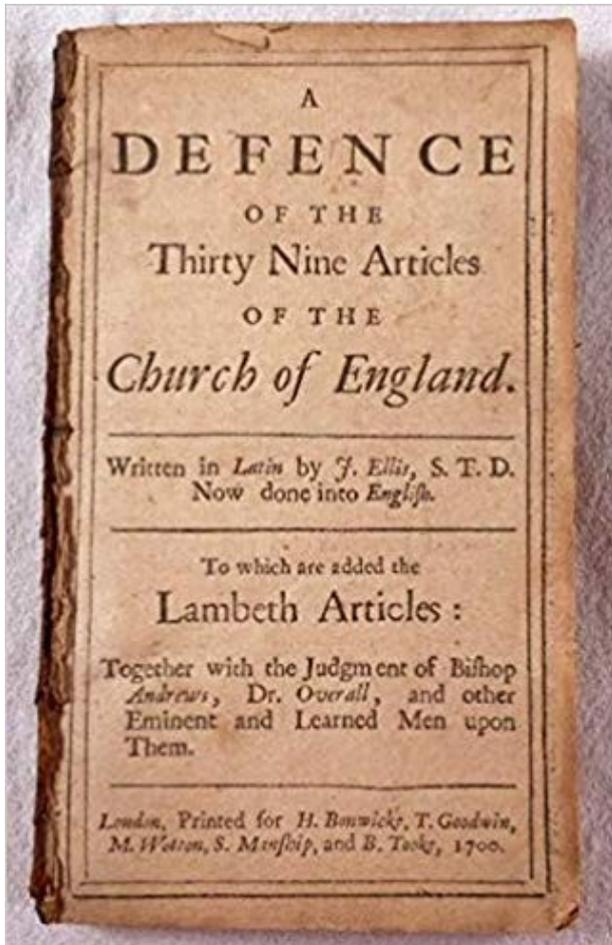


This document is offered for discussion of basic Christian views and does not represent policy or officially agreed views of Anglican Essentials Wales or any of its member organisations.

The 39 articles



Just because a document is old does not mean it is not true. The Bible may be old but it still remains holistically true, just as Jesus Christ constantly berated those around him for picking out text out of any context, or out of any reference to other text, and said that we must take Scripture holistically.

The thirty-nine articles are the “constitution” of the Anglican Church in England and Wales. Just because it is old does not mean that it is not true.

Even though the Church in Wales is separate now to the Church of England it still has the 39 articles as it's “constitution”.

As the Roman Empire retreated Wales was one of the last remaining parts of the Roman Empire in Britain. It is a very strange fact, but true, that the Church of England existed before England did!!!

When England was made up of Kingdoms in the same way that Wales was, kingdoms like Mercia, Wessex, Northumbria and so on, it

was in this time that the Church of England came into being. So it is that these kings made bequests to the Church even before their kingdoms merged into a single state and before St Augustine had even arrived.

The Venerable Bede gave us the very first record of St Augustine bringing Christianity to England BUT The Venerable Bede records that amongst the very first things St Augustine did was that he went and met the Bishops. Any sensible person thinks “*Hang on - if he is bringing Christianity to England then who are these Bishops?*” Of course, St Augustine actually brought Roman Catholicism to England. Hence St Patrick, who was captured in England and taken to Ireland, was from a Christian family and his Father was a priest even though this is all more than a whole century before the time of St Augustine. So it is that the Church of England pre-existed St Augustine's arrival at Canterbury.

This means that the Church of England existed already before any allegiance to Rome and to Roman Catholicism.

At the reformation the 39 articles was written by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer in the 16th century and published later at the time of the Book of Common Prayer in the 17th century.

The Church at the reformation grew out of the Roman Catholic church and so there is some continuity, and the truths set out in the 39 articles are just as relevant today as they were when they were written.

The 39 articles also reveals the basic tenets of the Christian faith. To be a Christian is to follow Jesus Christ and the clue is the name: CHRISTian. So it is that the 39 articles simply tell us:

Article I. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker, and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Article V says the Holy Ghost / Holy Spirit is that third part of the Trinity.

So Christians believe that God is three and God is one.

That may sound very odd but each night when you watch the television or go to your computer you are looking at an RGB monitor. RGB means red-green-blue. Every colour can be made of different degrees of red, green and blue light. If you put all three colours together at equal intensity you get white. Now white is interesting because when we see white light, we are actually seeing every colour equally, and the object that is white is emitting, i.e. giving away, everything (all colours). If you see an object that is black you are seeing an object that is keeping all colours to itself and is giving away nothing at all. So the most light-greedy objects are black! So white is God and is perfection that gives us everything. So God gives us everything.

So in everyday life we are using something that is one colour comprising three colours in different proportions. Trinitarian items are all around us.

Article II. Of the Word or Son of God, which was made very Man.

The Son,is one Christ, very God, and very Man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of human beings.

So Christians believe that Christ was indeed crucified for all of us and gave his life for us because all of us are so valuable to him.

Article III. Of the going down of Christ into Hell.

As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed, that he went down into Hell.

As part of that sacrifice for our wrong-doing, our Lord Jesus Christ (God) died and was buried in a cold stone tomb.

Article IV. Of the Resurrection of Christ.

Christ did truly rose again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of Man's nature; wherewith he ascended into Heaven, and there sits, until he return to judge all humankind at the last day.

As the culmination of that sacrifice by Christ (God) Christians believe that Jesus Christ actually rose again from the dead and is with God and is God, cloaking our wrong-doing with forgiveness and making it possible for us to come close to God even though we are wrong doers.

Article X says we have free will and so we keep making mistakes. **Article XI** says we are ONLY seen as forgiven, and therefore righteous before God, through our unwavering belief in Jesus Christ as our Saviour. **Article XII** then says that you can, and should, do good works but good works will never, ever be enough to save you in God's eyes.

Paul was a Saint and his letters are in the New testament of the Bible. So you can see that Paul was good, very good. Yet St Paul understood all this completely. St Paul wrote in Romans at chapter 7 at verse 21 that he wanted to do good but kept on getting things wrong:

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So if even St Paul, who is a really good person and a Saint, keeps getting it wrong then who are we to suggest we are better than St Paul ? If even St Paul constantly needs the forgiveness given by Jesus Christ then so does every single one of us. This means that all of us need to constantly repent of the wrong we do and receive the forgiveness that Jesus Christ freely gives to every one of us. What matters is the recognition that we are imperfect and realising the value of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

It also means that Christianity is the ONLY faith in which GOD dies for us and GOD gives us forgiveness so long as we believe in our Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

VI. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.

Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any human, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

This refers to all the books of the Bible including what is called the Apocrypha. We do have to remember that we are talking about the Scripture of the Holy Bible holistically, and so we must remember not to take bits on their own as if they are the law without the rest of Holy Scripture. After all, Jesus Christ constantly berated those around him for picking out text out of any context, or out of any reference to other text, and said that we must take Scripture holistically.

So the Bible may be old but it still remains holistically true, today, the same as yesterday, and the same as tomorrow, when it will still be true just as it always was.