

## 35. THE ELEVEN ARTICLES, 1559

### HISTORY

These Articles were drawn up in 1559 or 1560 and approved by Archbishop Matthew Parker for the subscription of the clergy. The intention was to make them as close to the Forty-two Articles (1553) as possible, though in fact they bear little relation to that document. Clergy were expected to subscribe to these Articles twice a year, as well as when they were presented to a living. They were effectively replaced by the Thirty-eight Articles in 1563.

### THEOLOGY

The Articles are clearly Protestant, though it is obvious that the main emphasis is on the recognition of Royal Supremacy. It was this, more than anything else, which Elizabeth was keen to secure, so that the other elements of her religious policy could be implemented without serious objections.

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Forasmuch as it appertaineth to all Christian men, but especially to the ministers and the pastors of the Church, being teachers and instructors of others, to be ready to give a reason of their faith when they shall be thereunto required; I for my part, now appointed your parson, vicar or curate, having before my eyes the fear of God, and the testimony of my conscience, do acknowledge for myself, and require you to assent to the same.

**01.** First, that there is but one living and true God, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things; and that in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, of equal power and eternity, the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.

**02.** I believe also whatsoever is contained in the holy canonical Scriptures, in the which Scriptures are contained all things necessary to salvation, by the which also errors and heresies may sufficiently be reproved and convicted, and all doctrine and articles necessary to salvation established. I do also most firmly

believe and confess all the articles contained in the three Creeds, the Nicene Creed, Athanasius' Creed, and our common Creed, called the Apostles' Creed; for these do briefly contain the principal articles of our faith, which are at large set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

**03.** I do acknowledge also that church to be the spouse of Christ, wherein the Word of God is truly taught, the sacraments orderly ministered according to Christ's institution, and the authority of the keys duly used; and that every such particular church hath authority to institute, to change, to clean put away ceremonies and other ecclesiastical rites, as they be superfluous, or be absurd, and to constitute other making more to seemliness, to order or edification.

**04.** Moreover I confess that it is not lawful for any man to take upon him any office or ministry, either ecclesiastical or secular, but such only as are lawfully thereunto called by their high authorities, according to the ordinances of this realm.

**05.** Furthermore, I do acknowledge the Queen's Majesty's prerogative and superiority of government of all estates and in all causes, as well ecclesiastical as temporal, within this realm, and other her dominions and countries, to be agreeable to God's Word, and of right to appertain to her highness in such sort, as is in the late act of Parliament expressed, and since by Her Majesty's injunctions declared and expounded.

**06.** Moreover, touching the Bishop of Rome, I do acknowledge and confess that by the Scriptures and the Word of God he hath no more authority than other bishops have in their provinces and dioceses; and therefore, the power which he now challengeth, that is, to be supreme head of the universal Church of Christ, and to be above all emperors, kings and princes, is an usurped power, contrary to the Scriptures and Word of God, and contrary to the example of the primitive Church, and therefore is for most just causes taken away and abolished in this realm.

**07.** Furthermore, I do grant and confess that the Book of Common Prayer and administration of the holy sacraments, set forth by the authority of Parliament, is agreeable to the Scriptures, and that it is catholic, apostolic and most for the advancing of God's glory and the edifying of God's people, both for that it is in a tongue that may be understood of the people, and also for the doctrine and form of ministration contained in the same.

**08.** And although in the administration of baptism there is neither exorcism, oil, salt, spittle or hallowing of the water now used, and for that they were of late years abused and esteemed to be necessary, where they pertain not to the substance and necessity of the sacrament, that they be reasonably abolished, and yet the sacrament full and perfectly ministered to all intents and purposes, agreeable to the institution of our Saviour Christ.

**09.** Moreover I do not only acknowledge that private masses were never used amongst the fathers of the primitive Church, I mean, public ministration and receiving of the sacrament by the priest alone, without a just number of communicants, according to Christ's saying: *Take ye and eat ye* [Mt 26:26], etc., but also that the doctrine that maintaineth the mass to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the quick and the dead, and a mean to deliver souls out of purgatory,

is neither agreeable to Christ's ordinance nor grounded upon doctrine apostolic, but contrariwise most ungodly and most injurious to the precious redemption of our Saviour Christ, and his only sufficient sacrifice offered once for ever upon the altar of the cross.

10. I am of that mind also, that the holy communion or sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, for the due obedience to Christ's institution, and to express the virtue of the same, ought to be ministered unto the people under both kinds; and that it is avouched by certain fathers of the Church to be a plain sacrilege, to rob them of the mystical cup, for whom Christ hath shed his most precious blood, seeing he himself hath said: *Drink ye all of this* [Mt 26:27]; considering also that in the time of the ancient doctors of the Church, as Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, Gelasius and others, six hundred years after Christ and more, both the parts of the sacrament were ministered to the people.

11. Last of all, as I do utterly disallow the extolling of images, relics and feigned miracles, and also all kind of expressing God invisible in the form of an old man, or the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, and all other vain worshipping of God, devised by man's fantasies, besides or contrary to the Scriptures, as wandering on pilgrimages, setting up of candles, praying upon beads, and such like superstition; which kinds of works have no promise of reward in Scripture, but contrariwise threatenings and maledictions; so I do exhort all men to the obedience of God's law and to the works of faith, as charity, mercy, pity, alms, devout and frequent prayer with the affection of the heart, and not with the mouth only, godly abstinence and fasting, charity, obedience to the rulers, and superior powers, with such like works and godliness of life commanded by God in his Word, which as St Paul saith: *hath promises both of this life and of the life to come*, and are works only acceptable in God's sight.

These things above rehearsed, though they be appointed by common order, yet I do without all compulsion, with freedom of mind and conscience, from the bottom of my heart, and upon most sure persuasion, acknowledge to be true and agreeable to God's Word; and therefore I exhort you all, of whom I have cure, heartily and obediently to embrace and receive the same, that we all joining together in unity of spirit, faith and charity, may also at length be joined together in the Kingdom of God, and that through the merits and death of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all glory and empire now and for ever. Amen.