

# Articles of Religion.

The 39 Articles form the basic summary of belief of the Church of England. They were drawn up by the Church in convocation in 1563 on the basis of the 42 Articles of 1553. Clergymen were ordered to subscribe to the 39 Articles by Act of Parliament in 1571. As part of the *via media* (middle way) of Elizabeth I, the Articles were deliberately latitudinarian but were not intended to provide a dogmatic definition of faith. It is clear that they are phrased very loosely to allow for a variety of interpretations. The Church of England still requires its ministers to publicly avow their faithfulness to these Articles. The articles were based on the work of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (1533-1556). Cranmer and his colleagues prepared several statements of faith during the reign of Henry VIII but it was not until the reign of Edward VI that the ecclesiastical reformers were able to make more thorough changes. Shortly before Edward's death, Cranmer presented a doctrinal statement consisting of forty-two points: this was the last of his major contributions to the development of Anglicanism.

Mary Tudor suppressed the 42 Articles when she returned England to the Catholic faith; however, Cranmer's work became the source of the 39 Articles which Elizabeth I established as the doctrinal foundations of the Church of England. There are two editions of the 39 Articles: those of 1563 are in Latin and those of 1571 are in English.

The 39 Articles repudiate teachings and practices that Protestants in general condemned in the Catholic church. For example, they deny the teachings concerning Transubstantiation (XXVIII), the sacrifice of the Mass (XXXI), and the sinlessness of Our Lady (XV). However, they affirm that Scripture is the final authority on salvation (VI), Adam's fall compromised human free will (X), both bread and wine should be served to all in the Lord's Supper (XXX), and that ministers may marry (XXXII).

Source: <http://www.victorianweb.org/religion/39articles.html>

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## I. *Of faith in the Holy Trinity.*

**T**HERE is but one living and true God, everlasting, 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.

## II. *Of the Word, or Son of God, which was made very man.*

**T**HE 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.

## III. *Of the going down of Christ into Hell.*

**A**S Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed that He went down into Hell.

*IV. Of the Resurrection of Christ.*

**C**HRI**S**T 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, wherefore He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until He return to judge all men at the last day.

*V. Of the Holy Ghost.*

**T**HE 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.

*VI. Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.*

**H**OLY Scriptures 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 Holy Scripture, we do understand those Canonical books of the Old and New testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

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 the 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.

#### VII. *Of the Old Testament.*

**T**HE 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 there 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.

#### VIII. *Of the Three Creeds.*

**T**HE three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius' 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.

#### IX. *Of Original or Birth Sin.*

**O**RIGINAL 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 engendered 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 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 itself the nature of sin.

*X. Of Free Will.*

**T**HE condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he 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.

*XI. Of the Justification of Man.*

**W**E 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.

*XII. Of Good Works.*

**A**LBEIT 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.

*XIII. Of Works before Justification.*

**W**ORKS done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy 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.

*XIV. Of Works of Supererogation.*

**V**OLUNTARY 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 do, say, We be unprofitable servants.

*XV. Of Christ alone without Sin.*

**C**HRI<sup>S</sup>T 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 S. 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.

*XVI. Of Sin after Baptism.*

**N**OT 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.

*XVII. Of Predestination and Election.*

**P**REDESTINATION 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 feeling 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 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.

XVIII. *Of obtaining eternal salvation only by the name of Christ.*

**T**HEY 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 to us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.

XIX. *Of the Church.*

**T**HE 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.

XX. *Of the Authority of the Church.*

**T**HE 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 anything 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 anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation.

XXI. *Of the authority of General Councils.*

**G**ENERAL 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 sometime have erred, even in things pertaining to 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.

XXII. *Of Purgatory.*

**T**HE Romish doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, worshipping and adoration as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saint, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture; but rather repugnant to the word of God.

XXIII. *Of Ministering in the Congregation.*

**I**T is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public 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 public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

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

**I**T is a thing plainly repugnant to the word of God and the custom of the primitive Church, to have public prayer in the Church, or to minister the sacraments in a tongue not understood of the people.

*XXV. Of the Sacraments.*

**S**ACRAMENTS 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 the 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, have they a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves damnation, as Saint *Paul* saith.

*XXVI. Of the unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments.*

**A**LTHOUGH in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometime 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 the 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.

*XXVII. Of Baptism.*

**B**APTISM is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from other that be not christened, but 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 the 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.

*XXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper.*

**T**HE Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another, but rather it 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.

*XXIX. Of the wicked which do not eat the body of Christ, in the use of the Lord's Supper.*

**T**HE wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as S. 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.

*XXX. Of Both Kinds.*

**T**HE Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both parts of the Lord's sacrament, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.

*XXXI. Of the one oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross.*

**T**HE offering of Christ once made is the 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 priests did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.



XXXII. *Of the Marriage of Priests.*

**B**ISHOPS, Priests, and Deacons are not commanded by God's laws either to vow the estate of single life or to abstain from marriage. Therefore it is lawful also 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.

XXXIII. *Of Excommunicated Persons, how they are to be avoided.*

**T**HAT persons 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 thereto.

XXXIV. *Of the Traditions of the Church.*

**I**T is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity 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 other may fear to do the like, as he that offendeth against common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the magistrate, and woundeth the conscience 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.

XXXV. *Of Homilies.*

**T**HE 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 the 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](#)

XXXVI. *Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers.*

**T**HE 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 anything that of itself is superstitious or ungodly. And therefore whosoever are consecrate or ordered according to the rites of that book, since the second year of 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 or ordered.

XXXVII. *Of the Civil Magistrates.*

**T**HE Queen's Majesty hath the chief power in this realm of *England* and other her 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 Queen'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 sacraments, the which thing the Injunctions also lately set forth by *Elizabeth* our Queen doth 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.

XXXVIII. *Of Christian men's goods which are not common.*

**T**HE 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.

XXXIX. *Of a Christian man's Oath.*

**A**S we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, 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.

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### **The Ratification.**

**T**HIS 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.