



# Making Confession, Hearing Confession: A History of the Cure of Souls

*Annemarie S. Kidder*

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Is confession obsolete? Far from it, Annemarie Kidder has learned. At unexpected times and in unexpected places, we hear the confession" of a friend or a perfect stranger; at crucial times in our lives we tend to unburden ourselves of matters that trouble our conscience. While some churches offer opportunities for sacramental confession, others provide counseling outside the sacramental framework. Some confessional practices have been secularized, as in psychotherapy and professional counseling; others find expression in evangelistic crusades and Christian 12-step programs. Meanwhile, the scope of "confessors" has widened to include men and women religious and lay spiritual directors. Addressing this broad audience, Kidder

reviews the origins and history of confession from biblical times to the early modern era, examines contemporary practices of confession, penance, and spiritual direction that have emerged in the twentieth century, and offers practical considerations for evaluating and improving one's own practice, either as confessor or penitent. Readers will be grateful for this concise historical overview of confession and Kidder's assurance that, despite its undervalued or misunderstood practice, this "cure of souls" is anything but obsolete. *Annemarie S. Kidder, PhD, is assistant professor at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary, Detroit, and a Presbyterian pastor. She is author of Women, Celibacy, and the Church: Toward a Theology of the Single Life; The Power of Solitude; and Etty Hillesum: Essential Writings. Kidder has translated works by Raimon Panikkar, Juergen Becker, Luise Schottroff, and Rainer Maria Rilke. She lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

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