

39

Articles of religion

Anglican Church Doctrine

Originally agreed and accepted in 1562 in London

This is an Everyday English version

The Anglican Parish of Bondi and Waverley wants to be Bible-based and Christ-centred. All Anglican Churches have the 39 Articles as a doctrinal summary.

The 39 articles were first written during the Reformation in the 16th century to summarise a belief that is based on the Bible and Christ-centred. We still benefit from these articles today as Anglican Churches

What Christians have Faith in (Articles 1-5)

1. Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is only one living and true God, who is eternal and not contained within a body. God is indivisible and invulnerable. God is of infinite power, wisdom and goodness. God is the maker and preserver of all things both things we can see and those we can't see. Within the unity of God there are three persons in an eternal relationship. This one true God has the three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are all equally divine in nature, power and eternal existence. These three persons have the same divinity, power and eternity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These three are also the one living and true God who exists forever, without beginning or end. God is spiritual and by definition is not limited like all other beings by a body. God is free from our bodily desires and impulses His power, wisdom, and goodness are infinite.

2. The Word, or Son of God, who became truly human

The Son, who is also called the Word of the Father, comes eternally from the Father. The Son is the true and eternal God, of the one same divine substance as the Father. He took man's nature in the womb of the virgin, Mary in such a way that two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided after that. Christ has two natures. He is the one true God and true man. He truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, to reconcile the Father to us. Christ restores a right relationship between the Father and His people. Jesus Christ came to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt but also for all actual sins of men.

3. The descent of Christ to the place of the dead

Just as Christ died for us and buried, so also it is to be believed that he descended to "Hell" or "Hades", which are names for the place where those who are dead go.

4. The resurrection of Christ

Christ really rose again from death and took his physical body, with flesh, bones, and all that naturally belongs to a complete human. In his body he ascended into heaven, where he is now seated until the last day, when he will return to judge all humans.

5. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is sent from the Father and the Son. He is of the same one divine substance, majesty, and glory as the Father and the Son, true and eternal God.

Basis of Authority for Christian Faith (Articles 6-8)

6. The Sufficiency of Scripture for salvation

Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation. Consequently whatever is not read in Scripture nor can be proved from Scripture cannot be demanded from any person to be believed as an essential article of Christian faith. In the same way, anything not contained in scripture cannot be thought necessary or required for salvation. Holy Scripture is the canonical book of the Old and New Testaments whose authority has never been doubted within the church. See a list of the 66 canonical books of the Old and New Testaments.

7. The Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for in both the Old and New Testaments eternal life is offered to mankind through the Messiah, or Christ. That is why Christ, being both God and man, is the only mediator between God and man. Those who suggest that the Old Testament people only had transitory promises must not be listened to. Although the law given by God through Moses is not binding on Christians as far as its forms of worship and ritual are concerned and the civil regulations are not binding on any nation state, nevertheless no Christian is free to disobey those commandments which may be classified as "moral", and therefore unchanging through time.

8. Three Creeds we accept as helpful

The following three creeds: *The Nicene Creed*, *The Athanasian Creed* and *The Apostles' Creed*, ought to be wholeheartedly accepted and believed. This is because their contents may be proved as helpful summaries of definite statements in Holy Scripture.

Personal Faith: Where it begins. (Articles 9-14)

9. Original Sin

Original sin is not established merely by others following Adam's bad example. Rather, it is to be seen as the fault and corruption found in the very nature of every human. The consequence of this is that humans all fall far short from being right before God. Human nature is predisposed to evil. So, the sinful nature always desires to behave in a manner contrary to the Holy Spirit. We rightly deserve God's anger and condemnation. This infection within human nature persists even within those who are born again or regenerated. In the Greek of the New Testament, it is called "*fronema sarkos*" and can be translated as the *wisdom, sensuality, affection* or *desire* of the *sinful nature*. Such desires are not consistent with God's law. Although there is no condemnation for those that trust in Christ and are baptised into him, nevertheless the New Testament states that any such desire is sinful even for Christians.

10. "Free" will

The fallen condition of humans since the fall of Adam is such that we are not able to turn and prepare ourselves by our own natural strength and good works to have faith and call upon the name of the Lord. That is why we have no power to do any good works that please God, unless the grace of God through Christ goes before us. This Grace allows us to have a good will, and then continues to work with us after we are given that good will.

11. How People receive Justification

We are counted as righteous before God solely because of the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ through faith and not because of our own good works. That is why the teaching that we are justified by Faith Alone in what Christ has done for us is such a wholesome and comforting truth to believe. (This is taught more fully in the homily *On Justification*).

12. Good works

Good works done by Christians are the fruit of faith and follow on after our justification. They can never atone for our sins or face the strict justice of God's judgment by themselves. Yet these good works are appropriate for Christians, and pleasing and acceptable to God. They will spring from a true and living faith. So we see that a Christian's good works displays a person's authentic living faith in Jesus, just as a tree is known by its fruit.

13. Works before justification

Works done by people before receiving the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasing to God. This is because they do not spring from faith in Jesus Christ. These Good Works do not make people who do them fit to receive grace, or (as some say) to deserve the "*grace of congruity*". On the contrary, because they are not done as God has willed and commanded that they should be done they have the nature of sin, even if others see them as "good".

14. Works above and beyond what God requires (sometimes called works of *supererogation*)

The concept of voluntary works besides, over and above God's commandments, cannot be believed or taught without arrogance and disrespect to God. This sort of thinking suggests that humans can serve God fully and properly, but also that they may actually do *more* than their required duty. But Christ says: '*so you also, when you after done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unprofitable servants."*

Personal Faith: Its Course (15-18)

15. Of Christ alone without sin

Christ, who truly took our full human nature, was made like us in every respect except that of sin. Christ was clearly free of sin in both body and spirit. He came to be the "Lamb without blemish" who, by the single sacrifice of himself, should "take away the sins of the world". Sin, as John's Gospel says, "was not in him". But all the rest of us, even though baptised and born again in Christ, still offend in many ways. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

16. Sin after baptism

Not every sin knowingly committed after baptism into Christ is sin against the Holy Spirit and unforgivable. Therefore the gift of repentance is not to be declared impossible for those who fall into sin after being baptised into Christ. After we have received the Holy Spirit we may depart from the grace given to us and fall into sin, and we may also by the grace of God return and amend our lives.

Therefore the teaching that says Christians are incapable of sinning any more in this life is to be condemned. In the same way, teachings that deny the opportunity of forgiveness to those who truly repent is incorrect and to be condemned.

17. Predestination and election

Predestination to life is in the eternal purpose of God. The Scriptures tell us that before the foundation of the world God decreed to deliver from curse and damnation those people he has chosen in Christ out of all humanity. He will bring them through Christ to eternal salvation. This happens as the Holy Spirit working at the appropriate time, calls those people freely given this excellent benefit by God according to His purpose.

By grace those who are called obey the calling; they are freely justified, are made children of God by adoption. They are made like his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. They are called to walk faithfully in good works and in the end, by God's mercy attain eternal happiness.

Reverent consideration of this subject of predestination and of our election in Christ is full of comfort to godly people and to those who feel within themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ as the Holy Spirit puts the deeds of the sinful and earthly nature to death and lifts their minds up to high and heavenly things. Considering this subject helps establish and confirm a Christian person's belief in eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ. It encourages a fervent love towards God. But for merely inquisitive yet unspiritual people who don't have the Spirit of Christ, this subject can easily be mis-used. The devil can use the idea of God's predestination to drive people to desperation or to reckless immoral living. That is why we need to receive God's promises in the manner in which they are set out for us in Holy Scripture. We need to follow the clearly declared will of God in our actions by being Godly.

18. Obtaining salvation only by the name of Christ

Those who presume to say that everybody shall be saved regardless of the rules of life, religion, or sect that they professes, provided they make diligent efforts to live by that rule and the light of nature are in serious error. For Holy Scripture declares to us that it is only in the name of Jesus Christ that people are saved.

COMMUNITY OF FAITH (Articles 19-39) Corporate Faith: The Church (19-22)

19. The church is not perfect

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of believers where the pure Word of God is preached and where sacraments are rightly administered according to Christ's command. As the churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch have made errors, so also the Roman Catholic Church and other churches have made and will continue to make errors, not only in their practice and forms of worship but also in matters of faith.

20. The authority of the church is limited by Scripture

The church has authority to decree forms of worship and ceremonies and to make decisions in controversies concerning the faith. However, it is not lawful for the church to order anything contrary to God's written Word. Nor may it expound one passage of Scripture so that it contradicts another passage. So, although the church is a witness and guardian to Holy Scripture, it must not decree anything contrary to Scripture, nor is it to enforce belief in anything additional to Scripture as essential to salvation.

21. The authority of general councils of church leaders

General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of governing authorities. When such councils are gathered together, because they are merely humans, they may make errors, and sometimes have made errors, even in things relating to our knowledge of God. Because of this, anything ordained by them as necessary to salvation has neither strength nor authority, unless it can be shown to be faithful to Holy Scripture.

22. Purgatory

The Roman Catholic doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, the worshipping, and adoration of both of images and of relics, and the invocation of saints is a futile thing foolishly conceived and has no evidence from Scripture. These teachings are repugnant to the Word of God.

Corporate Faith: Ministry (23-24)

23. Public Ministry in the congregation

It is not right for any person to take upon themselves the office of public preaching or of administering the sacraments in the congregation before he has been lawfully called and sent to perform these tasks. Those lawfully called and sent are those who have been chosen and called to this work by those who have had a public authority given to them in the congregation to call and send such ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

24. Speaking in the congregation in a language that people understand

It is plainly against the Word of God in Scripture and to the custom of the early church for any public prayer, speaking or the administration of the sacraments to be done in a language not understood by the people.

Corporate Faith: Sacraments (25-31)

25. The sacraments

The sacraments instituted by Christ are not only badges or tokens of the profession of Christians but are also sure witnesses and effectual signs of God's grace and good will towards us. Through them he works invisibly within us, both bringing us to life and also strengthening and confirming our faith in him.

There are only two sacraments instituted by Christ our Lord in the Gospel: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The five that are commonly called sacraments (confirmation, penance, ordination, marriage, and extreme unction) are not to be regarded as sacraments. This is because they are either a corruption of apostolic practice or states of life as allowed in the Scriptures. They are not the same in nature as the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper since they do not have any visible sign or ceremony instituted by God. The sacraments were not instituted by Christ to be gazed at or carried about or venerated but to be used properly. Only those people who receive them worthily receive any benefit. As Paul the apostle says about the Lord's Supper, *"those who receive it in an unworthy manner bring condemnation upon themselves"*.

26. The sacraments are not made ineffectual by the unworthiness of the minister

In the visible church; non-Christians are always mingled with those who have a living faith in Jesus. Sometimes non-Christians can even hold positions in the ministry of the Word and sacraments. Despite this, since they do not do these things in their own name but in Christ's and minister by his commission and authority. People may benefit from their ministry both in hearing God's Word and in receiving the sacraments. The effect of Christ's institution is not taken away by the fact that these people are not Christians, nor is the grace of God's gifts diminished, so long as the sacraments are received by faith and rightly. The sacraments are effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, even though evil men may sometimes administer them.

Nevertheless, it belongs to the discipline of the church that investigation is made into ministers who are inappropriate in any way. Those who are accused by witnesses having knowledge of their offences and who in the end are justly found guilty should be disposed.

27. Baptism

Baptism in water is not just a sign of profession and a mark of difference by which Christians are distinguished from those who are not baptised in water. It is also a sign pointing to the need for regeneration or new birth, through which, as through an instrument, those who receive baptism in the right manner with this understanding, can be grafted into the church. This happens to those who are baptised when the promises of the forgiveness of sin and of our adoption as sons and daughters of God by the Holy Spirit are visibly signed and sealed, faith is confirmed, and grace is increased by virtue of prayer to God. Baptising young children is allowed and to be continued in the church, as it is consistent with the way Christ instituted it.

28. Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the mutual love that Christians ought to have among themselves. Rather, it is a sacrament of our redemption through Christ's death. To those who rightly, worthily, and with faith receive it, the bread that we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and similarly the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. Transubstantiation (the change of the

substance of the bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord is not based on the teaching of Holy Scripture, but is actually inconsistent to the plain teaching of Scripture. It overthrows the nature of a sacrament and has given rise to many unhelpful superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper only in a heavenly and spiritual manner. The way or means by which the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is by faith.

29. The wicked who partake of the Lord's Supper do not eat the body of Christ

The wicked and those who lack a living faith, although they physically and visibly eat the bread or 'press with their teeth' (as St. Augustine says) the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless they are in no way really partakers of Christ. Rather, by eating and drinking this sign of so great a thing as Christ's sacrifice on the cross, they bring condemnation upon themselves.

30. Reception in both kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the people. For by Christ's institution and commandment both parts of the Lord's sacrament ought to be administered to all Christian people alike.

31. The oblation of Christ finished upon the cross

The offering of Christ made once for all is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. There is no other satisfaction for sin but this alone. Consequently, the sacrifices of masses, in which it was commonly said that the priest offered Christ for the living and dead so as to gain remission of pain or guilt, are blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.

Corporate Faith: Discipline (32-36)

32. Marriage of Ministry workers

It is not commanded by any decree of God that paid ministers of any kind; (bishops, presbyters or deacons) need to take a vow of celibacy or abstain from marriage. So it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion when they judge that this will promote godliness.

33. The excommunicated: how they are to be treated

Any person who has come to the point that they have gone through an official disciplining process and justly cut off from church fellowship for just cause, is to be regarded by the whole body of the faithful as someone who is hostile to the church. They are a person of bad standing until they are openly reconciled by repentance and received back into the church by a recognised church leader who has the necessary authority in such matters.

34. The customs and traditions of the church

It is not necessary that customs and forms of worship be exactly the same everywhere. Throughout history they have changed and differed in different contexts. They may be altered according to the differing nations, languages, cultures and habits of people provided that nothing is commanded contrary to God's Word. Whoever by his own private judgment openly, willingly, and deliberately breaks those customs and forms of worship of the church which do not contradict the Word of God and are approved by common authority, is to be openly rebuked. This is so that others will be afraid to act similarly, and in so doing offend against the common order and effectiveness of the church in that area and undermine the authority of those leading, or wound the consciences of weak Christians. Every particular or national church has authority to command, change, or abolish the ceremonies or forms of worship of the church, which are appointed by man's authority provided that every thing is done for the common good and building up of Christian people.

35 The Homilies

The second Book of Homilies contains godly and wholesome teaching, which is necessary for these times (referring here to the English Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries), as does the first book of Homilies published during the reign of Edward VI. We therefore judge that they ought to be read diligently and distinctly in the churches by the ministers in a way that the people may understand them.

36. The consecration of bishops and ministers The book for the consecration of archbishops and bishops and for ordaining presbyters and deacons, published in the time of Edward VI and confirmed at the same time by the authority of English Parliament, contains all things necessary for such a consecration and ordination. It does not contain anything which of itself is superstitious and ungodly.

Therefore whoever is consecrated or ordained according to the services of that book, since the second year of Edward VI to the present time, and whoever will be consecrated and ordained according to those services in the future, we declare to be rightly, duly and lawfully consecrated and ordained in the Anglican Church.

Corporate Faith: Church-State Relations (37-39)

37. The state and its civil representatives

The duly constituted Governments have authority to rule and legislate, (in our case, in the nation of Australia). The Government sets the legal framework in all matters whether ecclesiastical or civil. The Australian government is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

In stating that this authority belongs to the Government, we do not grant our government leaders the ministry of either God's Word or of the sacraments. This is also made clear in the Injunctions originally published by Queen Elizabeth 1. By this we are acknowledging the prerogative God has given to our national leaders. This is taught in Holy Scripture. Governments should rule all people committed to their charge by God, whatever their station or rank, whether ecclesiastical or secular, and restrain with civil power those who act against the common good or practice evil. Governments or church Leaders from other nations have no jurisdiction in Australia

The laws of the land may punish Christian people with death for heinous and grave offences. It is lawful for Christian men to carry weapons and serve in military service at the command of the state.

38. Private Property

The wealth and possessions of Christians are rightly owned by individuals and not held in common, as far as the rights, title, and possession of them is concerned. Nevertheless, everyone ought to generously and freely give to the poor from things they own, according to their means.

39. A Christian's Oath

We believe that vain and rash swearing of oaths is forbidden to Christians. Our Lord Jesus Christ makes this clear and also the New Testament letter of James. However, the Christian faith does not prohibit the swearing of an oath when the state requires it, in a cause where faithfulness and love can justify it according to the prophet Jeremiah's teaching, in justice, judgment and truth.

