

The Thirty-Nine Articles

Guide 10: The Thirty-Nine Articles

Adapted and revised from a booklet produced by the
Diocese of Pretoria in 1990

© 2026 ACSA Fellowship of Deacons

For information on the Fellowship of Deacons see:

<http://acsafod.org.za>

The Thirty-Nine Articles

This booklet is one of a series of guides designed for the training of Anglican deacons, and describes the purpose and place of the Thirty-Nine Articles in the Anglican Church.

Introduction

Shortly before candidates for ordination are actually ordained, they discover, often to their total surprise, that they have to sign a declaration which reads as follows:

The following declarations, in addition to the Oath Of Canonical Obedience to the Bishop, shall then be made and subscribed before the Bishop or Commissary:

(i) I, A.B., do solemnly make the following declaration:

I declare my belief in the faith which is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures, held by the Primitive Church, summed up in the Creeds and affirmed by the undisputed General Councils, to which the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons bear witness: I affirm my loyalty to this inheritance of faith as my inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making him known to those in my care.

(ii) I, A.B., declare that in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by lawful authority, and that I consent to be bound by all the Laws and Canons (both present and future) of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and by the Rules and Regulations which have until now been made, or which may from time to time be made by the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of and by the Provincial Synod of the Province of Southern Africa. I commit myself to a lifestyle which safeguards the integrity of creation and sustains and renews the life of the earth.

Of note here is that the candidate is asked to affirm that the [Christian] faith is borne witness to by “the Thirty-Nine article of Religion”.

Two problems immediately arise. One is a problem of ignorance about the Articles. The other is that much of the beliefs and practice and practice of South African Anglicans may be considered at variance to the some of the teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

First, many people have no knowledge of the existence or teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles as they have not been printed in either of the South African approved prayer books, the 1954 *A Book of Common Prayer South Africa*, or the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989*. [They can be found in the Church of England’s *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662]

Few clergy ever refer to them in their preaching or baptismal and confirmation teaching.

This declaration can be found in Canon 16 of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (<https://anglicanchurchsa.org>)

The Book of Common Prayer of 1662, is the final official version in the Church of England, though there have been many subsequent revisions in England and other countries.

The South African **An Anglican Prayer Book 1989** is a revision of this as was the **A Book of Common Prayer South Africa** of 1954.

High Church: this refers to the tendency for a congregation to place a 'high' emphasis the sacraments, on ceremony, clergy vestments, candles on the altar, use of incense, and various rituals. They are usually conservative in attitudes to worship. Low Church congregations place a 'low' emphasis on such things and follow freer worship practices.

Sometimes a similar term is used: **Anglo-Catholic.** Anglo-Catholicism was a movement within the Anglican Churches that emphasized the Catholic heritage and identity of the Anglican church (and wished to see a close agreement with the Roman Catholic Church, though they did not want to sacrifice essential principles of Anglican doctrine and practice). It emphasized concern about social issues, having a better educated clergy who were concerned about the pastoral care of church members, and freedom from unwarranted interference from the state (the Church of England was the state church).

Second, because the Anglican Church of Southern Africa tends on the whole to be somewhat "high Church" many clergy and laity take issue with some of the teaching of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

So what are the Thirty-Nine Articles?

The Thirty-Nine Articles is a document containing a set of defining statements of the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. It was developed at the time of the English Reformation when the Church of England broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. There were conflicts between competing views of Protestants and Roman Catholics as well as controversy within the Church of England itself.

The Articles are not a creed nor are they a confessional statement such as those produced by the some Protestant denominations. They seek only to provide a basic consensus on disputed points and to avoid certain Roman Catholic doctrines which were regarded as abuses or superstitions. At the same time, however, they affirmed other aspects of Christian belief which were held in common with the Roman Catholic Church.

Thus Thirty-Nine Articles provided a compromise between three doctrinal positions: traditional Catholic teaching, Lutheran teaching, and Calvinist teaching. It tried to draw on the best of traditional Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist teachings, and to bring them together in one set of doctrinal teaching. It went through five versions from 1536 to 1571 (though finally approved only in 1604):

Slightly Protestant (Lutheran)

Back towards Catholicism

Back further towards Catholicism

Towards Calvinism

Towards semi-Calvinism (this is the one printed in the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662).

The historical setting of the Thirty-Nine Articles

The acceptance of the Thirty-Nine Articles came after a lengthy period of upheaval in the Church of England, starting in the reign of Henry 8, when the Pope refused to annul his marriage and Henry ordered the Church of England to break away from the Roman Catholic Church, and ending in the reign of Elizabeth I. These events took place in England at the same time as the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe. The Reformation is generally linked to the teachings of Luther (1483-1546), Calvin (1509-1564) and Zwingli (1484-1531).

The teachings of the reformers spread rapidly, assisted by the invention of the printing press. Many Bibles began to be published in the vernacular, which meant that lay people were able to read and think about the meaning of the Bible for themselves. Many wanted to return to what they thought was the "original New Testament Church". During Elizabeth's reign many Church leaders and teachers at the universities demanded a more Protestant national church, while the more Catholic church leaders resisted these trends. Elizabeth I strove to keep together the various groupings, which is why a convocation was called to approve a final text of the Thirty-Nine Articles that would provide a consensus on the best of traditional Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist teachings.

Interpretations of the Thirty-Nine Articles

The Thirty-Nine Articles have always been subjected to a variety of interpretations by those who emphasized their Reformation heritage and by those who interpreted the Articles in a more Catholic manner

In the mid-1800s there was a move by a number of Church of England clergy to move back closer to Roman Catholic teaching, the so-called Oxford Movement, one of whose leaders, John Henry Newman, argued that the Thirty-Nine Articles could be read according to an Anglo-Catholic interpretation.

This tendency did not win substantial support in England but became fairly powerful in South Africa, though contested by Low Church evangelicals who opposed the reintroduction of certain beliefs, customs, and acts of sacramental piety which they believed Articles 25 and 28 prohibited. It is significant that the South African versions of the Book of Common Prayer do not include the Thirty-Nine Articles .

There was more recent change too in England where, since 1975, clergy are only required to acknowledge in a general sense that the Thirty-Nine Articles is one of the historic formularies of the Church of England that bears witness to the faith revealed in Scripture and contained in the creeds. Elsewhere, each of the 43 other member churches in the Anglican Communion are free to adopt and authorise their own official documents, and the Thirty-Nine Articles are not officially normative in all Anglican Churches (neither is the Athanasian Creed). The only doctrinal documents agreed upon in the whole Anglican Communion are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral*. Beside these documents, others such as a Prayer Book and Ordinal, are approved.

So why the declaration by clergy in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa?

In this declaration the deacon affirms the faith held by the early undivided church as revealed in Scripture. The making of this declaration assumes a sound knowledge of scripture; an understanding of the Creeds and the issues dealt with by the early councils of the Church; and knowledge of how we as Anglicans have come to have a common prayer book. In addition the deacon recognizes the setting aside of specific people for the ordained ministry of the Church. The deacon also recognizes the Thirty-Nine Articles as part of the history and tradition of our church. In making this declaration, the deacon affirms the church's continuity with the past and recognizes that we belong to a family of Anglican churches.

Understanding the Thirty-Nine Articles

Although the Thirty-Nine Articles are seldom referred to nowadays, an ordained person needs to have at least a basic understanding of them. However, they are sometimes difficult to understand, as they are written in 16th century English and were a response to a fairly complicated historical and theological situation.

This booklet is aimed at addressing these issues.

Each of the Articles is presented and discussed in turn.

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral:

The Holy Scriptures, as containing all things necessary to salvation;

The creeds (specifically, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), as the sufficient statement of Christian faith;

The dominical sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion;

The historic episcopate, locally adapted.

A list of the Articles

1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.
2. Of Christ the Son of God.
3. Of his going down into Hell.
4. Of his Resurrection.
5. Of the Holy Ghost.
6. Of the Sufficiency of the Scripture.
7. Of the Old Testament.
8. Of the Three Creeds.
9. Of Original or Birth-sin.
10. Of Free-Will.
11. Of Justification.
12. Of Good Works.
13. Of Works before Justification.
14. Of Works of Supererogation.
15. Of Christ alone without Sin.
16. Of Sin after Baptism.
17. Of Predestination and Election.
18. Of obtaining Salvation by Christ.
19. Of the Church.
20. Of the Authority of the Church.
21. Of the Authority of General Councils.
22. Of Purgatory.
23. Of Ministering in the Congregation.
24. Of speaking in the Congregation.
25. Of the Sacraments.
26. Of the Unworthiness of Ministers.
27. Of Baptism.
28. Of the Lord's Supper.
29. Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ.
30. Of both kinds.
31. Of Christ's one Oblation.
32. Of the Marriage of Priests.
33. Of Excommunicate Persons.
34. Of the Traditions of the Church.
35. Of the Homilies.
36. Of Consecrating of Ministers.
37. Of Civil Magistrates.
38. Of Christian men's Goods.
39. Of a Christian man's Oath.

For convenience that Articles can be divided into these sections:

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Articles 1-5)

The Holy Scriptures (Articles 6 - 7)

The Creeds (Article 8)

Sin and Salvation (Articles 9- 18)

The Church and State authority (Articles 19 - 21)

Errors to be avoided in the Church (Articles 22 - 24)

The Sacraments (Articles 25 - 31)

The discipline of the Church (Articles 32-36)

Christians and the State (Articles 37 - 39)

Articles 1 to 5: God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The first five Articles do little more than expand what is taught in the Creeds. They were probably included to resist the revival of early Christian heresies which the turmoil of the Reformation had thrown up. For example, some **Anabaptists** rejected the Trinity, or denied that Jesus was truly God and truly man. We suggest you refer to the first section of the Catechism in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* (pp. 423-431) for the current teaching of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, ever- lasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This Article says that God is greater than anything we can understand, and cannot be limited by time or space. God is unchangeable and not susceptible to outside forces or influences (that is what is mean by without ‘passions’). God is one but that within that Being (Godhead) there are three ways of being or modes of existing as God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit (for which the English word ‘person’ is a bit misleading).

2. Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man

The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took Man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

This Article affirms that Jesus is truly divine and truly human. One of the strengths of Anglicanism is that through the centuries we have stressed the importance of the incarnation and the consequent manifestation of God’s rule on

Anabaptists: The Anabaptists were a radical reformation movement that believed that only adult baptism was valid, church and state should be totally separate (and hence membership of a church should be voluntary), and regarded the Bible as their only rule for faith and life. They had a literal interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount and therefore would not swear oaths, use secular courts, engage in war, or become state officials. Because of their radical beliefs, the Anabaptists were persecuted by Protestants as well as by Roman Catholics. Contemporary groups with early Anabaptist roots include the Mennonites and the Amish.

earth. The Article also states that Christ saves us through his death on the cross. It affirms that Jesus, by his obedience, made the offering we could not make, and so God and humanity were reconciled. The New Testament speaks of us being reconciled to God, for he never stops loving us. It is we who need to receive salvation as a gift, in order to change. Note that the term 'Man' means human, men and women, as in the Greek term '*anthropos*', not a male man .

3. Of the going down of Christ into Hell

As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell.

'Hell', meaning a place of terrible eternal punishment for the wicked, is an English word that does not really correspond to any Greek word in the New Testament. The original word in the Apostle's Creed was "Hades", a Greek word meaning the place where all dead people go. The Article is based upon the words in 1 Peter 3:18-20

He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey

4. Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature; wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all Men at the last day.

Belief in the resurrection of Christ is an essential Article of faith. We believe in the resurrection of the body and spirit of Jesus and in his ascension to heaven as both God and Man.

5. Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

This Article may have been included to round off teaching about the Trinity. God the Holy Spirit is "of one substance" or "one being" with the Father and the Son.

Articles 6 to 8: The Holy Scriptures and the Creeds

The Reformation took very seriously the importance and authority of the Holy Scriptures and the Creeds.

6. Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

Ghost: in modern English a ghost is an apparition of a dead person, in 16th Century English it simply meant a spirit.

Of the Names and Number of the Canonical Books

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The First Book of Esdras, The Second Book of Esdras, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or Preacher, Cantica, or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the greater, Twelve Prophets the less

And the other Books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine; such are these following:

The Third Book of Esdras, The Fourth Book of Esdras, The Book of Tobias, The Book of Judith, The rest of the Book of Esther, The Book of Wisdom, Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch the Prophet, The Song of the Three Children, The Story of Susanna, Of Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasses, The First Book of Maccabees, The Second Book of Maccabees, All the Books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them Canonical.

At ordination the question is asked:

“Do you believe the holy Scriptures as uniquely revealing the word of God and containing all things necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?”

The two key points here are that of the Bible:

- “uniquely revealing” God’s communication with us, and
- that the Scriptures contain “all things necessary” for the Christian.

Anglicans regard the books of the Bible as having a special authority because we believe the Holy Spirit inspired the people whose words and writing are contained in the Bible. The Anglican Church does not teach that every word in the Bible is literally true.

The decision about the “Canon”, or list of books, which should be included which books should be in the Bible was made by the early Church.

The list of books which should be included in the New Testament was decided by the fourth century and has not been disputed since then.

There was some disagreement about the books to be included in the Old Testament.

There are several books which are not in the Hebrew Scriptures but were included in the Greek translation of the Old Testament used by the Early Church. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox versions of the Bible print them with the rest of the Old Testament. Protestant Bibles either omit them or print them in a separate section as “The Apocrypha”. In the Anglican Church they may be read in church services, but do not have the same authority as the rest of Scripture and are not used as the basis for doctrine.

Hierome: Jerome, an early Christian theologian and translator of the Bible into Latin

Canon: a Greek word meaning a measuring rod and later applied for a rule or list of approved items. Later the Church applied it to the list of approved books in the Scriptures, the set rules for the Eucharistic prayers, and for Church law as contrasted with civil law.

Apocrypha: a Greek word meaning “hidden things” or “private things” and was originally used by the Church to refer to books that were suitable for private reading but not part of the list of canonical Scriptures used in public worship. Later the term was applied to biblical or related writings not forming part of the accepted canon of scripture, some of which might be of doubtful authorship or authenticity.

7. Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

This Article deals with the problem of what part the Old Testament, and especially the “Law” of the Old Testament, play in the Christian Church. Should Christians observe the Sabbath, and the various Old Testament purification rites, food laws etc.? During the Reformation period, some had begun to say that because these “laws” no longer applied, none of the teachings of the Old Testament were to be taken seriously (that is, they were only “temporary” or “transitory”). The Article highlights the traditional Christian view that the Old Testament is important, in that it prepares us for, and helps us to understand, the ministry of Christ, that its “moral” teachings (the Ten Commandments, the requirements of justice, compassion, care for the widows, orphans, the oppressed, sexual and social morality, etc.) still apply. However, the “ceremonial” law (about foods, etc.) and “civil” law (what to do when someone came to court, etc.) no longer apply.

8. Of the Three Creeds

The Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius’s Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.

A creed is a summary of the Christian faith.

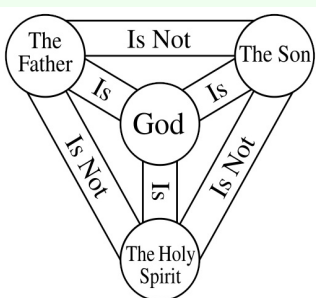
The earliest creeds were the professions of faith candidates made at baptism. The Apostles’ Creed is an expansion of an old Roman baptismal creed.

The Nicene Creed probably began as a baptismal creed but had additions made to it at the Councils of Nicaea (in 375) and Constantinople and was aimed at giving Bishops a common statement of faith. The *An Anglican Payer Book 1989* includes both the Apostles’ and the Nicene Creed in the services for morning and evening prayer and the Eucharist.

The Athanasian Creed is not included in the Southern African prayer books.

This creed, incorrectly named after Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria, is not really a creed but a lengthy and highly philosophical hymn making a Christian statement of belief focussed on Trinitarian doctrine and Christology. It was used by Christian churches in the West since the early sixth century, and was the first creed to explicitly state the equality of the three persons of the Trinity.

It differs from the creeds in our *Prayer Book* in that it includes anathemas condemning those who disagree with its statements. It is very seldom used liturgically nowadays.



Articles 9 to 18: Sin and Salvation

These Articles do not define “sin”. The Catechism in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* does (p. 426). Sin is “seeking our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation.”

Article 9 takes for granted beliefs which everyone in the Sixteenth century England held – namely that Adam and Eve are historical persons, from whom the whole human race is descended, and that only Christians can be saved. Both these beliefs are questioned by many Christians today. Genesis 3 gives us in traditional story form the truth that the whole human race has sinned and turned away from God. All need salvation but not all have the opportunity of hearing the gospel during their earthly lives. So we pray that God will give them this opportunity after death.

9. Of Original or Birth-sin

Original Sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk) but it is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in the Greek, “Phronema Sarkos”, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire, of the flesh, is not subject to the Law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.

The story of Adam and Eve teaches how sin destroys the harmony that human beings have with God, each other, the natural world, and with themselves. The universal tendency of human beings to sin – “Original Sin”, that is, a weakened nature inclined to evil – is the condition in which we are born, made worse by a human world environment which has got its values wrong, though we are not personally guilty of it. All human beings are capable of actual sin and rebellion against God; for this reason we all need a Saviour. This Article does not accept Calvin’s teaching that the Fall left human nature completely corrupt.

10. Of Free-Will

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that we cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

This Article is not so much about whether we have free will or not, as about how our will is enslaved. This was a semi-Calvinist position contrasted to that of the Roman Catholic one. We need God’s help to be truly free. We cannot turn to God or do any good action without God’s grace, given to us through the help of the Holy Spirit. But God goes before us (the meaning of the word “prevent” when the Articles were written) – making it possible for us to do good (and according to 2 Timothy 1:10 this grace was available from before the beginning of time.)

Pelagianism: the belief supposedly taught by an English philosopher, Pelagius, that people had been given free will by God and could live a sinless perfect life as God did not command the impossible. It was condemned as a heresy in AD 428.

Some radical Protestants in the 16th Century also taught a belief that Christians could be free from sin in this life.

11. Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings: Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the *Homily of Justification*.

'Justification by faith' was a concept that Luther claimed to have rediscovered in reading Paul's Letter to the Romans. He made it the rallying-cry of the Reformation. "Justify" is really a legal term and means "acquit" or "account righteous". A human judge can only acquit the innocent; God justifies, he forgives, so we are no longer guilty. God's forgiveness is a free undeserved gift, an act of grace. So we are justified or saved by God's grace, received through faith, even if guilty.

Modern Biblical scholarship suggests that Luther's argument was oversimplified and there is a more complex relationship between God's grace and good works.

12. Of Good Works

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's Judgement; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

Looking back over history, we are able to see that some of the Sixteenth-century arguments about "faith" and "works" were based on misunderstanding about the meaning of the terms. By "faith", Catholics meant the belief that certain religious propositions were true and, so-defined, faith was not enough to ensure salvation, but had to be linked with another gift from God, love. Protestants said we could be saved by faith alone because they understood "faith" as meaning faith in a person, Jesus Christ and we cannot put our faith in Jesus without loving him.

The letter of James reads "faith" in the narrower (beliefs) sense and therefore says that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). This is not a contradiction of Paul's teaching. Christians who know that God loves them, and has forgiven them, will try to please him. "Good deeds" are thus a sign of a genuine relationship with God. "You will know them by their fruits." said Jesus (Matthew 7:16).

13. Of Works before Justification

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

A rather extreme semi-Calvinist position.

School-authors: the philosophers of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church - "the scholastics" - who valued logical reasoning and classical philosophy

14. Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary Works besides, over, and above, God's Commandments, which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety: for by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake, than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

The context of this Article was the Roman Catholic belief at that time that exceedingly saintly people could accumulate extra merit by many good works (doing far more than what is required from them – *supererogation*) (and which saints could then hand over to sinners to help them). The Articles make the point that we cannot run up a credit account with God. We do “good” in response to God’s love, not to make him give us credits. When we have done our best in his service, we have still done no more than our duty (see Luke 17:7-10).

15. Of Christ alone without Sin

Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh, and in his spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of himself once made, should take away the sins of the world, and sin, as Saint John saith, was not in him. But all we the rest, although baptized, and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

In the New Testament it is stated that Christ was sinless. The Article use wording from John 1:29 and 1 John 1:8.

16. Of Sin after Baptism

Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Christians may sin gravely after Baptism, but repent and be forgiven.

The reference to a “sin against the Holy Spirit” (Mark 3:29; Matthew 12:31) has been interpreted as a person calling evil good or God the Satan. The Pharisees complained that Jesus was casting out evil spirits by the power of the devil. It is suggested that Jesus warned them that if they persisted in calling good evil and calling evil good, they could get into a state of mind in which it was impossible for them to repent because they could not tell the difference between good and evil. This may be the meaning of this difficult saying

17. Of Predestination and Election

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

Predestination was a subject of heated debate in the Reformation period. To “predestinate” means to decide someone's destiny in advance. This problem had been approached in various ways before the Articles were drawn up.

The Western Church had been heavily influenced by St Augustine who believed that as a result of Adam's sin the whole human race deserves eternal death. So he taught that God has rescued some and given them eternal life. He has left the others to their just punishment. But the question remains: if faith is a gift from God, why do some people, but not others, believe when they hear the gospel.

Calvin went much further and taught double predestination. God has predestined some to eternal life and some to damnation. The elect, even if they sin, are certain to repent and be saved. Christ died for the elect only, not for everyone.

A good many people in England followed Calvin's teaching. Those developing these Articles did not want to exclude them, but Article 17, which at first looks as if it agrees with Calvin, ends by saying just the opposite. This long Article rejects this extreme Calvinist view of predestination.

Calvin took a one-sided view of Paul's teaching. He did not take into account these two passages:

1 Timothy 2:3-4 “God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

2 Corinthians 5:14 14 “For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died.”

Paul had faced this question in an acute form because the majority of Jews, his own people, did not recognise the Messiah when he came. In Romans 9-11 Paul struggles to find the answer and concludes that Jewish unbelief is only temporary. God allows it because the conversion of the Gentiles will lead to the conversion of the Jews. God's call is not just a privilege for those who receive it, but a summons to work with him for the salvation of the world. The Church, the new people of God, is called to mission.

In the letter to the Ephesians 1:4-5 it says that before God made the world he had already chosen us to be adopted as his sons and daughters through our union with Christ. Paul also speaks about this in Romans 8: 28-30. We are Christians not through any merit of our own but because God, in his mercy, has called us and given us the grace to respond. Of course this does not rule out moral effort. We have to co-operate with God's grace, or we can reject it.

18. Of obtaining eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ

They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.

This repeats the rejection of the idea that we can be saved by works alone or simply by belonging to a Church. However, an unasked question is whether people who are not Christians and therefore have no faith in Christ can also be saved by Christ. The parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46) suggest the answer is Yes.

The Church and State authority (Articles 19 - 21)

These articles explain the nature and authority of the visible church. They state that the church, under Scripture, has authority over matters of faith and order. General councils of the church can only be called with the permission of the civil authority. It is possible for church councils to reach the wrong decisions, so they should only be followed if their actions align with Scripture.

19. Of the Church

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

This definition of the Church owes much to the teaching of Martin Luther. The Article states that the Roman, Eastern Orthodox, Syrian and Coptic churches are all in error!

For a more recent definition, see the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* catechism (pp. 432-433)

20. Of the Authority of the Church

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

The statement that no particular piece of Scripture may be expounded in such a way as to denounce another part of Scripture is based on the idea that all parts of Scripture are essentially in harmony with each other. Whilst this can be argued for in a general sort of way it must be pointed out that there are contradictions in Scripture.

21. Of the Authority of General Councils

General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes. And when they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.

The early General Councils were gatherings at which all the Bishops of the then known world attended to discuss key issues. Their purpose was to clarify what the Church believed and to identify what were errors in belief.

Whilst it is certainly true that once Christianity was legalised in the Roman Empire such Councils were presided over by Christian Emperors, the idea that no Council can be held unless called by secular authority fits in very much with the desire of English monarchs (specifically Henry 8 and Elizabeth 1) to control the Church and keep it subservient to national state policy. The English king is still nominally the head of the Church of England. This is not the case in most parts of the Anglican Communion today.

The Article is also an explanation of why the Church of England did not recognise the decisions of the Roman Catholic Church's Council of Trent (1543-1563) which was summonsed by the Pope, not a king, and instituted a large number of reforms in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Articles 22 to 24: Errors to be avoided in the Church

These articles condemn the Catholic teachings on purgatory, indulgences, the use of religious images and the invocation of saints.

In addition, the Catholic practice of using Latin as a liturgical language is disapproved of in favour of the vernacular.

The articles state that no person should preach publicly or administer the sacraments unless they are called and authorised by legitimate church authority.

22. Of Purgatory

The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping, and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.

This Article criticizes popular teachings and superstitions of its own time and, quite specifically, the Roman Catholic practices of the time. Later Roman Catholic teaching would also not agree with many of these teachings.

Purgatory. The Scriptures are silent on exactly what happens upon death. Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31) simply uses popular Jewish ideas of the next life. By the second century Christians were praying for the dead and asking for their prayers. Later on the idea developed that Christians who had lead a somewhat sinful life did not go straight to heaven but spent some time in "purgatory" where they were purified from the effects of sin. The specific idea of purgatory should not be confused with praying for the dead. This has long been part of Anglican tradition. In the Eucharistic Prayer the priest gives thanks for all the saints, the living and the dead. We continue to pray for the dead as we believe they can still grow in love for God (see the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* Catechism (p. 444), the Funeral Services (pp. 526, 528, 539, 540, 543), and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed (p. 313).

Another belief was that the dead could get to heaven more quickly through the prayers of the living and especially through Masses said by the priests on their behalf. Many people left money for this purpose in their wills. Some priests earned their living entirely by saying Masses for the dead, which angered some people. The Reformers also saw this as an easy and corrupt way for the clergy to make money, so they forbade this practice, saying there was no such place as purgatory.

Pardons: From ancient times the Church had allowed for Bishops to shorten the normal very strict penitential disciplines, to give a so-called indulgence.

Historically, we can see that one of the reasons for some of these popular teachings and superstitions was the Church's inability to give proper teaching about the stewardship of money and talents. Various corrupt ways of raising money, by the sale of "indulgences" (pardons for sin, at its worst almost a licence to sin) , etc. crept into the Church. The late medieval Church also imposed heavy penances for sin. When people made sacramental confessions they would be told to fast for some days or say long prayers. An "indulgence" let a person off these penances and the usual way of obtaining one was to make a payment of money to the Church.

The heresy was that people believed they could buy forgiveness. Many thoughtful people realised indulgences were being misused, but the Church authorities found it too profitable to give up. People were encouraged to buy them not only for themselves, but for the souls in purgatory. Luther's protest against the sale of indulgences was one of the things which sparked off the Reformation. The giving of money to the Church is part of a Christian disciple's grateful and natural response to the love of God, and a way of caring for the mission of God. Still today, in parts of Church, giving is not taught as a grateful response to God.

Images, relics and the invocation of Saints: God is Spirit and the second commandment forbade images of God. However Jesus and the saints are human, so from quite early times the Church allowed for pictures and statues of Jesus and the saints. However, these images are not themselves idols, actual objects of worship.

Relics are the bodies or body parts of the saints or their possessions. Pilgrims often went to pray at the tomb of a holy man or woman, and left money at these shrines, which produced revenue for the Church. More and more churches acquired relics in order to attract pilgrims and their money, and a profitable and corrupt trade developed. Devotion to the saints had become exaggerated.

The Reformers protested, and pulled down the images and shrines. The Roman Catholic Church also at the Council of Trent condemned these abuses related to saints and relics.

In today's Church we honour the memory of those who have died and pray for them. We pray that we may follow their example of holiness. Many believe that the dead also continue to pray for us.

23. Of Ministering in the Congregation

It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same.

And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have publick authority given unto them in the Congregation, to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

This was meant to counter the radical Protestant belief that any Christian could preach and act as a minister on his own initiative even in defiance of church authorities. The Anglican Church has retained the tradition of right ordering of its ministers. This Article affirms that it is part of church order that ministers of the Church must be officially authorised to so minister. At the ordination of a deacon the question is asked: "Do you believe that you are truly called by God and his Church to the life and work of a deacon?" (p. 584) A similar question is asked at the ordination of priests (p. 588). The inward call must be confirmed by the Church. This Article is vague as to how that is done, but Article 36 makes it clear that a person ordained by a bishop is "rightly, orderly, lawfully" a Minister.

24. Of speaking in the Congregation in such a tongue as the people understandeth

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have publick Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people.

In the Western Church, prior to the Reformation, Latin was used as the language of the Church even after it had ceased to be a spoken language. One of the achievements of the Reformation was to re-introduce the **vernacular** (the common spoken language) into the worship of the Church. This included the reading of scripture. At the time the Roman Catholic Church still used Latin as the language for services, though it was not the spoken language of ordinary people. The Protestant Reformation insisted that services be in the **vernacular** and the scriptures translated into that everyday language.

The same position now holds in the Roman Catholic Church.

vernacular: the ordinary, informal, spoken form of a language, particularly when perceived as having lower social status or less prestige than standard, institutionally promoted, literary, or formal language

Articles 25 to 31: The Sacraments

These Articles explain the Church of England's teaching on the sacraments. According to the Articles, sacraments are signs of divine grace through which God works invisibly but effectively in people's lives. Through sacraments God creates and strengthens the faith of believers.

Consider the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* catechism statements (pp. 438 and 440):

"The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. ... Other sacramental rites which evolved in the Church [under the guidance of the Holy Spirit] include Confirmation, Ordination, Christian Marriage, Confession and Absolution, and the Anointing of the Sick."

25. Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of grace, and God's good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation, as Saint Paul saith.

The belief of some radical Protestants that sacraments are merely only outward signs of a person's faith is denied by the Articles. Zwingli (one of the Swiss Protestant Reformers) taught that sacraments were nothing more than signs. Baptism was like a badge, an outward token showing that a person was a Christian. These Articles were intended to correct that teaching. But the sacraments are not magic and will only benefit those who come to them with repentance and faith.

While the Catholic Church claimed seven sacraments, the Articles recognise only two: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The other five rites called sacraments by Roman Catholics are identified in the Articles as either partly corrupted imitations of what the Apostles did and partly as "states of life allowed in the Scriptures". It is clear from the New Testament that many actions bearing a strong similarity to these other five rites were performed by apostles.

So whether we say there are two sacraments or seven is largely a matter of the words we use to define them. Two, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (or Eucharist) were commanded by Jesus (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The *Anglican Prayer Book 1989* calls them "sacraments of the gospel" and the other five "sacramental rites".

26. Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament

Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments, yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their Ministry, both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men.

Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgement be deposed.

This is an important principle. The grace of the sacrament depends on God's promises, not on the worthiness or otherwise of the minister, who acts in the name of Christ.

This does of course not mean that our ordained leaders, whatever level of authority they are on, can behave as they like and the Church has the right to depose ministers who are proven to have behaved sinfully and scandalously.

27. Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.

Regeneration (or the gift of new life), membership in the church, forgiveness of sins and adoption as children of God are all received through baptism. The Article state that infant baptism is “most agreeable with the institution of Christ” and should continue to be practised in the church.

28. Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another; but rather is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

Some of the bitterest arguments of the Reformation period centred on the Lord's Supper. In reading the Articles we must remember that they deal with old controversies. In our own times the main Christian denominations have come much closer to agreement than at any other time in the last 400 years over the meaning of this sacrament.

The Lord's Supper is much more than a love feast or a memorial of a past event (the Anabaptists said it was the first, Zwingli said the second.). It is a “sacrament of our redemption” whereby the saving actions of Christ's death and resurrection become a reality for us now. St Paul says we are sharers in the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16):

[The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?](#)

The Early Church never tried to explain the mystery of the Eucharist, that is, the Church did not say how or in what sense the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. The Anglican Church does not try to explain it either. It simply says that Christ is really present.

Reserved sacrament:

In many Christian churches, some portion of the consecrated elements is set aside and reserved after the reception of Communion. This reserved sacrament is usually stored in a tabernacle, a locked cabinet usually located on, above, or near the high altar or in an aumbry, a small safe in a side wall. In Western Christianity usually only the consecrated bread, is reserved, except where wine might be kept for the sick who cannot consume a host. Until around 1000 AD the only reason for reserving the sacrament was for it to be taken to the ill, homebound, or dying. After that devotional practices arose, as in the service of Benediction and for when a priest is unavailable to celebrate the Eucharist.

Benediction:

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is an evening devotion and consists of the singing of certain hymns, etc. before the reserved sacrament, in which a host is exposed upon the altar in a monstrance and is surrounded with candles. Then the minister takes the monstrance and with it makes the sign of the cross in silence over the kneeling congregation. Anglo-Catholic reintroduction of this popular Roman Catholic rite offended the main Church of England view that Articles 25 and 28 prohibited it.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church which the Article rejects was that of transubstantiation (the transformation of a substance) which used the dominant philosophy of the time that distinguished between the appearance of a thing (its ‘accidents’ and its ‘substance’ (its inner essence or reality). The accidents of the bread and wine remained, the inner substance was changed to the body and blood. That is, the Roman Catholic Church believes that God acting in the Eucharist effects a change in the inner reality of the elements of bread and wine.

Unfortunately at the time the doctrine of “transubstantiation” that attempted to define precisely what happens was a difficult teaching and hardly anyone understood it. The popular explanations were very crude and materialistic. People thought of the consecration as a kind of magical act by which the priest “made” the body of Christ. It is ideas like that which the Article rejects.

Before the Reformation most lay people made their communion once a year at Easter. Otherwise they went to Mass to adore Christ present in the sacrament. The Reformers wanted to restore communion as the focal point in the service and to discourage devotions unconnected with it. Hence their rejection of the **reserving of the sacrament**, it being carried about, lifted up, or worshipped. One of these was the carrying of the sacrament in procession, as was done at Corpus Christi and other times. This does not include taking communion to the sick, which is a very old practice.

29. Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s Supper

The Wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as Saint Augustine saith) the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing.

“The Wicked” are obviously the unrepentant and unbelieving. This Article repeats St Paul’s warning against receiving communion unworthily. However, too much stress on receiving “worthily” can make people afraid to receive communion. As we say in the Prayer of Humble Access, none of us are worthy. Christ accepts us in his love and mercy. The sacrament is not for “good” people but for forgiven sinners. The rubric in the original *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662 to make peace with those with whom we are at odds before we receive communion still stands. This is a warning to us to get our relationship with God and our neighbour right.

30. Of both kinds

The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay-people: for both the parts of the Lord’s Sacrament, by Christ’s ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.

At some time in the Medieval period the chalice ceased to be administered to lay people. Perhaps this began during an outbreak of plague and was continued for reasons of convenience. But it made an unnecessary separation between clergy and laity. The Reformation put an end to this practice.

31. Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross

The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.

The Article declares that “The offering of Christ once made is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world”. This was meant as a repudiation of the popular idea at that time that the each Mass was a fresh sacrifice in which Christ was offered for the forgiveness of sins for the living and the dead in purgatory. It is doubtful whether this was ever official church teaching, but it was popularly taught that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross only did away with original sin. Repeated Masses were necessary for the forgiveness of actual sin. This is clearly a heresy as it denies that Christ offered himself once for all to take away sin.

The Eucharist can only be called a sacrifice if it is seen as making present the one sacrifice of Christ. This is well explained in the *An Anglican Prayer Book 1989* catechism (p. 439).

Articles 32 to 36: The discipline of the Church

These Articles defend the practice of clerical marriage and the church’s power of excommunication. It states that traditions and ceremonies in the church may vary by time and place; national churches can alter or abolish traditions created by human authority.

The First and Second Book of Homilies are said to contain correct doctrine and should be read in church.

The Articles also defend the ordination rites contained in the 1549 and 1552 **Ordinals**.

Ordinals: service books containing the rites for the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops

32. Of the Marriage of Priests

Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are not commanded by God’s Law, either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness.

In Western Europe before the Reformation priests and deacons were not allowed to marry. Priests (not deacons) are still not allowed to marry in the Roman Catholic Church. But it has never been a universal rule and has no scriptural support. It has never been an article of faith, simply a Church rule.

God calls some men and women who never marry, to serve him in religious communities. This should not be confused with the calling to the ordained ministry.

33. Of Excommunicate Persons, how they are to be avoided

That person which by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church, and excommunicated, ought to be taken of the whole multitude of the faithful, as an Heathen and Publican, until he be openly reconciled by penance, and received into the Church by a Judge that hath authority thereunto.

This Article refers to the complete exclusion of a person from the Christian fellowship. The main scriptural reference is to Matthew 18:15-17. This form of church discipline is seldom used today and when a person is excommunicated the bishop is required to investigate the case.

34. Of the Traditions of the Church

It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever through his private judgement, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the consciences of the weak brethren.

Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.

During the time of the Reformation, changes in worship were imposed in an authoritarian way. This caused much unhappiness amongst many people. The point of this Article was that church customs and ways of worship did not have to be the same everywhere.

In the Anglican Communion today changes usually come about by consent. A major change, affecting the Church at a national level like the introduction of a new prayer book, requires the approval of a Provincial Synod. Smaller changes to do with the life and witness of the local community are normally discussed with the parish council and the congregation so that they can be introduced with general approval.

35. Of the Homilies

The second Book of Homilies, the several titles whereof we have joined under this Article, doth contain a godly and wholesome Doctrine, and necessary for these times, as doth the former Book of Homilies, which were set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth; and therefore we judge them to be read in Churches by the Ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood of the people.

Of the Names of the Homilies

1. Of the right Use of the Church.
2. Against peril of Idolatry.
3. Of repairing and keeping clean of Churches.
4. Of good Works: first of Fasting.
5. Against Gluttony and Drunkenness.
6. Against Excess of Apparel.
7. Of Prayer.
8. Of the Place and Time of Prayer.
9. That Common Prayers and Sacraments ought to be ministered in a known tongue.
10. Of the reverend estimation of God's Word.
11. Of Alms-doing.
12. Of the Nativity of Christ.
13. Of the Passion of Christ.
14. Of the Resurrection of Christ.
15. Of the worthy receiving of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.
16. Of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.
17. For the Rogation-days.
18. Of the State of Matrimony.
19. Of Repentance.
20. Against Idleness.
21. Against Rebellion.

Soon after the Church of England broke away from Rome, the reformers saw the need for local congregations to be taught Christian theology and practice. Since clergy often lacked the education and experience needed to write sermons and were often unfamiliar with reformation teachings, scholars and bishops wrote out a collection of thirty sermons and homilies for them, which were appointed to be read each Sunday and holy day. The reading of this collection, called *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches* is mandated under this Article.

This has long since fallen out of practice. One of these, a diatribe against 'Papist idolatry', is more than 120 pages long! Others are shorter, a couple of pages, and quite practical. Take the first paragraph of An homily for repairing and keeping clean, and comely adorning of Churches:

It is a common custom used of all men, when they intend to have their friends or neighbours to come to their houses to eat or drink with them, or to have any solemn assembly to treat and talk of any matter, they will have their houses, which they keep in continual reparations, to be clean and fine, lest they should

homily: a commentary, without formal introduction, division, or conclusion, on some part of the scriptures. So in practice a homily is usually a commentary delivered by a priest or deacon after the reading of scripture during the religious service.

sermon: a formal, complex, structured discourse or lecture (with introduction, parts and a conclusion) on a religious or moral topic. A sermon may be in reference to a scripture that has been proclaimed during a religious service, but it may also simply be on a moral, dogmatic, historical, or liturgical subject.

be counted sluttish, or little to regard their friends and neighbours. How much more then ought the house of GOD, which we commonly call the Church, to be sufficiently repaired in all places, and to be honourably adorned and garnished, and to be kept clean and sweet, to the comfort of the people that shall resort there unto.

The Homilies listed here have been out of print for a very long time and would not be suitable for a modern congregation. In the Anglican Church of Southern Africa priests and deacons are supposed to have had sufficient training to be able to preach. Deacons and lay ministers may only preach if they are licensed to do so. Those who preach need to pay detailed attention to their sermon preparation and are expected to keep up to date with their reading. Commentaries are available to help with this.

36. Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers

The Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops, and Ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth, and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, doth contain all things necessary to such Consecration and Ordering: neither hath it any thing, that of itself is superstitious and ungodly. And therefore whosoever are consecrated or ordered according to the Rites of that Book, since the second year of the forenamed King Edward unto this time, or hereafter shall be consecrated or ordered according to the same Rites; we decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordered.

This Article was included to address a problem which many people had, concerning the validity of the ordinations of bishops, priests and deacons done according to services drawn up by Protestant advisers to king Edward 6. The Article said their ordination was valid. Although it was written to deal with a temporary problem it witnesses to the principle that priests and deacons are ordained by a bishop, and bishops by other bishops.

Articles 37 to 39: Christians and the State

These Articles affirm the role of the monarch as the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. It rejects all claims to the Pope's jurisdiction in England. It defends the state's right to use capital punishment and declares that Christians may serve in the military. It rejects the Anabaptist teaching that the property of Christians should be held in common, but it does explain that Christians should give alms to the poor and needy. It also defends the morality of oath-taking for civic purposes.

37. Of the Civil Magistrates

The King's Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of England, and other his Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction.

Where we attribute to the King's Majesty the chief government, by which Titles we understand the minds of some slanderous folks to be offended; we give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by Elizabeth our Queen do most plainly testify; but that only prerogative, which we see to have been given always to all godly

Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself; that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil-doers.

The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England.

The Laws of the Realm may punish Christian men with death, for heinous and grievous offences.

It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars.

This is perhaps the most outdated article as circumstances have changed so much in the last 400 years. We are used to having several Christian denominations living side by side in the same country. Church and state are separate. That was not so in the sixteenth century. Democratically elected governments rule countries, and even where there are still monarchs they have little real power.

The Pope's authority over the English Church was brought to an end in 1534. Henry 8 took the title of "Supreme Head" of the Church. Elizabeth 1 changed this to "Supreme Governor", pointing out that Christ alone was Head of the Church. The Article makes it clear that this did not give her priestly functions.

The Church of England still has a connection with the British Parliament. This does not apply to the rest of the Anglican Communion which is a family of self governing churches that are separate from the state.

In the sixteenth century every country had the death penalty for a number of offences and methods of execution were often cruel. Many countries have abolished the death penalty including South Africa.

This Article states that Christians if compelled by civil authority to fight in a war, should do so. Most members of the Church over the last 1700 years have generally supported this view, particularly if the war is considered to be a just war.

The Anglican Church in Southern Africa has always given moral support to conscientious objectors whether they take a pacifist position (all war is against the will of God or that a particular war is unjust). In the Early Church for the first three hundred years Christians did not fight in the wars of their pagan rulers. In recent time many Christians have argued that a pacifist position is the Christian position. Just as in the 19th Century the Church questioned and did away with slavery, we may find that in the 20th and 21st Centuries the Church argues for a pacifist stand.

38. Of Christian men's Goods, which are not common

The Riches and Goods of Christians are not common, as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

This Article is an attempt to counter the Anabaptist view that individual ownership of property is not scriptural, and thus argues for the individual ownership of property. The Early Church's position of sharing all things in common - the rich sharing with the poor- is a constant reminder to Christians today to strive at all levels of Government (local and national), whatever economic

systems(capitalist or socialist) exist, for a fair, just and equitable distribution of wealth and land and resources.

39. Of a Christian man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash Swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, and James his Apostle, so we judge, that Christian Religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the Magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching, in justice, judgement, and truth.

Witnesses in a law court are required to take an oath to speak the truth. The Anabaptists and, later, the Quakers, thought this was forbidden by Matthew 5: 33-37 and James 5:12. Other Christians think this is a misunderstanding of the teaching of Jesus and James. They were teaching us to speak the truth at all times, whether we are on oath or not.

It is uncertain to which prophet the Article is referring, but all the old Testament prophets had a great deal to say about truth and justice.

This Book of Articles before rehearsed, is again approved, and allowed to be holden and executed within the Realm, by the assent and consent of our Sovereign Lady ELIZABETH, by the grace of God, of England, France, and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith, &c. Which Articles were deliberately read, and confirmed again by the subscription of the hands of the Archbishop and Bishops of the Upper-house, and by the subscription of the whole Clergy of the Nether-house in their Convocation, in the Year of our Lord 1571.

