

# The Augsburg Confession of 1530

## Article XXVIII: Church Authority



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❖ “<sup>1</sup> There has been great controversy about the power of the bishops, in which some have terribly confused the power of the Church with the power of the State.  
...”

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❖ “...<sup>2</sup> This confusion has produced great war and riot. All the while the popes, claiming the Power of the Keys, have instituted new services and burdened consciences with Church discipline and excommunication....”

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❖ “... But they have also tried to transfer the kingdoms of this world to the Church by taking the Empire away from the emperor. <sup>3</sup> Learned and godly people have condemned these errors in the Church for a long time....”

# Prominent papal depositions

- \* Feb. 22, 1076 Pope Gregory VII deposed Henry IV from his office as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.
- \* April 4, 1160 Pope Alexander III deposed Frederick I from his office as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.
- \* In 1212 Pope Innocent III is said to have deposed King John from his office as king of England.
- \* August 20, 1228 Pope Gregory IX deposed Frederick II from his office as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.

## Prominent papal depositions (cont'd)

- \* July 17, 1245 Pope Innocent IV deposed Frederick II from his office as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire.
- \* March 21, 1283 Pope Martin IV deposed Peter III from his office as King of Aragon.
- \* September 8, 1303 Pope Boniface VIII sought to depose Philip IV from his office as King of France.
- \* March 20, 1512 Pope Julius II drew up a bull deposing Louis XII from his office as King of France and giving the throne to Henry VIII of England.

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❖ “...<sup>4</sup> Therefore, our teachers, in order to comfort people’s consciences, were constrained to show the difference between the authority of the Church and the authority of the State....”

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❖ “... They taught that both of them are to be held in reverence and honor, as God’s chief blessings on earth, because they have God’s command....”



# Two Kingdoms

## God's Kingdom

### Kingdom of the Left

1. Civil Government
2. Christians and non-Christians
3. Wars based on defense
4. Reward good, punish evil

### Kingdom of the Right

1. Church government
2. Christians Only (visible/invisible)
3. Proclaiming Gospel peace
4. Christian equality, service of the sick and poor

### The Christian

1. Citizen of the State
2. Congregant of the Church
3. Owes allegiance to both
4. **Recognizes God's Kingdom above both**

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❖ “...<sup>5</sup> Our teachers’ position is this: the authority of the Keys [Matthew 16:19], or the authority of the bishops—according to the Gospel—is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments....”

# Matthew 16:19

✝ “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

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❖ “...<sup>6</sup> Christ sends out His apostles with this command, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld” (John 20:21–22)....”

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❖ “...<sup>7</sup> And in Mark 16:15, Christ says, “Go ... proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation.” <sup>8</sup> This authority is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, either to many or to individuals, according to their calling....”

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❖ “... In this way are given not only bodily, but also eternal things: eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. 9 These things cannot reach us except by the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments,...”

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❖ “... as Paul says, “The Gospel ... is the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes” (Romans 1:16). 10 Therefore, the Church has the authority to grant eternal things and exercises this authority only by the ministry of the Word....”

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❖ “... So it does not interfere with civil government anymore than the art of singing interferes with civil government. <sup>11</sup> For civil government deals with other things than the Gospel does....”



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❖ “... Civil rulers do not defend minds, but bodies and bodily things against obvious injuries. They restrain people with the sword and physical punishment in order to preserve civil justice and peace [Romans 13:1–7]....”

# Romans 13:1-7

“<sup>1</sup> Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. <sup>4</sup> For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. <sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”

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❖ “...<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the Church’s authority and the State’s authority must not be confused. The Church’s authority has its own commission to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments [Matthew 28:19–20] ...”

# Matthew 28:19-20

✚ “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

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❖ “... 13 Let [the Church] not break into the office of another.

Let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world to itself.

Let it not abolish the laws of civil rulers....”

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❖ “... Let it not abolish lawful obedience. Let it not interfere with judgments about civil ordinances or contracts. Let it not dictate laws to civil authorities about the form of society. <sup>14</sup> As Christ says, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36)....”

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❖ “...<sup>15</sup> Also, “Who made Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” (Luke 12:14).

<sup>16</sup> Paul also says, “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20)....”

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❖ “...<sup>17</sup> And, “The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4) ...”



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❖ “...<sup>18</sup> This is how our teachers distinguish between the duties of these two authorities. They command that both be honored and acknowledged as God’s gifts and blessings....”

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❖ “...<sup>19</sup> If bishops have any authority of the State, this is not because they are bishops. In other words, it is not by the Gospel’s commission. It is an authority they have received from kings and emperors for the purpose of administering the civil affairs of what belongs to them in society. This is another office, not the ministry of the Gospel....”

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❖ “...<sup>20</sup> Therefore, when a question arises about the bishops’ jurisdiction, civil authority must be distinguished from the Church’s jurisdiction....”

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❖ “...<sup>21</sup> Again, the only authority that belongs to the bishops is what they have according to the Gospel, or by divine right, as they say. For they have been given the ministry of the Word and Sacraments....”

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❖ “... They have no other authority according to the Gospel than the authority to forgive sins, to judge doctrine, to reject doctrines contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the Church wicked people, whose wickedness is known. They cannot exclude people with human force, but simply by the Word....”

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❖ “...<sup>22</sup> According to this Gospel authority, as a matter of necessity, by divine right, congregations must obey them, for Luke 10:16 says, “The one who hears you hears Me.”<sup>23</sup> But when they teach or establish anything against the Gospel, then the congregations are forbidden by God’s command to obey them....”

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❖ “...<sup>27</sup> The Canonical Laws also command this (II. Q. VII. Cap., Sacerdotes, and Cap. Oves)<sup>28</sup> And Augustine writes:

“Neither must we submit to catholic bishops if they chance to err, or hold anything contrary to the canonical Scriptures of God.” (Contra Petiliani Epistolam) ...”

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❖ “...<sup>29</sup> If the bishops have any other authority or jurisdiction, in hearing and judging certain cases, as of matrimony or of tithes, they have this authority only by human right....”



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❖ “... If the bishops do not carry out their duties in these areas, the princes are bound, even if they do not want to, to dispense justice to their subjects in order to maintain peace....”

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❖ “...<sup>30</sup> There is also a dispute about whether or not bishops, or pastors, have the right to introduce ceremonies in the Church, and to make laws about meats, holy days, and grades, that is, orders of ministers, and so on....”

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❖ “... 31 Those who say that the bishops do have this right refer to this testimony of Christ in John 16:12–13, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.”...”

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❖ “... 32 They also refer to the example of the apostles, who commanded that Christians abstain from blood and from things strangled (Acts 15:[20,] 29)....”

# Acts 15:20, 29

✚ “Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood....<sup>29</sup> You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.”

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❖ “...<sup>33</sup> They refer to the Sabbath day as having been changed into the Lord’s Day, contrary to the Decalog, as they understand it. In fact, they make more of the supposed change of the Sabbath day than any other example they can think of. They say that the Church’s authority is so great, it has even done away with one of the Ten Commandments....”

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❖ “...<sup>34</sup> But on this question, for our part (as we have shown earlier) we teach that bishops have no authority to decree anything against the Gospel. The Canonical Laws teach the same thing (Dist. IX)....”

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❖ “...<sup>35</sup> It is against Scripture to establish or require the observance of any traditions for the purpose of making satisfaction for sins, or to merit grace and righteousness.  
<sup>36</sup> When we try to merit justification by observing such things, we cause great harm to the glory of Christ’s merit....”



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❖ “...<sup>37</sup> It is quite clear that by such beliefs, traditions have almost multiplied to an infinite degree in the Church, while at the same time, the doctrine about faith and the righteousness through faith has been suppressed....”

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❖ “... Gradually more holy days were made, fasts appointed, new ceremonies and services in honor of saints instituted. Those responsible for such things thought that by these works they were meriting grace.<sup>38</sup> So the Penitential Canons increased. We still see some traces of this in the satisfactions....”

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❖ “...<sup>39</sup> Those who establish such traditions are acting contrary to God’s command when they locate sin in foods, days, and similar things. They burden the Church with bondage to the Law, as if there needs to be something similar to the services commanded in Leviticus [chapters 1–7] in order to merit justification....”

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❖ “... They say that Christ has committed the arrangement of such services to the apostles and bishops.  
40 They have written about the Law of Moses in such a way that the popes have been misled to some degree....”

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❖ “...<sup>41</sup> This is how they have burdened the Church, by making it a mortal sin—even if nobody else is offended—to do manual labor on holy days, or to skip the canonical hours, or that certain foods dirty the conscience, or that fasting is a work that appeases God....”

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❖ “... Or they say that, in a reserved case, sin can only be forgiven by the person who reserved the case, even though canon law speaks only of reserving the ecclesiastical penalty, not the guilt....”

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❖ “...<sup>42</sup> Who has given the bishops the right to lay these traditions on the Church, by which they snare consciences? In Acts 15:10, Peter forbids us from putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples, ...”

# Acts 15:10

✚ “Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?”



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❖ “... and Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13:10 that the authority given to him was for edification, not for destruction. Why do the adversaries increase sins with their traditions?...”

## II Corinthians 13:10

✚ “This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority-- the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down.”

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❖ “...<sup>43</sup> There are clear testimonies that forbid creating traditions in such a way as to suggest that they merit grace or are necessary to salvation.<sup>44</sup> Paul says in Colossians 2:16, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.” ...”

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❖ “...<sup>45</sup> And later:

“ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch’ (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom.”  
(Colossians 2:20–23)...”

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❖ “...<sup>46</sup> Also in Titus 1:14 he openly forbids traditions with these words: “not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.”...”

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❖ “...<sup>47</sup> In Matthew 15:14, Christ says of those who require traditions, “Let them alone; they are blind guides.”<sup>48</sup> In verse 13 He rejects such services: “Every plant that My heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.”...”

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❖ “...<sup>49</sup> If bishops have the right to burden churches with infinite traditions, and to snare consciences, why does Scripture so often forbid making and listening to traditions? Why does it call them “teachings of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1)? Did the Holy Spirit warn of these things in vain?...”

# 1 Timothy 4:1

✝ “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”



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❖ “...<sup>50</sup> Therefore, ordinances instituted as though they are necessary, or with the view that they merit grace, are contrary to the Gospel. Therefore, it follows that it is not lawful for any bishop to institute and require such services.<sup>51</sup> It is necessary that the doctrine of Christian freedom be preserved in the churches....”

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❖ “... In other words, the bondage of the Law is not necessary in order to be justified, as it is written in the Epistle to the Galatians, “do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (5:1)....”

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❖ “...<sup>52</sup> It is necessary for the chief article of the Gospel to be preserved, namely that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not by certain observances or acts of worship devised by people....”

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❖ “...<sup>53</sup> What, then, are we to think of the Sunday rites, and similar things, in God’s house? We answer that it is lawful for bishops, or pastors, to make ordinances so that things will be done orderly in the Church, but not to teach that we merit grace or make satisfaction for sins....”

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❖ “... Consciences are not bound to regard them as necessary services and to think that it is a sin to break them without offense to others. <sup>54</sup> So in 1 Corinthians 11:5, Paul concludes that women should cover their heads in the congregation and in 1 Corinthians 14:30, that interpreters be heard in order in the church, and so on....”

# 1 Corinthians 11:5, 14:30

- \* 1 Corinthians 11:5 “And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head-- it is just as though her head were shaved.”
- \* 1 Corinthians 14:30 “And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.”

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❖ “...<sup>55</sup> It is proper that the churches keep such ordinances for the sake of love and tranquility, to avoid giving offense to another, so that all things be done in the churches in order, and without confusion (1 Corinthians 14:40; comp. Philippians 2:14). ...”

# 1 Corinthians 14:40, Philippians 2:14

- ✚ 1 Corinthians 14:40 “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”
- ✚ Philippians 2:14 “Do everything without complaining or arguing.”



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❖ “...<sup>56</sup> It is proper to keep such ordinances just so long as consciences are not burdened to think that they are necessary to salvation, or to regard it as sin if they are changed without offending others. For instance, no one will say that a woman sins who goes out in public with her head uncovered, as long as no offense is given....”

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❖ “...<sup>57</sup> This kind of ordinance in the Church is observing the Lord’s Day, Easter, Pentecost, and similar holy days and rites.  
<sup>58</sup> It is a great error for anyone to think that it is by the authority of the Church that we observe the Lord’s Day as something necessary, instead of the Sabbath Day....”

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❖ “...<sup>59</sup> Scripture itself has abolished the Sabbath Day [Colossians 2:16–17]. It teaches that since the Gospel has been revealed, all the ceremonies of Moses can be omitted. ...”

# Colossians 2:16-17

✚ “<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

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❖ “...<sup>60</sup> Yet, because it was necessary to appoint a certain day for the people to know when they ought to come together, it appears that the Church designated the Lord’s Day [Revelation 1:10] for this purpose....”

# Revelation 1:10

✝ “On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,…”

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❖ “... This day seems to have been chosen all the more for this additional reason: so people might have an example of Christian freedom and might know that keeping neither the Sabbath nor any other day is necessary....”

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❖ “...<sup>61</sup> There are monstrous debates about changing the law, ceremonies of the new law, and changing the Sabbath Day. They have all sprung from the false belief that in the Church there must be something similar to the services set forth in Leviticus [1–7], and that Christ had commissioned the apostles and bishops to come up with new ceremonies necessary to salvation....”



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❖ “...<sup>62</sup> These errors crept into the Church when the righteousness that comes through faith was not taught clearly enough. <sup>63</sup> Some debate whether or not keeping the Lord’s Day is not a divine right, but similar to it. They prescribe the extent to which is it is lawful to work on holy days....”

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❖ “...<sup>64</sup> What else are such disputes except traps for the conscience? Even when they try to modify the traditions, nobody will understand the modifications as long as the opinion remains that these traditions are necessary and must remain. There the righteousness of faith and Christian freedom is not known....”

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❖ “...<sup>65</sup> In Acts 15:20, the apostles commanded to abstain from blood. Who observes this now? Those who choose to eat blood do not sin, for not even the apostles themselves wanted to burden consciences with bondage to traditions....”

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❖ “... They forbid the eating of the blood for a time to avoid giving offense. <sup>66</sup> For in this decree we must always keep in mind what the aim of the Gospel is....”

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❖ “...<sup>67</sup> Scarcely any canon laws are kept with exactness. From day to day many go out of use, even among those who are the most zealous advocates of traditions....”

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❖ “...<sup>68</sup> In order to treat the conscience properly, we must realize that canon laws are to be kept without regarding them as necessary. No harm is done to the conscience even though traditions may go out of use....”

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❖ “...<sup>69</sup> The bishops might easily retain the legitimate obedience of the people if they would not insist upon the observance of traditions that cannot be kept with a good conscience.<sup>70</sup> Instead, they command celibacy and accept no preachers—unless they swear that they will not teach the Gospel’s pure doctrine....”

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❖ “...<sup>71</sup> The churches are not asking the bishops to restore concord at the expense of their honor, even though it would be proper for good pastors to do this.<sup>72</sup> They ask only that the bishops release unjust burdens that are new and have been received contrary to the custom of the universal Church....”



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❖ “...<sup>73</sup> It may be that in the beginning there were plausible reasons for some of these ordinances, but they are not adapted to later times.<sup>74</sup> It is also clear that some were adopted through erroneous ideas. Therefore, it would be in keeping with the popes’ mercy to change them now....”

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❖ “... Such a modification does not shake the Church’s unity. Many human traditions have been changed over time, as the canons themselves show. <sup>75</sup> But if it is impossible for the adversaries to change those traditions, which they say is sinful to change, we must follow the apostolic rule, which commands us to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29)...”

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❖ “...<sup>76</sup> In 1 Peter 5:3, Peter forbids bishops to be lords and rule over the churches.<sup>77</sup> It is not our intention to take oversight away from the bishops....”

# 1 Peter 5:2-3

✝:2 “Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup> not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

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❖ “... We ask only this one thing, that they allow the Gospel to be taught purely, and that they relax a few observances that they claim it is sinful to change....”

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❖ “...<sup>78</sup> If they will not give anything up, it is for them to decide how they will give an account to God for causing schism by their stubbornness.”