



Adult E&F Fall 2018: Understanding Others' Beliefs & Our Own

Class 9 – November 4: The Place of the Articles Today

Recap of the 39 Articles

- **The Thirty-nine Articles**, like other “confessions” of the Reformations, sought to return to simple faith of Scripture. These Anglican Articles of Religion were developed over 35 years and finalized in 1571. It is important to note that the Anglican Church sought to define itself in contrast to two religious movements – an extreme Protestantism on one side, and the Medieval Catholic Church on the other.
- **Articles I–V**: affirm basic doctrines of the Christian faith as stated in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. They underscore Anglicanism’s common ground with the universal, and elaborate on the creeds to address faith in the Trinity, and the nature of the Trinity, Christ, and his resurrection.
- **Articles VI–XI**: address issues of the Reformations, give clarity to the gospel message, and affirm the authority and sufficiency of Scripture for salvation, canonical books of Scripture, the continuity of the Old and New Testaments, the nature of ceremonial and moral law, original sin, free will and reliance on God, and justification by faith in the merit of Christ.
- **Articles XII–XVIII**: addresses the major reformation issues of justification and good works, as well as the sinless nature of Christ, predestination and election, and eternal salvation only by the name of Christ.
- **Articles XIX–XXV**: addresses the nature of the church and the authority of the church and its councils, the importance of ordained ministry amid the “priesthood of all believers,” the importance of worship in understandable language, and the sacraments of the church. Article XXII turns the Anglican church from Roman Catholic understandings of purgatory pardons, adoration of relics, and invocation of the saints.
- **Articles XXVI–XXXVI**: addresses the sacraments, whose effectiveness does not depend on the worthiness of the minister. A brief theology of baptism and the Lord’s supper are given. Notably: those who are actively wicked do not truly partake in Christ; lay people are to be given both the bread and the cup; the Lord’s supper is not a sacrifice, since Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was once for all time. Articles XXXII–XXXVI cover the marriage of priests, excommunication, church traditions and ceremonies, “The Homilies” of the 16th century church, and the consecration of ordained ministers.

Articles XXXVII–XXXIX: address the Church’s and the Christian’s relationship to the state and the common good

- **Article XVII**: Anglican Church-State Relations: Neither medieval Catholic nor Anabaptist.
 - Assertion of Royal Supremacy
 - Clarification of definition of state power
 - Denial of Papal Supremacy
 - Example of valid state power
 - Example of valid Christian service to the state
 - 1801 U.S.-specific clarification of scope of state power
- **Article XVIII**: Christians aren’t communists, but are required to give charitably.
- **Article XIX**: Christians can take (appropriate) oaths.

The Anglican Articles and their Place Today

- Are the 39 Articles still significant today? Are they relevant?
 - *Yes, the 39 Articles are relevant because, notwithstanding some historical anachronisms in their wording, they are a concise statement of unchanged doctrinal truths we continue to believe as Anglicans. Heresy and false teaching has a way of reappearing throughout the ages.*
- How can they be helpful to us today in ACNA? (See note regarding ACNA's acceptance of the Articles on the front of the Articles handout.)
 - *They can be helpful to us today in the ACNA by allowing us better to understand our tradition and guiding us as we confront many of the same perennial questions.*
- Are there things that are problematic or should be changed/reframed?
 - *Some of the articles are addressing very specific controversies of their day, and if we were writing them again today, many would be different because the issues we confront are different. The underlying sources (Scripture, the historic creeds, natural revelation) would be the same, but we would draw on them to speak to different issues. For example, in responding to Anabaptism, Article 39 emphasizes that Christians can take oaths. Not many people today think Christians shouldn't take oaths, but many are confused about issues of sexuality and gender in a way that most weren't in the seventeenth century. A new or revised 39 Articles (or maybe a 40th Article) could address that. With that being said, one thing we value as Anglicans is unity, so we wouldn't seek to rewrite or revise as an individual congregation but only in the context of the broad worldwide communion.*