

ANGLICAN TEACHING

An Exposition of

THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

by

W. G. WILSON, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.

and

J. H. TEMPLETON, M.A., B.D., M.LITT., Ph.D.

With a Foreword by

THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH

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CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
FOREWORD BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH <i>(Most Rev. James McCann, Ph.D., D.D.)</i>	xi
PREFACE	1
INTRODUCTION	5
I THE PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD ..	
Article 1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity ..	13
Article 2. Of the Word, or Son of God ..	24
Article 3. Of the going down of Christ into Hell	34
Article 4. Of the Resurrection of Christ ..	36
Article 5. Of the Holy Ghost	43
II THE SCRIPTURES AND CREEDS	
Article 6. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures	47
Article 7. Of the Old Testament ..	55
Article 8. Of the Three Creeds	61
III THE NATURE OF MAN	
Article 9. Of Original or Birth-sin ..	65
Article 10. Of Free-will	71
Article 15. Of Christ alone without Sin ..	75
Article 16. Of Sin after Baptism	81
IV THE SALVATION OF MAN	
Article 11. Of the Justification of Man ..	87
Article 12. Of Good Works	96
Article 13. Of Works before Justification ..	100
Article 14. Of Works of Supererogation ..	104
Article 17. Of Predestination and Election ..	108
Article 18. Of obtaining eternal Salvation by Christ	115

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V	THE CHURCH		
	Article 19. Of the Church	121
VI	THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY IN DOCTRINE		
	Article 20. Of the Authority of the Church		129
	Article 21. Of the Authority of General Councils	135
	Article 22. Of Purgatory	140
VII	THE CHURCH'S AUTHORITY IN DISCIPLINE		
	Article 24. Of Speaking in the Congregation	149
	Article 32. Of the Marriage of Priests	152
	Article 33. Of Excommunicate Persons	154
	Article 34. Of the Traditions of the Church		157
	Article 35. Of the Homilies	161
VIII	THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH		
	Article 23. Of Ministering in the Congregation	165
	Article 36. Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers	165
IX	THE SACRAMENTS		
	Article 25. Of the Sacraments		179
	Article 26. Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers	184
	Article 27. Of Baptism	188
	Article 28. Of the Lord's Supper	194
	Article 29. Of the Wicked which do not eat Christ's Body in the Lord's Supper	199
	Article 30. Of Both Kinds	202
	Article 31. Of the one oblation of Christ	205
X	CHURCH AND STATE		
	Article 37. Of the Civil Magistrates	209
	Article 38. Of Christian Men's Goods not common	217

Article 39. Of a Christian Man's Oath	220
---------------------------------------	-------	-----

APPENDIX A. QUESTIONS FOR USE IN DISCUSSION GROUPS		225
--	--	-----

APPENDIX B. CHRISTIAN INITIATION—A Reprint of an Article on Holy Baptism and Confirmation, published in the <i>Church Quarterly Review</i> , Vol. CLVII, Jan.—Mar. 1957.		233
--	--	-----

APPENDIX C. MODERN COSMOLOGY AND CREATION		253
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GENERAL INDEX	257
---------------	-------	-----

FOREWORD

I am happy to accept the kind invitation of Dr. Wilson and his collaborator Dr. Templeton, to write a foreword to this book which they have written on the 'Thirty-nine Articles' in our Book of Common Prayer.

It is most important that the Christian 'apologia' should be made clear, as it has been done in this book.

Our Church of Ireland is greatly indebted to these two scholars, who have used the leisure afforded them, when their parochial tasks have been carried out, to study deeply the records of our Reformation era, and to present their interpretation of our past history in modern language.

The original purpose of the 'Articles' was to instruct people in the Faith. The essential principles of continuity and change are embedded in our historic tradition. In each generation, therefore, it becomes necessary to explain the truths of the Christian Creeds in the setting and situation of the day.

The most remarkable phenomenon in twentieth century Christendom is the world-wide movement towards re-union. An understanding of the 'Thirty-nine Articles' throws light on the special genius and place of the Anglican Communion as a 'Bridge Church' which claims to hold firmly every doctrine taught in the Apostolic Age as 'de fide' and as 'necessary for salvation'.

This study makes plain the 'setting' in which the Articles were produced in the Elizabethan period, when the scholars of that time in 'Ecclesia Anglicana' were guided towards a 'via media' between the extremes of the Church of Rome on the one hand, and the variety of 'sectaries' on the other. The appeal to Scripture and Antiquity convinced them that

Christian Truth was to be found along a 'middle pathway'.

This is illustrated in the study of Articles VI, XIX, XX and XXXIV. Those who are interested especially in the 'ecumenical movement' will find the treatment of these particular Articles illuminating.

The 'Questions for Use in Discussion Groups—Appendix A' is a very valuable addition to this work, and should be most helpful.

Dr. Wilson's appendix on 'Christian Initiation' and Dr. Templeton's on 'Cosmology' will be of interest also, and of use to students in these subjects.

I commend this valuable work to all within or without our Communion who are working for Unity and Fellowship in Christ's Church.

JAMES ARMAGH
*Archbishop of Armagh and
Primate of All Ireland.*

*The Palace,
Armagh,
5 April, 1962.*

PREFACE

THIS book is offered to members of the Anglican Communion in the conviction that there is a great need within our Church for more teaching manuals which will present the dogmatic principles of Anglicanism in an easily assimilated form. In many parts of the world members of our Communion are subject to persistent efforts to undermine their faith and loyalty to the Church. Quite apart from the spread of humanism and secularized systems of education which foster a purely materialistic outlook on life, and must be met with informed Christian opinion, the activities of the sects often present the Church with a challenge which cannot be ignored. Even as early as 1536 when the Ten Articles were published, the crop of heresies which sprang from the religious licence accompanying the Reformation, and then known under the general name of Anabaptism, had begun to infect the Church of England. This fact has an important bearing on the contents of the Thirty-nine Articles, more than half of which deal with 'the pestilent and heinous heresies of the sects', as Ridley described them, rather than with the corruptions of the Roman Church. Anabaptism revived the whole gamut of erroneous doctrines which vexed the early Church, besides introducing novelties of its own, and demanded a fairly full restatement of orthodox teaching in reply.

The Commission on Evangelism appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York emphasized the fundamental importance of dogma in any really effective presentation of the Gospel. 'Dogma is the core of every system of faith and worship; without it, religion would dissolve into mere sentiment and would, in a few generations, perish altogether'. Out of dogma emerges Christian doctrine, which is 'the formulation of

revealed truth in current terms, together with the deductions implicit within it'. The Commission considered that 'a grasp of doctrine, derived from the Bible as the Word of God, is the essential equipment of an evangelist, and one that has never been more needed than to-day'. The revival of interest in theology amongst university students, the increasing emphasis on Adult Religious Education, and the growing recognition of the layman's place in Evangelism, all underline the need for more authoritative teaching manuals. We believe that a study of the Thirty-nine Articles in relation to the teaching of the Bible can do much to meet this need. On the basic Christian beliefs the Articles contain a careful, well-balanced statement of the historic Church's interpretation of the revelation of God in Christ, with which modern thought is more in sympathy than is usually supposed. 'The times call urgently for the Anglican witness to Scripture, tradition and reason—alike for meeting the problems which Biblical theology is creating, for serving the reintegration of the Church, and for presenting the faith as at once supernatural and related to contemporary man. This witness demands a costly devotion to truth and a conviction that theology is not merely a handmaid to administration, but a prime activity of the Church.'¹

A study of the teaching of the Articles is also relevant for another reason. In many parts of the world members of the Anglican Communion are joining in discussions on Church Unity and are seeking to overcome theological barriers to reunion. In some cases, however, legal barriers may prove to be more formidable than theological differences. For instance, it has been pointed out that in the case of the Church of Ireland the tenets and principles of the Church as set out in the Preamble and Declaration adopted by the General Convention in 1870 'are essential to its identity and all church property, and all funds held for any church purpose, are held upon trusts of which the several provisions of the Preamble constitute an integral part'.² The Preamble states that the Church of Ireland will maintain communion with other

¹Archbishop A. M. Ramsey, *From Goreth Temple* (1960) p. vi.

²*The Constitution of the Church of Ireland*, (1946) p. vi.

churches 'agreeing in the principles of this Declaration'. It is difficult to see how she could enter into full communion with any church which felt unable to accept those principles, for if she were to compromise on any of those principles for the sake of reunion, she might risk the forfeiture, by sequestration, of all her property and endowments. The same risk would doubtless face some other parts of the Anglican Communion contemplating reunion. As in the case of the Church of Ireland, one of the Fundamental Provisions of the Uganda Constitution declares:

'1. The Church of Uganda doth hold and maintain the doctrines and sacraments of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded in His Holy Word and as the Church of England hath received and explained the same in the Book of Common Prayer, and in the form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, and in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and further it disclaims for itself the right of altering any of the aforesaid standards of faith and doctrine.'

If theological discussions on reunion are to achieve practical results cognizance must be taken of such Declarations and of their legal force and implications. A fresh study of the Reformation formularies (such as the Thirty-nine Articles) against the background of the teaching of Scripture and early Church practice may be useful, before we attempt to draft any doctrinal statements as a basis for reunion. As Dr. Broomfield so rightly says, 'The faith of the One Holy Catholic Church, when it is again united, will not be limited to what is common to all the various groups into which Christians are now divided. That would be a sad impoverishment. On the contrary, it must include everything which is true in the faith of each and all of them. Similarly the Order and practice of the united Church must be such as to preserve everything of real and permanent value . . . If this is so, unity is to be sought not by a readiness to minimize—much less to abandon—the things which distinguish us from our brethren, but rather by an eagerness to discover whatever is true and valuable in the things which

distinguish them from us'.¹ As, in the past, those who sought the reformation of the Church were obliged to think out and express the principles for which they stood, so those who to-day seek the reunion of the Church must re-examine their principles. How far, for instance, are the Thirty-nine Articles in accord with the teaching and practices of the Primitive Church? We hope that a study of the following pages may indicate an answer to that important question.

We should like to express our gratitude to the Bishop of Cashel, Rt. Rev. W. C. de Pawley, and to the Rev. T. N. D. C. Salmon, who read the typescript and made many helpful suggestions. We are also deeply indebted to Mr. A. G. Gray for the keen personal interest he has taken in the production of the book.

W. G. WILSON
J. H. TEMPLETON

Feast of the Epiphany,
1962.

INTRODUCTION

THE Thirty-nine Articles are associated with many other doctrinal statements issued during the Reformation in Europe. In order to justify their actions, those who disapproved of the doctrine and practices of the Church of Rome were obliged to examine and express in print the principles for which they stood. It is necessary to know something of the other formularies of faith which appeared in the sixteenth century, before we state our own position.

One of the earliest of the Reformation formularies,¹ and by far the most important, was the *Confession of Augsburg* (1530) drawn up mainly by Melancthon, revised by Luther, and presented to the Diet² at Augsburg. It consisted of 21 Articles on matters of faith, and 7 Articles protesting against abuses. On the whole it was moderate in tone and aimed at reformation within the Church, if possible. In 1552 it was enlarged to Thirty-five Articles, and presented to the Council of Trent by the ambassadors of Würtemberg, and in that form is known as *The Würtemberg Confession*. The influence of these Confessions on our Articles is noted in our exposition.

In 1530, Zwingli, a Swiss reformer, also presented a Confession to the Diet of Augsburg. After his death, his followers put forward their views in the *Confession of Basle* and the *First Helvetic Confession* (1536). But none of these documents had any positive influence on our Articles. Other well-known Continental documents were Calvin's *Institutes* (1549), the *Saxon Confession* (1551), and the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), the work of Henry Bullinger.

¹There were one or two earlier documents, such as Luther's Greater and Lesser Catechisms (1527-29), the Articles of Schwabach (1529) and Torgau (1530).

²The English name for a foreign Parliament.

The first English statement of doctrine was issued with the approval of Convocation as *The Ten Articles* (1536), a compromise designed to promote unity between the Roman Catholic and the reforming parties. The first five of these Articles dealt with doctrine: the Rule of Faith was based on the Bible, the three Creeds, and decisions of the Four Great Councils; three Sacraments (Baptism, the Eucharist, and Penance) were affirmed as instituted by Christ, and the Real Presence¹ was asserted; the Royal Supremacy was substituted for Papal Supremacy.² The second five Articles were mainly concerned with ceremonies, and permitted the use of images, the honouring and invoking of saints,³ encouraged prayers for the dead, and denounced abuses connected with Purgatory and Indulgences.⁴

The Ten Articles remained effective until 1543. Meanwhile, a practical handbook of instruction, based on the Ten Articles, appeared in 1537 as *The Institution of a Christian Man*, commonly called *The Bishops' Book*.⁵ It was the work of a committee under Archbishop Cranmer, and was issued with the authority of the Bishops, though it never gained the King's authority because of its poor theology and literary style. In 1543 a revised edition, based on the King's criticisms, was produced under the title *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man*, commonly called *The King's Book*.⁶ It was more anti-Protestant, and reflected the reaction then developing against further reform.

In 1538, the King had invited three Lutheran Divines over to consult with Archbishop Cranmer and two other Bishops on matters of faith. The *Confession of Augsburg* was used as a basis for discussion. Henry, however, would not agree to

¹Cf. Article XXVIII.

²Cf. Article XXXVII.

³Cf. Article XXII.

⁴Cf. Article XXII.

⁵The Creed, Seven Sacraments, Ten Commandments, Ave Maria, Lord's Prayer, Justification and Purgatory were explained. Baptism, Eucharist, and Penance were placed higher than other Sacraments.

⁶Transubstantiation, Clerical celibacy, and implied equality of all Seven Sacraments, were its chief characteristics.

Communion in Both Kinds,¹ Clerical Marriage, or the condemnation of propitiatory Masses, and the conference broke down, but not before *The Thirteen Articles* were compiled.² They were not published then, but were later found amongst Cranmer's papers, and are important because they form a link between the Augsburg Confession and our present Articles³.

When the Pope excommunicated Henry in 1538, the King reacted in proclaiming his orthodoxy by applying 'The Whip with the Six Strings' (*The Six Articles* of 1539), which was incorporated in an Act of Parliament popularly called 'The Bloody Statute of the Six Articles.' The Act compelled the acceptance of Transubstantiation (though the actual word is avoided), Clerical Celibacy, Communion in One Kind, the obligation of Vows of Chastity, the use of Private Masses, and Auricular Confession. Thenceforth no further move towards the reformation of the doctrine of the Church was possible while Henry VIII lived.

On the accession of Edward VI in 1547, Cranmer and his colleagues were able to continue the work of reformation. First came the revised Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552. Although no new Articles were officially authorized for some years, there is evidence that as early as 1549 Cranmer required preachers and lecturers in Divinity to assent to certain Articles of Religion. In the same year, a committee under his chairmanship drew up a scheme for the Reform of Church Law (*Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*) which, though it was not published by authority, accords very closely with the language of some of our present Articles.

In 1551, Cranmer was directed to prepare a Book of Articles, which he showed to some of the Bishops. But it was May 1552 before the Council asked Convocation for them. They originally numbered 45, but after revision by the Royal Chaplain,

¹Cf. Article XXX.

²The Thirteen Articles were derived largely from Seventeen Articles drawn up by Luther and Melancthon in 1536 and handed to the English Ambassadors, Fox and Heath. Some of the Thirteen Articles were word for word the same as their German counterparts in the Seventeen Articles.

³Cf. Article XXIII.

were reduced to 42, and published, by Royal command, in Latin and English, in 1553 as *The Forty-Two Articles*. They were mainly the work of Cranmer, who in compiling them made use of the Thirteen Articles of 1538, and the *Confession of Augsburg*.¹ It is still doubtful whether they were approved by Convocation, but the point is not of great significance, for they were put forth by the King's authority only seven weeks before his death. On the accession of Queen Mary they were dropped—they had not been enforced by Act of Parliament and there was no need to repeal them. Once more the reforming process was halted.

When Queen Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558, Prayer Book revision took precedence over the Articles. But, as a temporary measure, Archbishop Parker drew up and circulated amongst the clergy *The Eleven Articles* (1559), dealing with the authority of Scripture, the rights of National Churches, the Royal Supremacy, and Roman errors such as private masses, communion in one Kind, and the extolling of images and relics. These Articles were never legally binding except in Ireland, where they were in force from 1566 until superseded by the Thirty-nine Articles in 1615. All Ministers at their first entry into their cures, and twice yearly afterwards, were required to read them publicly.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Parker, with the help of Bishop Cox of Ely, and Bishop Guest of Rochester, was working on a revision of *The Forty-Two Articles* of 1553. As in 1553, Cranmer had used the *Thirteen Articles* (based on the *Confession of Augsburg*), so once more Lutheran influence made itself felt when Parker drew upon *The Württemberg Confession* in making his revision of 1563. Four of the original Forty-two were struck out (viz: Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, Of Grace, Of the Moral Law, Against the Millenarians) and four others substituted: Of the Holy Ghost (V), Of Good Works (XII), Of Communion in Both Kinds (XXX), Of the Non-participation of the Wicked in the Holy Communion

¹He apparently did not use the *Confession of Augsburg* direct, but through the Thirteen Articles, especially on Articles I, II, IV, IX, XIV, XVI, XXIII, XXIV, XXV.

(XXIX). Convocation passed only 39 of the 42, and the Queen (i) reduced the number to 38 by striking out Article XXIX to avoid offending the Roman Catholic party, and (ii) added the opening clause in Article XX, taken from *The Württemberg Confession*.

The *Thirty-eight Articles* remained unaltered until 1571. The Queen's excommunication by the Pope in 1570 destroyed any hope of reconciliation. It was no longer necessary, then, to fear that Article XXIX would hurt their feelings, and it was accordingly incorporated. A few other minor changes were made, including the addition of four books in the list of the Apocrypha (Article VI). As revised, the *Thirty-nine Articles* were then passed by Convocation, and received the sanction of Parliament in 1571. Since then they have been "received and approved" as authoritative standards of doctrine by most of the branches of the Anglican Communion.

In many parts of the Anglican Communion every clergyman, when he is made a Deacon, ordained Priest, consecrated Bishop, or licensed for a benefice or curacy, is required to declare his assent to the *Thirty-nine Articles*. The Ordinal requires every Priest at his ordination to vow 'always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church hath received the same.' The Ordinal thus allows little scope for the teaching of novel or personal opinions; only 'received' doctrine is to be taught. Hence one of the chief uses of the Articles to-day is that they provide a body of official teaching.

It was the declared aim and object of the Anglican Reformers to cleave to the faith and practice of the Primitive Church. They made a two-fold appeal to Scripture and Antiquity one of their basic principles. In matters of doctrine, the appeal to Scripture as the supreme Rule of Faith was always regarded as final; in questions as to the correct interpretation of Scripture, and in matters of ceremonial they preferred to be guided by the practice of the Primitive Church. In the fifth century, St. Vincent of Lerins formulated a rule for distinguishing Catholic truth from falsehood, and his rule

