



Adult Education & Formation Fall 2018

Understanding Others' Beliefs & Our Own

Through this course we seek to understand the religious beliefs of neighbors and those of our own tradition by looking at the Anglican Articles of Religion.

Class 4 – September 30: The “Catholic” Articles: Articles I-V (Joe Davis)

Creeds: From Latin *credo* (I believe), a summary statement of essential beliefs. Biblically grounded, they are used in worship to teach (and guard) the basics of the faith as we keep and say them.

- In the first **FIVE** centuries, there were **FOUR** councils, which affirmed **THREE** creeds, which affirmed the **TWO** natures of the **ONE** Christ. (e.g. Nicene Creed – 325 AD)
- While these four councils establish the Christological and Trinitarian questions of early Christianity, many other issues (such as salvation) are left untouched. Why?

Confessions & Articles: Presuppose creeds and build on them; “articulate” what distinctives of denominations or traditions. Useful for establishing orthodoxy within a given denomination; tend to emerge in times of theological controversy (e.g. reformed confessions of 16th c.)

- **Explosion of Confessions in the Reformation:** Luther’s Augsburg Confession (1530), Zwingli’s Sixty-Seven Articles (1523), Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1549), Church of England’s Westminster Confession (1647).

Thirty-Nine Articles (The Articles of Religion): finalized in 1571 to establish English Doctrine:

- **Ten Articles (1536, Henry VIII):** Protestant leanings, related to alliance w/ German Lutheran princes.
- **The Six Articles (1539, Henry VIII):** Reaffirm Roman Catholic doctrines.
- **The Forty-Two Articles (1552, Edward VI):** Thomas Cranmer’s Calvin-inspired articles for “avoiding of controversy in opinions and the establishing of a godly concord in certain matters of religion.”
- **The Thirty-Nine Articles (1571, Elizabethan):** In 1563, 42 are revised to 38 (editing, omissions to avoid offending Catholics, and moderating of Calvin’s influence). In 1571, after Elizabeth’s excommunication by Pope Pius V, Article XXIX returns. The Thirty-Nine Articles take their final.

“The Thirty-Nine Articles must be viewed as part of a large number of Confessions issued about the same time. Definition of their position was essential on the part of the Reformers, and our articles were both suggested by Continental Confessions and also influenced by them. For centuries abuses in the Church had been recognized and almost wholly unheeded, but forces were at work which paved the way for Reformation. The movement in the sixteenth century was a return to the pure and simple faith of Christianity as embodied in Holy Scripture.”

(W. H. Griffith Thomas, The Principles of Theology: An Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles)

Articles I – V: Restatement of Historic Creeds: Doctrines of Trinity and Incarnation

The “Catholic” Articles: So called because they affirm the basic, universal doctrines of the Christian faith as stated in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. They come first to underscore Anglicanism’s common ground with the universal church before moving into the issues that were disputed at the time of the Reformation.

Article I: The Articles begin where the creeds do—Anglicans (of course) believe in God.

- *Compare* Nicene Creed: “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, visible and invisible.”
- Article I elaborates on the creeds in a couple of ways:

- Attributes: It lists the classic attributes of God—He is “everlasting” and “of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.”
- Trinity: It explicitly states the doctrine of the Trinity, which is only implicit in the creeds.
- The doctrine of the Trinity in 7 statements, per St. Augustine:
 - 1. The Father is God.
 - 2. The Son is God.
 - 3. The Holy Spirit is God.
 - 4. The Father is not the Son.
 - 5. The Son is not the Holy Spirit.
 - 6. The Holy Spirit is not the Father.
 - 7. There is one God.

Article II: Articles 2–5 then restate the Gospel: the Son, the second person of the Trinity, became human to reconcile the fallen world to God through His death and resurrection.

- Who is Jesus? The Article affirms the Christology developed over the first four church councils.
 - Nicaea (325)—He’s the creator, not the creation—“of one substance with the Father.”
 - Constantinople (385)—He was fully human—“very God *and* very Man,” not just God in disguise.
 - Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (450)—He had two natures, united in one person; not just two separate natures sitting uneasily beside one another and not one nature with the divine and the human mixed together.
- What did He do? He saved us on the cross—“reconcil[ing] his Father to us.”

Article III: An affirmation of the “Descensus Clause.” *Compare* Apostles’ Creed: “He descended to the dead.”

- The meaning of the Descensus Clause was and is disputed:
 - Traditional View: Christ descended to the dead to preach to them—to evangelize those who died before He came, bring the Old Testament believers into paradise, or declare his victory over Satan.
 - Reformed View: Christ’s “descent into Hell” was his forsakenness on the cross.
- Article III leaves it open; either of these views is Anglican.

Article IV: Affirms the *objective, bodily* resurrection of Jesus and locates us within salvation history—Jesus now “sitteth” in heaven and will do so “until he return[s] to judge all men at the last day.”

- *Compare* Nicene Creed: “On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.”
- Elaborates on the Nicene Creed to emphasize the resurrection’s corporality—Jesus “took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man’s nature.”
- This is important for two reasons:
 - (1) The resurrection is the fundamental historical event at the heart of Christianity, so it matters a lot that it *really*, and not just metaphorically, happened. *E.g.*, St. Paul: “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:14.)
 - (2) That the resurrection was *bodily* reflects what makes Christian hope different from what other belief systems’ ideas about the afterlife—when Christ returns, all the dead will be bodily raised like He was; He was “the first fruits” of the resurrection. 1 Cor. 15.

Article V: Affirms that the Spirit is equal to and on par with the Father and the Son, not the odd Person out of the Trinity.

- The *filioque*—“and the son”: This is the rare place where the first five Articles say something controversial within the Church as a whole.
 - The Eastern Church is ambivalent about the *filioque*; they worry that it undermines the Father as the source of the whole Trinity.
 - The Western Church affirms it, because it differentiates the relationships between the three Persons.