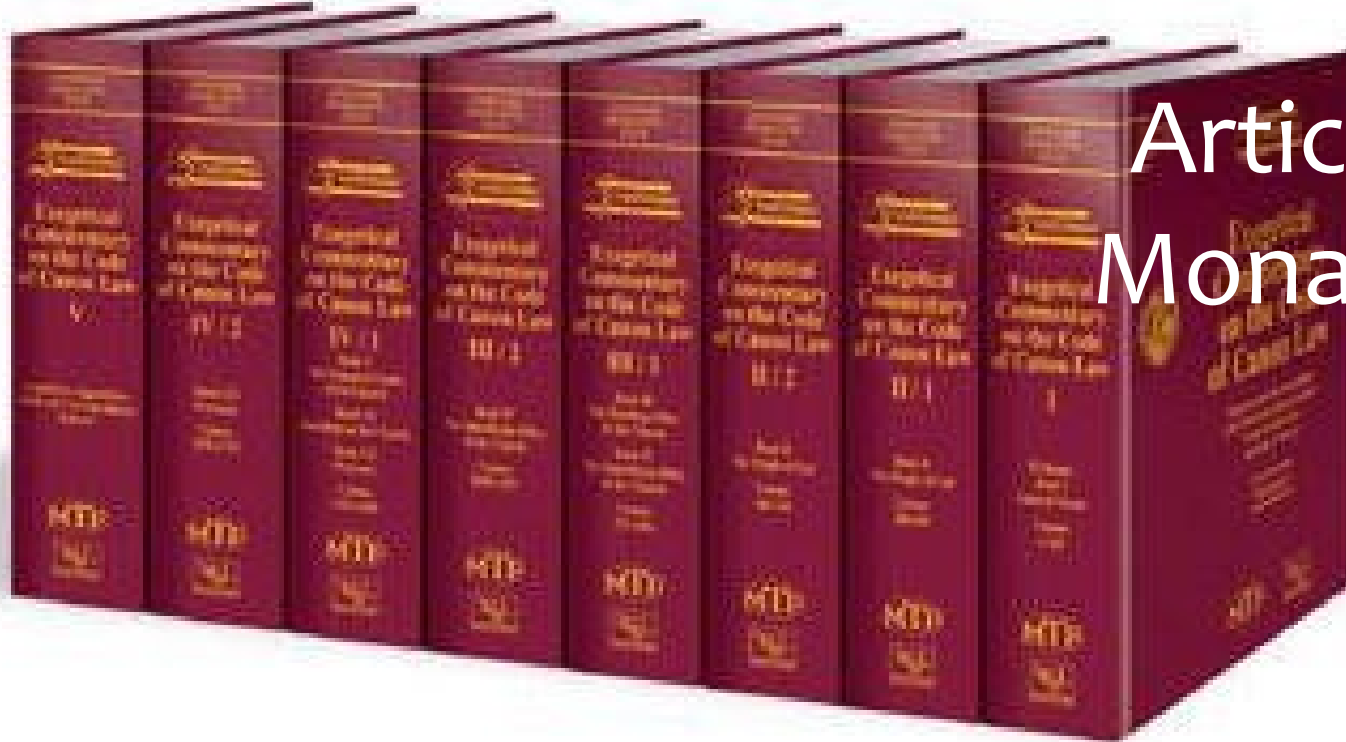
# 1 Peter 3:7

\***1 Peter 3:7** “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”



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❖ “...<sup>8</sup> This rigor displeased many good people before this time, who saw that young men and women were thrown into convents for a living. They saw what unfortunate results came of this procedure, how it created scandals, and what snares were cast upon consciences!  
...”



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❖ “...<sup>9</sup> They were sad that the authority of canon law in so great a matter was utterly set aside and despised....”



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❖ “...<sup>10</sup> In addition to all these evil things, a view of vows was added that displeased even the more considerate monks. They taught that monastic vows were equal to Baptism....”

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❖ “...<sup>11</sup> They taught that a monastic life merited forgiveness of sins and justification before God...”

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❖ “...<sup>12</sup> Yes, they even added that the monastic life not only merited righteousness before God, but even greater merit, since it was said that the monastic life not only kept God’s basic law, but also the so-called “evangelical counsels.”...”

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❖ “...<sup>13</sup> So they made people believe that the profession of monasticism was far better than Baptism, and that the monastic life was more meritorious than that of rulers, pastors, and others, who serve in their calling according to God’s commands, without any man-made services....”





❖ “...<sup>14</sup> None of these things can be denied. This is all found in their own books about monasticism...”

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❖ “...<sup>15</sup> How did all this come about in monasteries? At one time they were schools of theology and other branches of learning, producing pastors and bishops for the benefit of the Church. Now it is another thing. It is needless to go over what everyone knows....”



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❖ “...<sup>16</sup> Before, they came together for the sake of learning, now they claim that monasticism is a lifestyle instituted to merit grace and righteousness. They even preach that it is a state of perfection!...”

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❖ “... They put monasticism far above all other kinds of life ordained by God.  
<sup>17</sup> We have mentioned all these things without hateful exaggeration so that our teachers’ doctrine on monasticism may be better understood....”



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❖ “...<sup>18</sup> First, concerning monks who marry, our teachers say that it is lawful for anyone who is not suited for the single life to enter into marriage. Monastic vows cannot destroy what God has commanded and ordained....”

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❖ “...<sup>19</sup> God’s commandment is this,  
“Because of the temptation to  
sexual immorality, each man  
should have his own wife” (1  
Corinthians 7:2)....”

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❖ “...<sup>20</sup> It is not just a command given by God. God has created and ordained marriage for those who are not given an exception to natural order by God’s special work. ...”

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❖ “... This is what is taught according to the text in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good that the man should be alone.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, those who obey this command and ordinance of God do not sin...”

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❖ “...<sup>22</sup> What objection can be raised to this? Let people praise the obligation of a monastic vow as much as they want, but they will never be able to destroy God’s commandment by means of a monastic vow....”

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❖ “...<sup>23</sup> Canon law teaches that superiors can make exceptions to monastic vows; how much less are such monastic vows in force that are contrary to God’s commandments!...”



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❖ “...<sup>24</sup> If, in fact, an obligation to a monastic vow could never be changed for any reason, the Roman popes could never have granted exceptions to the vows. For it is not lawful for someone to make an exception to what is truly from God....”

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❖ “...<sup>25</sup> The Roman pontiffs have wisely judged that mercy is to be observed in these monastic obligations. That is why we read that many times they have made special arrangements and exceptions with monastic vows....”

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❖ “...<sup>26</sup> The case of the King of Aragon, who was called back from the monastery, is well known, and there are also examples in our own times....”

# The King of Aragon

- \* Ramiro II, byname Ramiro the Monk, (born c. 1080—died Aug. 16, 1157), king of Aragon from 1134 to 1137. He was the third son of Sancho V Ramirez. His elder brother, Alfonso I the Battler, left no heir upon his death. Ramiro, who had entered a monastery and was bishop-elect of Barbastro, renounced his vows, married, and received the crown. His daughter Petronila was betrothed to the son of Count Ramón Berenguer IV of Barcelona. Ramiro abdicated his rule in 1137 and returned to monastic life, retaining the title of king of Aragon.

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❖ “...<sup>27</sup> In the second place, why do our adversaries exaggerate the obligation or effect of a vow when, at the same time, they do not have anything to say about the nature of the vow itself? A vow should be something that is possible; it should be a decision that is made freely and after careful deliberation....”

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❖ “...<sup>28</sup> We all know how possible perpetual chastity actually is in reality, and just how few people actually do take this vow freely and deliberately!...”

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❖ “...<sup>29</sup> Young women and men, before they are able to make their own decision about this, are persuaded, and sometimes even forced, to take the vow of chastity....”

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❖ “...<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it is not fair to insist so rigorously on the obligation. Everyone knows that taking a vow that is not made freely and deliberately is against the very nature of a true vow....”



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❖ “...<sup>31</sup> Most canonical laws overturn vows made before the age of fifteen. Before that age a person does not seem able to make a wise judgment and to decide to make a lifelong commitment like this. ...”

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❖ “...<sup>32</sup> There is another canon law that adds even more years to this limit, showing that the vow of chastity should not be made before the age of eighteen. So which of these two canon laws should we follow?...”

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❖ “...<sup>33</sup> Most people leaving the monastery have a valid excuse, since they took their vows before they were fifteen or eighteen....”



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❖ “...<sup>34</sup> Finally, even though it might be possible to condemn a person who breaks a vow, it does not follow that it is right to dissolve such a person’s marriage....”

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❖ “...<sup>35</sup> Augustine denies that they ought to be dissolved (XXVII. Quaest. I, Cap. Nuptiarum). Augustine’s authority should not be taken lightly, even though some wish to do so today....”

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❖ “...<sup>36</sup> Although it appears that God’s command about marriage delivers many from their vows, our teachers introduce another argument about vows to show that they are void....”

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❖ “... Every service of God, established and chosen by people to merit justification and grace, without God’s commandment, is wicked. For Christ says in Matthew 15:9, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” ...”

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❖ “...<sup>37</sup> Paul teaches everywhere that righteousness is not to be sought in self-chosen practices and acts of worship, devised by people. Righteousness comes by faith to those who believe that they are received by God into grace for Christ’s sake....”



# Colossians 2:20-23

- \* “Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

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❖ “...<sup>38</sup> It is clear for all to see that the monks have taught that services made up by people make satisfaction for sins and merit grace and justification. What else is this than detracting from Christ’s glory and hiding and denying the righteousness that comes through faith?...”

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❖ “...<sup>39</sup> Therefore, it follows that monastic vows, which have been widely taken, are wicked services of God and, consequently, are void. <sup>40</sup> For a wicked vow, taken against God’s commandment, is not valid; for (as the Canon says) no vow ought to bind people to wickedness....”

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❖ “...<sup>41</sup> Paul says, “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4).<sup>42</sup> Therefore, anyone wanting to be justified by his vows makes Christ useless and falls from grace....”

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❖ “...<sup>43</sup> Anyone who tries to connect justification to monastic vows bases his justification on his own works, which properly belongs to Christ’s glory....”

## Article XXVII: Monastic Vows

❖ “...<sup>44</sup> It cannot be denied that the monks have taught that they were justified and merited forgiveness of sins by means of their vows and observances. Indeed, they even invented greater absurdities, saying that they could give others a share in their works....”

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❖ “...<sup>45</sup> If anyone wanted to make more of this point, to make our opponents look even worse, even more things could be mentioned, things that even the monks are ashamed of now....”

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❖ “...<sup>46</sup> And on top of all this, the monks persuaded people that the services that they invented were a state of Christian perfection.<sup>47</sup> What else is this other than assigning our justification to works?...”



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❖ “...<sup>48</sup> It is no light offense in the Church to set before the people a service invented by people, without God’s commandment, and then to teach them that such service justifies.  
...”

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\*“... For the righteousness of faith, which ought to be the highest teaching in the Church, is hidden when these “wonderful” and “angelic” forms of worship, with their show of poverty, humility, and celibacy, are put in front of people....”

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❖ “...<sup>49</sup> God’s precepts, and God’s true service, are hidden when people hear that only monks are in a state of perfection...”

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❖ “... True Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart, to have great faith, and to trust that for Christ’s sake we have a God who has been reconciled [2 Corinthians 5:18–19]. ...”

## II Corinthians 5:18-19

\* “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”

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❖ “... It means to ask for and expect from God His help in all things with confident assurance that we are to live according to our calling in life, being diligent in outward good works, serving in our calling....”

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❖ “...<sup>50</sup> This is where true perfection and true service of God is to be found. It does not consist in celibacy or in begging or in degrading clothes.<sup>51</sup> The people come up with all sorts of harmful opinions based on the false praise of monastic life....”

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❖ “...<sup>52</sup> They hear celibacy praised without measure and feel guilty about living in marriage. <sup>53</sup> They hear that only beggars are perfect, and so they keep their possessions and do business with guilty consciences....”



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❖ “...<sup>54</sup> They hear that it is an even higher work, a Gospel-counsel, not to seek revenge. So some in private life are not afraid to take revenge, for they hear that it is but a counsel and not a commandment.<sup>55</sup> Others come to the conclusion that a Christian cannot rightly hold a civil office or be a ruler....”

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❖ “...<sup>56</sup> There are on record examples of men who hid themselves in monasteries because they wanted to forsake marriage and participation in society.<sup>57</sup> They called this fleeing from the world, and said they were seeking a kind of life that would be more pleasing to God. ...”

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❖ “... They did not realize that God ought to be served according to the commandments that He Himself has given, not in commandments made up by people. <sup>58</sup> Only a life that has God’s commandment is good and perfect. <sup>59</sup> It is necessary to teach the people about these things....”

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❖ “...<sup>60</sup> Before our times, Gerson rebukes the monks’ error about perfection. He testifies that in his day it was a new saying that the monastic life is a state of perfection. ...”

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❖ “...<sup>61</sup> So many wicked opinions are inherent in monastic vows—that they justify, that they cause Christian perfection, that they make it possible to keep the counsels and commandments, that they are works over and above God’s commandments....”



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❖ “...<sup>62</sup> All these things are false and empty. They make monastic vows null and void.”