

# Sufficiency & Perfection of Scripture vs. Tradition

by James Arminius

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*The sermon argues that the Scripture is perfect and sufficient for salvation, and that all things necessary for salvation have been inspired into the apostles.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 30:18, Romans 1:18, Romans 2:5, Romans 5:9, Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:6, James 1:19, Revelation 6:16

**Topics:** "Gods Wrath", "Holy Scripture"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher delves into the concept of 'Orge,' which conveys God's settled indignation and controlled passionate hostile feeling toward sin. This wrath is not a momentary, emotional anger but a deep resentment that seethes and smolders within God. 'Orge' is used primarily to describe God's holy, righteous wrath against all unrighteousness, showcasing His intolerance for sin in any form. The preacher emphasizes that God's wrath is not a loss of temper but a reflection of His righteous reason and holy law, contrasting it with human anger tainted by sin.

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## Transcript

### DISPUTATION 2

#### ON THE SUFFICIENCY AND PERFECTION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES IN OPPOSITION TO TRADITIONS RESPONDENT: ABRAHAM VLIET

I. When we ascribe Perfection to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, we do not mean by that word, the perfection described by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians xiii, 10; for the latter is peculiar to the life to come, in which "God will be all in all." (1 Cor. xv, 28.) Neither do we understand by it a certain absolute quality which is equally dispersed through the whole body of Scripture and each of its parts, and which cannot be withdrawn from the Scriptures by any man who confesses that they have proceeded from God, their most perfect Author. (Psalm xix, 7-9; Rom. vii, 12.) Nor do we mean such a perfection as may embrace all things generally and severally, of what description soever they are, which have at any time been inspired into "holy men," and published by them to the Church. (2 Tim. iii, 16, 17.) But by this expression we understand a relative Perfection, which, for the sake of a particular purpose, agrees with the Scriptures as with an instrument, and according to which they perfectly comprehend all things that have been, are now, or ever will be necessary for the salvation of the Church.

II. We are compelled, both by the truth of the thing itself, of which we shall hereafter treat, and by a kind of necessity, to establish this perfection of Scripture: because, without this, we shall be forced, for the sake of obtaining entire salvation, to have recourse to other revelations of God, already made, or afterwards to be communicated; but our attempt will prove abortive, unless the Divinity of these additional revelations be established by indubitable arguments. Those [new] revelations which are said to have been already made, have never yet been demonstrated in this manner; and it will be impossible to produce any such demonstrative evidence in support of those which, it is asserted, will afterwards occur.

III. But, that we may be able to establish this perfection of Scripture in a solid manner, and as if from the very foundation, we will take a brief view of the perfection of Divine revelations in general. For, by this means, we shall not only remove the error of those who entertain a different opinion, but shall also expose and shut up the source from which it is derived. We now use the expression, "Divine revelation," for the act of reveling, not for what is revealed; and we say, Divine revelation is internal, which, with the Scriptures themselves, we distinguish by the general term, "inspiration;" and that it is external by means of the enunciation or the inditing of the words spoken or revealed. Perfection, therefore, is withdrawn from the Scriptures, either in these revelations, or in those which preceded them, in the subjoined order and method.

IV. (1.) The perfect inspiration given to the prophets and apostles, who are the administrators of the Scriptures, is denied; and the necessity and frequent occurrence of new revelations after those holy men, are openly asserted. (2.) Even when this perfection is conceded, the possibility is denied of making a perfect enunciation of the inspired signification or sense by means of the outward word. The reason assigned is, that the ratio of those Divine meanings which are necessary to be known for the perfect consummation of our salvation, is diverse. For while some of them serve for the instruction of the ignorant and of babes in Christ, and for preparing their minds; others are useful for perfecting adults, and for imbuing and filling their minds with the plenary wisdom of the Spirit; and while the former class of Divine meanings [for the ignorant, &c.] may be made manifest and taught by the external word, the latter class can be offered to the minds [of adults,] and impressed upon them, only by the internal address of the Spirit. (3.) When the perfect inspiration and enunciation of all the divine meanings have been granted, it is denied that the Scriptures perfectly contain whatever has been inspired and declared that is necessary to salvation; because, as it is alleged, it was not the intention of the Spirit who inspired them, or of his amanuensis, to consign all those necessary things in writing to posterity.

V. Since these three negatives hold the following order and relation among themselves, when the first two, or when either of them is established, the third may likewise be granted, and when the third is destroyed, its predecessors may be removed, having effected the destruction of the third, we might seem to have given complete satisfaction, if we had not thought proper, according to our promise, to remove the causes of the error, and thus to cut off from the adversaries all occasion for complaining, that we had treated the controversy not according to its nature, but for the convenience of our own design and for the sake of Victoria. Wherefore to these three negatives we oppose affirmatively the following three most veritable enunciations: (1.) All things which have been, are now, or till the consummation of all things, will be necessary to be known for the salvation of the Church, have been perfectly inspired and revealed to the prophets and apostles. (2.) All things thus necessary have been administered and declared by the prophets and apostles, according to this inspiration, by the outward word, to the people who have been committed to them. (3.) All things thus necessary are fully and perfectly comprehended in their books.

VI. From this deduction it is apparent, that the acts of revelation are distinguished from the significations revealed, and yet that the matters or subjects and the significations agree with the different acts of revelation. This distinction meets the objection of the Mystics, who insist that the internal illumination of the Holy Spirit is always necessary. This we concede with respect to the act of revelation, but not with respect to the subjects and new significations. The agreement between the subjects and meanings, and the acts of revelation, refutes the Papists, who affirm, that the Church was before the Scripture, because the inditing of the word which had been previously pronounced, was posterior to the Church." This, however, is not a necessary consequence, if the same meanings be comprehended in the written word and in that which was pronounced.

VII. (1.) Commencing therefore with the proof of the first of our three affirmative propositions, (§ 5,) and, for the sake of brevity, laying aside the perfection of the revelation made under the Old Testament, we will proceed to shew, that all things necessary in the manner which we have described have been inspired into the apostles, and that no new inspiration has since their times been communicated, and that it will not be in the future. We prove this in the following manner: (1.) By express passages of Scripture; (2.) by arguments deduced from them. The first passage is, "The Holy Ghost shall teach you all things, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John xiv, 26.) From the former part of this passage we obtain the whole of our proposition: for he who "teaches all things" omits nothing that ought to be taught. The same proof is derived from the latter part of it, if it be evident that Christ told "all things" to his disciples, which is demonstrated by these his own words: "All things which I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." (John xv, 15.) But he "who is in the bosom of the Father," has heard of all things which ought to be revealed. "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." (John xvii, 8.)

VIII. The second passage is, "The spirit of truth will guide you into all truth." (John xvi, 13.) The efficacy of this teaching will shine forth with more splendid evidence, if we suffer ourselves to be instructed by Christ in that truth through which, according to his prayer, not only the apostles, but likewise the whole Church to the end of the world, will be sanctified. (John xvii, 17-20.)

IX. The third is, "But God will reveal it unto us by his Spirit," (1 Cor. ii, 10,) that is, the wisdom which is there specified. But that no one may suppose this wisdom to be partial and serving the Church only for a certain time, let him examine the attributes which are there assigned to it. It is the wisdom which God pre-determined from all eternity, and foreordained "unto the glory" of the Church Universal, for this is meant by the word "our" in the phraseology of the apostles. (v. 7.) It is the wisdom which contains "the things that God hath prepared for ALL them who love him," and not for them only who lived in the apostolic age: (v. 9.) The wisdom which contains "the deep things of God," (v. 10,) all those "things that are freely given to us of God," as his Church, (v. 12,) and that are called, in another passage, (Ephes. iii, 8,) "The unsearchable riches of Christ." It is that wisdom which is called "the mind of the Lord, and the knowledge of which is said to be the knowledge of the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. ii, 16.) It is the wisdom of which "those alone who are perfect and spiritual" are said to be capable, (v. 6, 14, 15,) that it might not seem to be serviceable only for the preparatory instruction of the more ignorant sort, and of babes in Christ." [See § 4.] The passages already cited may suffice.

X. From among many others, let the following be received as the reasons: The First is taken from the joint consideration of the glorification of Christ, and the promise of the Holy Spirit, who was bestowed after the glorification of Christ, and who was poured forth by Him. (John vii, 38, 39.) The most copious effusion of the Holy Spirit was deferred to the time when Christ should be glorified. After his glorification, it was necessary, that it should not be any longer delayed; for Christ, "being by the right hand of God exalted,

and having received the promised Holy Spirit," (Acts ii, 33,) and that "not by measure," (John iii, 34, 35,) "he shed him forth" in such copious abundance, as it was possible for him to be poured out, and to be received by mankind. So that the event which had been predicted by the prophet Joel (ii, 28,) is said then to have come to pass. (Acts ii, 16, 17.) This Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of Christ alone; and he will plead the cause of no one except that of Christ, through the entire duration of the present life, as his Advocate against the world. (John xvi, 7, 8.) "he will not speak of himself" but from Christ; and he will "shew us those things which are Christ's, and which He will receive from him. He will therefore glorify Christ." (13-15.) From these premises it follows, that no new inspiration, after that to the apostles, will be necessary to salvation; and that what is said about the distinct periods of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, with regard to a revelation, is a pure invention of the human brain. By this argument, all new inspirations are refuted, with such soundness and so agreeably to the nature of the thing itself, that the doctrine which maintains the contrary cannot possibly defend itself without inventing another Christ and another Spirit; (which is a notable trait in the conduct of the great masters among the Mystics;) or it must at least substitute for Christ His vicar on earth, who, invested with plenary power, may administer the affairs of the church, as is the practice of the Papists.

XI. The Second reason is taken from the office of the Apostles, for the discharge of which, because they were immediately called by Christ himself, they were undoubtedly furnished with sufficient gifts, and therefore with sufficient knowledge. But they were constituted "able ministers of the "New Testament;" (2 Cor. iii, 6,) to which as a Testament, nothing can be added; (Gal. iii, 15;) and, as New, it will neither "wax old" nor be abrogated; (Heb. viii, 13;) after the apostles, therefore, no new inspiration will be given. They were also made ministers of the Spirit;" they were therefore instructed by inspiration in those meanings which agree with the most perfect Christians, and not with those only who are placed under the law and "the oldness of the letter." To them was also committed "the ministration of righteousness;" but this was the last of all, on account of being that which is immediately connected with life eternal, and which is likewise administered by righteousness. The apostles are also called "reapers," with regard to the prophets who were the sowers;" (John iv, 38;) but this last service was to be performed in the field of the Lord. After the apostles, therefore, no new ministration has been given; and, on this account, no new inspiration.

XII. The Third reason is drawn from the circumstance of the period at which this inspiration was communicated to the apostles, and which may be considered in two respects. (1.) It was in the time of the Messiah, which is called the last," being truly the last time with regard to a revelation. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." (Acts ii, 17.) "When the Messiah is come, he will tell us all things." (John iv, 25.) "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Heb. i, 2.) To the same effect Christ is said to have been made, "manifest in these last times." (1 Pet. i, 20.) (2.) That was "the time appointed of the Father," in which "the heir" should be no longer "as a child, under a tutor;" (Gal. iv, 1- 5;) but, having arrived at full age, he might pass his life under the grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit; by whom, as "the Spirit of liberty," being illuminated, he might "with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and be transformed into the same image from glory to glory." (2 Cor. iii, 17, 18.) After the apostles, therefore, no new inspiration, no greater perfection has been granted.

XIII. The Fourth reason will exhibit to us the glory and duration of the doctrine inspired and committed to the apostles. For it greatly excels in glory, as being "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. iv, 4,) who is the image of God, "the brightness of the glory, and the express character of the person, of the Father," (Heb. i, 3,) and "in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell." (Col. i, 19) indeed "all the

fullness of the Godhead bodily." (ii, 9.) The law was not at all glorious, "by reason of this glory which excelled it." (2 Cor. iii, 10.) From these premises it will follow, by parity of reason, that, if the more excellent doctrine shall continue forever, no future doctrine "will have any glory by reason of this which excelleth in glory." Its duration also excludes all others: for it remains without being abolished, (2 Cor. iii, 11,) and will be preached in all the world till the end shall come," (Matt. xxiv, 14;) and Christ promises to those who administer this doctrine, that he "will be with them always, even unto the end of the world." (xxviii, 20.)

XIV. We will distinctly prove the second proposition [§ 5,] thus separated into two members. First. Those things which serve for perfection, as well as those which serve for preparation, can be and really have been declared by Christ and the apostles. Second. The apostles perfectly taught all things which are and will be necessary for the Church.

XV. Let the subjoined arguments stand in proof of the First member of the proposition. (1.) "The Son who is in the bosom of the Father," that is, who is admitted to the intimate knowledge of his secrets, "hath declared," by the outward word, "what He hath seen and heard" with the Father. (John i, 18; iii, 32.) But it is impious to suppose, that these things relate only to preparation. Nay, "the things which the apostles saw and heard they have declared," that the Church "might have communion with the Father and the Son." But perfection is placed in this communion. (1 John i, 3.) The wisdom which the apostles received through revelation of the Spirit, who "searcheth the deep things of God," has been declared by them "in words which the same Holy Spirit teacheth." (1 Cor. ii, 18.) But this wisdom belongs to perfect and spiritual men, (1 Cor. ii, 6-15,) as we have already seen. [§ 9.]

XVI. (3.) The word, through faith in which righteousness and eternal life are obtained, is not only preparative but likewise perfective. Of this kind is "the word of faith which the apostles preached;" and for this reason the gospel is called "the ministration of righteousness," "the word of salvation," and "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (Rom. x, 8-10; 1 Cor. i, 21; 2 Cor. iii, 9; Acts xiii, 26; Rom. i, 16.) (4.) The ministration of the Spirit and of the New Testament is opposed to that of Moses, which acted the part of a school master, yet "made nothing perfect" (Heb. vii, 19,) and to "the letter" of death and of the Old Testament. This ministration of the Spirit does not serve for preparation, but contains perfection; and this is the ministration which the apostles executed, and from which they are called ministers of the New Testament and of the Spirit, (2 Cor. vi, 7,) and are said to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col. i, 8.) (5.) That word which is called "the incorruptible seed, of which we are born again, and which endureth forever," (1 Pet. i, 23-25,) is not merely preparatory. And such is the word which through the gospel the apostles have declared.

XVII. Let the following arguments establish the Second member. (1.) The whole counsel of God, which is to be "declared unto men," (Luke vii, 30,) contains all things necessary to salvation. But Paul declared to the Ephesians "all the counsel of God." (Acts xx, 27.) Therefore all things necessary to salvation were declared, &c. (2.) The Corinthians are saved by the gospel which Paul preached, provided they retain it as they received it. (1 Cor. xv, 1, 2.) Therefore, all things necessary to salvation were preached to the Corinthians. (3.) "Salvation at the first began to be spoken by Christ," and, after having been perfectly preached by him, "it was confirmed unto us by the apostles that heard him." (Heb. ii, 3.) Therefore the doctrine of the apostles perfectly contained all things which the necessary confirmation of the Church demanded.

XVIII. And lest any one should utter this cavil, "The Apostles, we allow, taught all the things which were necessary at that time, but not all those which are sufficient for the edification of the body of Christ to the

end of the world," let the following arguments likewise be added. (4.) Whoever he be that "preaches any other gospel" than that which the apostles preached, and which the apostolic churches received, "he is accursed." (Gal. i, 7-9.) Therefore it is not lawful to add anything to the gospel preached by the apostles, to the end of the world. Indeed, he who makes an addition, "has perverted the gospel of Christ." (5.) In Christ Jesus, or "in the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii, 2 3.)

But Jesus Christ and this mystery were completely preached by the apostles. (i, 25-28.) "Jesus Christ has been made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption;" (1 Cor. i, 30, 31;)

from which the apostle concludes, that true glorying consists in the knowledge of Christ alone. (Jer. ix, 24.) Therefore the doctrine taught by the apostles contains whatever will, at any time to the end of the world, be necessary, useful and glorious to the church. (6.) The Church Universal is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," (Ephes. ii, 20, 21;) and the apostles are called "the foundations of the celestial Jerusalem," (Rev. xxi, 14,) which is the mother of us all." (Gal. iv, 26.) Therefore, the apostles have declared all things which will be necessary for the whole church to the final consummation. (7.) "There is one body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all; one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one bread, one God and Father of all, and Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." (Ephes. iv, 4-6; i, 23; 1 Cor. x, 17; Heb. xiii, 8.) But the apostles perfectly preached this God, this Lord, this Spirit, this faith, hope, baptism and bread, and by their doctrine animate and vivify this whole body to the end of the world. (Col. i, 24, 25.) Therefore the church ought "not to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines." (Heb. xiii, 9.)

XIX. The last proposition remains to be discussed. It commends to us the perfection of the prophetic and apostolical Scriptures; and for establishing it we produce the following arguments. (1.) This perfection is taught in the express testimonies of Scripture, which prohibit any addition to be made to those things which the Lord has commanded; and the same scriptures teach, in a manner the most convincing, that these testimonies must be understood concerning the written word. (Deut. iv, 2; 12, 28; xxx, 10- 14; xxviii, 58; Josh. i, 7, 8.) The apostle therefore requires, that "no one be wise above what is written," (1 Cor. iv, 6;) and he who tells the Ephesians, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," (Acts xx, 27,) confesses, that "he said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." (Acts xxvi, 22.)

XX. (2.) This perfection is also established by the very object and matter of the saving doctrine. This is done by various methods. (i.) The entire matter of the saving doctrine consists of "the truth which is after godliness;" (Tit. i, 1.) But the Scripture perfectly delivers this truth, for it is concerning God and Christ, and the manner in which He is to be known, acknowledged and worshipped. (1 Chron. xxviii, 9; John xvii, 3; v, 23.) (ii.) The Scripture perfectly delivers the doctrine of faith, hope, and charity. But in those acts is contained whatsoever God requires of us. (1 John v, 13; Timothy iii, 16; Rom. xv, 4; 1 Thess. i, 3; Tit. ii, 12, 13.) (3.) They are called "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament," because in them both these parts are completely comprehended. But nothing can be added to a Testament: nay, the testament of a prudent testator fully contains his last will, according to which he wishes the distribution of his property to be made, and his heirs to regulate their conduct. (2 Cor. iii, 6; Gal. iii, 15; Jer. xxxi, 31-34; xxxii, 38-40; Gal. iv, 1, 2.) But the whole of the saving doctrine consists of a description of the beneficence of God towards us, and of our duty towards God. (4.) The division of all this saving doctrine into the LAW and the GOSPEL, as into parts which draw forth the amplitude of the whole, proves the same thing, since both of them are perfectly contained in the Scriptures. (Luke xvi, 16; Josh i, 8; Luke i, 1-4; Rom. i, 2-6; Acts xxvi,

22, 23.)

XXI. (3.) The same perfection is proved from the end and efficacy of the whole of the saving doctrine. If the Scriptures propose this entire end and perfectly accomplish it, there is no reason why we should call a doctrine, in what manner soever it may be proposed, more perfect than the Scriptures. But they entirely intend this end and efficaciously produce it. (Rom. x, 4-10.) "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one other." (1 John iii, 23.) "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ," &c. (John xx, 31.) "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John v, 9-13.) "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matt. xxii, 37-40.) "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." (John v, 39.) The Scriptures prevent men from going down into the place of the damned; (Luke xvi, 27-30) and they prevent this sad consequence without the addition of any other doctrine whatsoever. For they render a man "wise unto salvation through faith, and perfectly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii, 15-17.)

XXII. (4.) This is also confirmed by the mode of speaking usually employed by holy men of God, and by the Scriptures themselves; according to which they indiscriminately use the term "Prophets" for the writings of the prophets, "the word of prophecy" for the prophetic Scriptures, and, on the contrary, "the Scriptures" for the prophets and for God himself; by which is signified that the word of God and of the prophets is completely one with the Scriptures; and that this word in its amplitude does not exceed the Scriptures with regard to those things which are necessary. Thus it is said, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" (Acts xxvi, 27,) that is, the writings of the prophets. (Luke xvi, 29.) "We have a more sure word of prophecy," that is, the word which is comprehended in the writings of the prophets: for it is soon afterwards called "prophecy of Scripture." (2 Pet. i, 19, 20.) "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures what they say concerning Himself." (Luke xxiv, 27.) And, on the contrary, "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh," (Rom. ix, 17,) that is, God said it by Moses. (Exod. ix, 16.) "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." (Gal. iii, 22.) "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief." (Rom. xi, 32.) "The Scripture, foreseeing that God, &c., preached before the Gospel unto Abraham." (Gal. iii, 8; Gen. xii, 2, 3.)

XXIII. (5.) In the last place we add the following: No subject can be mentioned, by the sole knowledge or the worship of which the church ought to bedeck herself with increased honour and dignity, and which subject is not comprehended in the Holy Scriptures. Neither can any attribute be produced agreeing with any subject of this kind, which it is necessary for the church to know about that subject, or for her to perform to it, and which the Scriptures do not attribute to that subject: (John v, 39; Rom. i, 3; Luke xxiv, 27.) Whence it follows, that the Scripture contains all things necessary to be known for the salvation of the Church, and for the glory of God. The Papists indeed speak and write many things about Mary, the rest of the saints, and about the Roman Pontiff; but we affirm, that these are not objects either of any knowledge or worship which the church ought to bestow on them. And those things which the Papists attribute to them, are such as, according to the sure judgment of the scriptures, cannot be attributed to them without sacrilege and a perversion of the gospel of Christ.

XXIV. We conclude, then, that all things which have been, are now, or to the final consummation will be necessary for the salvation of the church, have been of old perfectly inspired, declared and written; and that no other revelation or tradition, than those which have been inspired, declared and contained in the scriptures, is necessary to the salvation of the church. (2 Tim. iii, 16; Matt. iv, 3, 4; xxii, 29 Acts xviii, 28.) Indeed we assert, that whatsoever relates to the doctrine of truth is so perfectly comprehended in the

scriptures, that all those things which are brought either directly or indirectly against this truth are capable of being refuted, in a manner the clearest and most satisfactory, from the Scriptures themselves alone. This asseveration we take with such solemnity and yet assurance of mind, that as soon as anything has been proved not to be contained in the scriptures, from this very circumstance we infer that thing not to be necessary to salvation; and whenever it is evident, that any sentiment cannot be refuted by the Scriptures, we judge from this that it is not heretical. When, therefore, the Papists sedulously attempt to destroy the whole perfection of Scripture by specimens of articles, which they call necessary, but which are not proved from Scripture, and by those which they consider heretical but which are not confuted from Scripture the sole result of their endeavours is, that we cannot conclude with any certainty the former to be necessary and the latter heretical.

XXV. In the mean time we do not deny, that the apostles delivered to the churches some things which related to the external discipline, order and rites to be observed in them, and which have not been written, or at least are not comprehended in those of their books which we call "Canonical." (1 Cor. xi, 34) But those things do not concern the substance of saving doctrine; and are neither necessary to salvation, perpetual, immutable, nor universal, but accommodated to the existing state and circumstances of the church.

XXVI. We likewise confess, that individual churches, or great numbers, or even all of them, if they can agree together in unity, may frame certain ritual Canons relative to their mutual order and decorum, (1 Cor. xiv, 40,) and to the discharge of those functions which minister to edification; provided those rites be neither contrary to the written word, superstitious, nor difficult of observance in consequence of being numerous and burdensome. (Col. ii, 8; Acts xv, 10, 28.) This proviso is needful to prevent those rites from being considered as a part of Divine worship, or from becoming prejudicial to the liberty of the church, whose equitable "power" in abrogating, changing, or amplifying them, is always subservient to "edification and not to destruction." (1 Cor. xiv, 5, 26; 2 Cor. xiii, 10.) In this sense we admit the distinction of Traditions into Written and Unwritten, Apostolical and Ecclesiastical; and we call those men "violators of order," (2 Thess. iii, 6; 1 Cor. xiv, 32, 33,) who oppose ecclesiastical canons that are constituted in this manner, or exclaim against them by their own private authority.

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