

On the 39 Articles: notes by Michael Gray

This is not a book length commentary, and it should not contain any original material. However, most Christians do not have access to the full commentaries, which are in any case fairly old, but might reasonably want a basic understanding of the Articles. I include at the end an earlier article of mine (2008) which discusses the practical use of the Articles. (Warning: circumstances have changed!)

The origin of these notes is sermons preached mainly on occasional Sundays after Trinity at Letchworth over a period of four years. Inevitably, the Articles had to be expounded one at a time, and with minimal referencing forward and back. My purpose was and is descriptive, not apologetic.

The Articles are most easily found in modern English Books of Common Prayer (1662). However, there is room for doubt whether the master text of the Articles should be the Latin, of which the English is a somewhat free translation. It is essential to know that the Articles used by the Episcopalians in the United States, the Articles of the Church of Ireland and the Articles of the Free Church of England are *not* the 39 Articles. And the “Lambeth Articles” which nearly cost Archbishop Whitgift his position (and property) are only relevant as indicating what he and his collaborators thought (but the Queen disagreed) was needed but was *not* clearly taught in the 39 Articles.

First, some history. Various sets of Articles were produced within the Church of England after the break with Rome. None of these had ecclesiastical authority or use. Eventually, in 1563, a text largely agreed by Convocation but later modified by the Queen came into being. Its hybrid authority might be problematic. Even later, in 1571, Convocation agreed and gave authority to the current text. Parliament attempted to require the clergy to subscribe to only a limited group of the Articles. Convocation, however, required the clergy to subscribe to all the Articles. But the form of words for the subscription was only settled (for a time) in the Canons of 1604. Lay Christians did not have to subscribe (students in the two Universities were until the nineteenth century an exception).

Second, the fundamental problem of interpretation. You will find in the Book of Common Prayer “His Majesty's Declaration” (issued by Charles 1, probably written by Laud). This requires the Articles to be understood as they stand, “in the literal and grammatical sense”, without adducing any other source. Unfortunately, when the Church of England appointed a Commission to investigate subscription and assent, it reported that the Declaration was “of only historical interest”! Whether in force or not, it is a sensible approach. It is one thing to subscribe (declare your assent in writing) to a text of limited size which is fully available to you, and quite another to have to take into account with it some other text or interpretative system which is not so tightly bounded (and may come down to a disputed scholarly opinion). Once for all, then, we cannot use Cranmer's alleged opinions or those of his contemporary colleagues to settle the meaning of a text which only stabilised a generation after them. We cannot usually appeal to the views of the final Elizabethan compilers, not least because we often do not know who was responsible for any part of any Article. We cannot use Calvin's opinions, let alone those of the Synod of Dort or even more recent Calvinists, unless the text of the Articles makes a clear reference to following or rejecting him (which it never does). It is even hazardous to say that where the 39 Articles are different from the earlier drafts, then the theology of those drafts has been rejected. It might only be a case of finding (or thinking one has found) a better way of doing the same job.

A subsidiary topic in principles of interpretation is “Tract 90”. This is more often condemned than studied. Newman at the time of writing was affirming the Articles (which he had subscribed) in the terms of His Majesty's Declaration. In his then view, most of the Articles were quite simply right and required no explaining, but “certain passages” (only) were commonly thought to be opposed to Roman teaching (as in the Council of Trent) or more widely to known beliefs and practices of the Early Church, and he wished to examine the truth of this opinion. Sometimes, his analysis may have been right. The difficulty on the specifically Roman point is this. By 1563, and certainly by 1571, it would have been possible for the Articles to refer to some decisions of Trent as official Roman teaching (though not yet, if that was thought important, ratified by the Pope). But they never do so. It is not always clear, as will emerge in various places, what the Articles *do* oppose. It is a further matter whether *current* Roman teaching (for which their Catechism was until the current papacy the most convenient source) is the same as or indistinguishable from something which the Articles oppose.

It should be obvious that the Articles have never been revised since 1571 and therefore (the compilers not being prophets) take no account of subsequent developments. Whatever their original purpose (if this is a meaningful concept), they never were and certainly cannot now be a comprehensive tool, capable of answering all our newly emerging questions. They assume a state church to which everybody belongs, and a royal supremacy in both church and state, all of which we cannot hope to recover even if we desire it. To some extent, then, they are alien. That does not mean they are useless.

As anybody reading this is likely to have access to a Book of Common Prayer with the Articles, I do not print them fully. Obviously, the Latin text (where adduced) is not so available.

The first block of Articles (1-5, broadly on Trinity and Incarnation) can fairly be said to be conventional Western teaching on fundamental points. They are in no sense anti-Roman. It may be that the most careful scholarship can find disagreements with near-contemporary Roman or continental Protestant formulations, but these are unlikely to be intentional. The reformers were not revising God! (Nor am I.) Even in the remaining Articles, more is conventional than many imagine.

1. There are slight textual issues. English “of this Godhead” but Latin “hujus divinae naturae” which might more precisely be rendered “of this divine nature”. English “of one substance . . .” but Latin “ejusdem essentiae . . .” which is better rendered as “of the same substance . . .” I do not think these issues reflect any intended theological difference. As to the substance of the Article, here are some (inevitably oversimplified) comments. Never ignore the “one”. It is the most important gift which the Jews gave to us. Whatever the difficulties, they are not to be fudged by a plurality of opposing “gods”. The English word “God” hides the non-trivial point that masculine terms (in the Latin of the Article, as in Greek and Hebrew) are the least erroneous. God is not like a fertility-goddess, with which the Jews were familiar. “Living and true” basically covers the point that God is active, not a do-nothing. “Everlasting” in modern terms takes us beyond the “big bang”. Time is merely part of God's creation. Contrast again the classical gods, who have their beginnings in time. “Without body, parts or passions” again contrasts the classical gods, who have all of these things in excess. Masculine terms – but never imagine a male body with the associated “parts” (sexual organs). We need to be a little careful about the “passions”. The Old Testament contains talk of God “being angry” or “provoked” or occasionally even of God loving or desiring. Strictly, this will not do; it is using human language in a context where it is strained to the limit. It is of the nature of God that human beings cannot force anything on him, even emotion. “Of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness” makes clear the God is subject to no limit but himself. Yes, this opens us to the challenge of “why doesn't he stop it (whatever the complainant dislikes)”; but it is not power alone; rather power exercised in wisdom and for good ends, and not least in consistency. If God did not act consistently, many human goods (and not least science) would be impossible. “Maker and preserver” again insists on the unity of God in action; no rival God, nor even God and (pre-existent) matter. Yes, this opens the challenge “why didn't he make a better job of it?” but actually it is not easy to imagine piecemeal improvements; God chooses for the most part to let his creation work itself out (and it is only at the end that we will fully understand what the nature of the “job” was, if indeed we would even then be able). We will come to the complications of the “Fall” later. The Article ends by mentioning the Trinity of Persons, in a conventional Western manner.
2. There are very slight textual issues. English “Man's nature” but Latin “naturam humanam” which as “human nature” is perhaps more to modern taste, though the English was when written not exclusive of women. English “whole and perfect” but the Latin has adverbs “integre atque perfecte” better rendered “so that two natures, the Godhead and Manhood, were wholly and perfectly joined together in a unity of Person” This Article in effect summarises the “Chalcedonian Definition” of the fourth Ecumenical Council. In effect, Christ is the bridge between God and us, and a bridge is useless unless firmly attached to both sides of the river and crossing it without break. (This is an idea of the late fourth century Church.) The Article rightly insists on the reality of Christ's sufferings (no faking). If there is a problem, it is in “to reconcile the Father to us”. We would more naturally speak of reconciling us to the Father (see 1 John 4.10). After all, the problem is in us, not in God! This is again the imperfections of human language derived from the Old Testament.
3. There may be a textual issue. English “Hell” but Latin “Inferos” which might mean “those below” (Hebrew Sheol and Greek Hades) without the implication of a place of punishment which Hell has for

us. Note that in Article 4 the Resurrection is “from death” rather than from Hell. The point is that in all senses of “death” Christ truly underwent it. No let-offs. An earlier draft was even more explicit about Christ's preaching activity in “prison or hell”. This of course opens up the Christian myth of the “Harrowing of Hell”; the Article as we have it does not actively reject the myth.

4. No textual issues. There is no chance of finding the Body and if we did, our faith would be vain. The Article is normal Christian belief. One may think the compilers might have gone on to stress that the nature of Christ's *entire* resurrection is a paradigm for our own hope.
5. Again the slight textual issue of “one” and “ejusdem” (the same). “Proceeding from the Father and the Son” is normal Western thought, as in the Western form of the “Nicene” creed and the “Athanasian” creed. The Eastern Orthodox retain the original text of the “Nicene” creed “from the Father” (without reference to the Son). This is not the best place to explain either the issues of changing a creed once an Ecumenical Council has agreed it or the issues of Trinitarian theology.
6. There is a slight trap that Latin has no definite article but English has to decide whether one is needed. So concerning the Apocrypha “the other books” seems more definite than the Latin. Fortunately, the comprehensive listing of the books is unambiguous. This is the first point at which the Articles may be said to diverge from pre-reformation (Roman) thought. There is little doubt about the facts. The Early Church read in church (and used in argument) all the books of the Greek (“Septuagint”) version of the Old Testament. After all, it was fluent in Greek and only very few theologians knew Hebrew. As the Jews came to standardize on only the books which they had in Hebrew (and some Aramaic), it was obvious that there was a wider and a narrower list of books. We must remember that technology was changing, and separate scrolls for each book only slowly gave way to what we know as book format, in which it was possible to have all the Old Testament in a single volume. The Western Church eventually adopted Latin as its language, so continued to read the wider list of books in Latin. There was no conclusive list of books; as it happens, the compilers of the Article included some books which the Council of Trent rejected, and the Church of England continued to read its wider list of books in church. I am not convinced that the Church has to assume that the Holy Spirit guided the Jews into their final list of books only some time after the Resurrection (see the myth in 4 Esdras 14 for this) so that the other books (the Apocrypha) should be devalued as they are in the Article. To turn to the theology of the Article, I accept the opening sentence. Many other doctrines may be true and edifying but are not to be enforced as necessary. But the second sentence, beginning “In the name of Holy Scripture”) is not true. The extent of the Old Testament has never been resolved between West and East (quite apart from those reformers who insisted on only reading the books which the Jews accepted). Several books which we include in the New Testament were widely disputed in the Early Church (Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles, the Apocalypse) and several which we exclude were sometimes admitted (1 Clement, Barnabas, the Didache, the Shepherd). To be fair, the compilers did not know much of this, but we have to face facts. Our current list of New Testament books is not found until the fourth century and never had formal recognition at an ecumenical council. Nevertheless, I have no wish to change the list of books which may be read in church. But I doubt that a book can be read “for example of life and instruction of manners” without being authoritative; and if so then the ban on using it “to establish any doctrine” seems odd. It may be worth noting that this Article says nothing good or bad about “tradition”. But the starting point of the Article has the effect that tradition could not add anything essential to salvation. It may then seem ironic that they use Jerome as a witness to tradition – especially as his was a distinctly minority opinion. That is a bad use of tradition. Ironically, and like it or not, we have *only* tradition (Jewish or Christian) to determine the list of the books of scripture. God has never given us a list for either Testament. And, it has to be added, God has never given us an authentic text of them; we have no choice but to use the tools of scholarship.
7. Textually, English “they are not to be heard” is not the same as Latin “male sentiunt” which is more accurately rendered as “they think badly”. The effect is similar. The important background is that the Church of England has always read far more Old Testament (including Apocrypha) in church with a view to the faithful hearing it in their own language than any other ecclesiastical body. So the Old Testament matters far more to it than to most Christian bodies. The Article is not innovative. If it is directed against anybody, it is against protestants who thought the Old Testament either irrelevant or

wholly binding. The interesting principle in the Article is the distinction between moral and ceremonial law. The persistence of the moral law was unavoidable given the use of the Ten Commandments in the Communion (1552 onwards) and the Catechism (1549 onwards). But there are many other laws in the Old Testament which might fairly be considered moral. Presumably the compilers believed that the law of tithing was still binding! It is not clear what the limits are.

8. The Article is normal Western teaching (the Orthodox only use the original form of what is commonly called the Nicene creed). We know (but the compilers did not) that the Nicene creed does not originate from the Council held in Nicea, that the Athanasian creed has nothing to do with Athanasius, and that the Apostles' creed is a reworking of the Old Roman creed and was not drawn up by the Apostles. To be fair, the compilers had their doubts about the last attribution! We also know that the Western form of the Nicene creed is not the same as that (probably) agreed by the Council of Constantinople and (certainly) ratified by the Council of Chalcedon. And indeed the Prayer Book form of the Nicene creed also introduces further changes such as the omission of "holy" as an attribute of the Church. It is an important truth that the Prayer Book regularly exposes ordinary Christians to all three creeds. If not just acceptance but also recital of the Creeds were enough to prove belonging to the Universal Church, the evidence is there. We might be concerned about "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture". For the clause "whose kingdom shall have no end" is hard to reconcile with one scriptural text (though based on another). And the fundamental Trinitarian formula "being of one substance" is not scriptural; that is not the same as saying it is not true! The use of non-scriptural wording is the best way the Church found of being faithful to the scriptural evidence.
9. Textually, one might doubt the difference between "baptized" (English) and "renatis" (Latin) which might be rendered "born again" and implies rather than states baptism. Also, "and lust" in the English corresponds to nothing in the Latin, but this makes no difference. In general, the Article is normal Western teaching, Augustine's systematizing of Paul. (The Orthodox never gave Augustine the status which he had in the West.) For once, it is clearly directed: against "the Pelagians", apparently some wilder sects of the reformation who were thought to have revived this ancient British heresy (which is basically that you can be good if you choose and so should not need God's help for salvation). There is no assertion here that the Church of Rome was Pelagian. The Article benefits from close reading. We may use our better scholarship to doubt whether the Hebrew of Genesis actually refers to a person named Adam rather than to man (humanity) in the abstract; but this does not alter the "fault and corruption". "Very far gone from original righteousness" is a precise formulation; it is not "total depravity". We are damaged goods – indeed badly damaged. As Christians, we remain damaged. This is simply a fact of life. Now the fact of being damaged will not bring a Christian to hell; in that sense "there is no condemnation". Notice "for them that believe and are baptized" - the English text, reflecting the "long ending" of Mark and several passages in Acts, makes baptism necessary.
10. Textually, the title "of free will" does not describe the content of the Article. That content is again normal Western teaching, Augustine's systematizing of Paul. Again the implied opponents are the Pelagians; though in the polemic of the reformation period it was a common attitude that your opponents must be Pelagians (and that practical Romanism as distinct from careful theology led there). We cannot save ourselves, or by ourselves put ourselves into a right relationship with God, or act out such a relationship; only by grace of God. This is a corollary of the previous Article.
11. Textually, there is no "Homily of Justification". This indicates how casual the Articles can be even when referring to an existing official published document. There is a Homily of Salvation, which is undoubtedly meant. Now this Article is still normal Western teaching. "We are accounted righteous" is a verdict – what God declares, is the case. Philosophers might think of it as a performative. When Christ in his earthly ministry says "thy sins be forgiven thee" this is not a statement about the future (after the Cross) but has immediate effect. I, this son of man, have God's power to forgive sins, and I exercise it. Obviously, God does not tell lies. He does not say we are good when we are not; he forgives. "Only for the merit of our Lord" means on the basis of that power which Christ was given on earth and still has. "By faith" is not by holding the correct opinions, but, in so far as it is in us at all, by our trust in that very Christ. Bicknell rightly points out that the Prodigal Son did not have opinions or alleged rights – he simply trusted his father. "And not for our own works or deservings" - the last word

here is “merita” in the Latin, which makes a pointed reference back to “the merit of our Lord” earlier. Those who assume that justification is an invention of Paul should be reminded of “we are unprofitable servants”; of course there is better and worse, but the best is not good enough! So we reach “justified by faith only”. Now followers of Barth might be tempted towards “the faithfulness of God”, but the compilers had not read Barth! They did know that forgiveness was in Christ's gift, and all we can do is trust him. Otherwise we would be able to force ourselves on God, which is not possible. If you didn't (to some extent) rely on God, why bother with Christianity? Faith as trust in God (not as having opinions about him) is the only possible starting point. It is essential; it is not the whole Gospel. As to “very full of comfort”, this must be true compared to the idea of buying our way into God's favour, for how could one ever know one was succeeding? The Article, like Paul, knows of only two possible ways into God's favour; so if one is excluded, the other it must be.

12. Textually, the English “follow after justification” does not fit well with the Latin “justificatos sequuntur”, which is rather “follow the justified”. Also, “pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ” does not fit well with “deo grata sunt, et accepta in Christo” which is rather “pleasing to God, and accepted in Christ”. There are other lesser ways in which the two versions differ, so this Article is an instance of the English and Latin being rather independent of each other, though hardly in disagreement. “Good works” is best simply understood as a Christian life, rather than a mere series of independent actions. So, what the Article says is that to find a Christian life where there is a Christian trust in God is just what we should expect (and pleases God). By implication, to avoid these good works because it feels as if you are earning salvation by them is a mistake.
13. Textually, English “the School-authors” but Latin simply “multi” (many). This is an important difference. The School-authors were a limited group of medieval writers – the compilers knew who they were (Aquinas is the obvious example) and could still just about remember what they taught (many of the books had been destroyed). The Latin attacks no identifiable person or persons, but they would seem to be contemporaries of the compilers. Pedantically, the title does not correspond to the text. “Works before justification” is a narrower category (only applying - or rather not - to some Christians) than “works done before the grace of Christ” which may indeed be works done by those who never come to faith. Paul seems to treat their works with some respect in Romans 2, which had been made the basis for “grace of congruity” precisely because it seemed grace could not follow them in the normal way. But there is a further problem with Cornelius in Acts, of whom it is said that his “prayers and alms had gone up as a memorial before God”, and because of them he receives the grace of conversion. There is a danger here that “grace” becomes treated as a thing rather than as God's favour. And was there ever a time when God was not assisting man?
14. Textually, English “Voluntary works besides, over and above God's commandment” but Latin “Opera quae superrogationis apellant” which is more like “Works which they call works of going beyond the commandment” - notice that the Latin alone attacks an unidentified group who make the claim, possibly the same as “multi” of the previous Article, and the English alone gives an expansive but accurate explanation of the technical term. The Article is a clear and unanswerable argument. Everything is asked of us; even if we could do everything, there is nothing left so we simply cannot do more. And we don't in practice do all that is asked of us. The very danger of using the ten commandments as a definition of Christian living is that it may be true (or at least imagined) that “all these have I kept since my youth up”. And then follows the feeling that if I do more, then I have done more than is required. But the whole approach is a mistake.
15. There is a grammatical oddity in the English, but the Latin is correct. It is better to follow the Latin and so extend the parenthesis “(sin only except)” to the end of the sentence. This is a peculiar Article, in that it seemingly attacks nothing identifiable. At the time of compilation, the immaculate conception of the Virgin was not a defined Roman belief, only a controverted topic. If it had been desirable to condemn that belief, why not do so clearly and openly? As it is, the Article is normal Western teaching. Christ “like unto us in all things (sin only except)” is a truth of the Chalcedonian Definition. Christ as the perfect offering is straightforward teaching from Hebrews. That we “offend in many things” is from James; “if we say we have no sin” is a simple citation of 1 John. This simple assembly of scriptural passages is uncommon in the Articles. But there is nothing wrong here.

16. The Article is probably directed against the wilder reformation sects, since the opinions condemned are that a Christian cannot sin, or that if he does, repentance is impossible. (Needless to say, the Article antedates the five points of a much later Calvinism, including the perseverance of the elect.) The Article is well aware of Hebrews (that it is sometimes impossible to recover a sinner) and 1 John (that there is a sin unto death), not to ignore the “sin against the Holy Ghost”. But not all serious sins (“deadly sin willingly committed”) are in this category; there has accordingly to be a “grant of repentance” (the Latin “locus poenitentiae” is perhaps better rendered as a “place for repentance” and is from Hebrews, albeit misapplied). If so, the Church has to provide that opportunity. The Commination expresses a wish for the restoration of public penance; that never happened. But the Elizabethan church retained the possibility of private confession and absolution.
17. This is a huge Article so far as word count goes. It does not have significant textual issues, and indeed seems to have been little changed since 1553, which means that no later developments in the period from 1553 to 1571 (such as revised and expanded editions of Calvin's Institutes down to 1559) were thought to require it to be updated. The Latin reflects the Vulgate; the English of course antedates the Authorised Version! As already hinted, the meaning of the Article was not transparent less than a generation after its approval. For if it had been obviously adequately Calvinist to satisfy Whitgift for his disciplinary purposes, then his Lambeth Articles of 1595 would have been unnecessary. So there may be some difficulty in ascertaining what it does mean. It falls into three parts. The first (roughly two thirds of the whole) is a contemplation of the normal Christian path; the second, much more briefly, considers the other path; the third may be said to discuss how we should receive what has been previously described. “Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God” then is the starting point. Whatever else there may be, that “wears the trousers”. And God is not a man that he should change his mind. From the beginning that has been his purpose. The Article never says that anybody is “predestined to damnation”. Nor indeed that anybody can be known to us to be predestined to salvation – the Article insists the matter is “secret to us”. Now it is a simple matter of observation (and was even at the time of compilation) that God's “choice in Christ” cannot apply to all men alive, for many have no chance of hearing the Gospel and so being brought by God along the normal Christian path. These are simply not discussed in the Article. But this part of the Article is about those who are so brought. This is the nearest the Articles get to the topic of “sanctification”. There is a way of holiness; it involves receiving calling, justification, adoption, the image of Christ, good works, election and predestination. All of this is described in the language of Scripture. And of course if it is working out, it is a matter of “sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort” (beware of taking this emotionally; it is objective). There is no suggestion that this whole passage applies to some small group hidden among the mass of Christians; it would seem to be the normal Christian path. But of course there are two paths (Matthew 7.13-4). There is a way of destruction, and some follow it. I suspect the Article had in focus as “curious and carnal persons” those who were aware of the path of Life and chose to reject it. Their path is only briefly outlined, for the Church is not in the business of damnation. Ironically, from the compilers' point of view, the very success of the reformation in proclaiming the Gospel increased the possibility of its deliberate rejection. We have now reached the concluding paragraph of the Article. “Generally” is the critical term. It means “for all”; for God wills all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2). The Gospel is therefore good news. I think the conclusion hints that it is a mistake to focus on secrets of predestination (let alone reprobation); our business as Christians is with how God guides us along the path of life. The Scriptures tell us clearly what we need to know for that.
18. There are several textual issues. In the title, English “obtaining” but Latin “speranda” which means “hoping for”. Now this matters. In the abstract, obtaining might apply to everyone. Only those with some knowledge about salvation (obviously a narrower group) can be said to hope for it. “They also” is odd as no previous group has been said to “be had accursed”, yet the “also” which was therefore rightly deleted in an earlier draft was later reinstated. English “he professeth” but Latin “profitetur esse servandum” which means “he professeth ought to be followed”. This is the only time in the Articles we find the solemn form “to be had accursed” (Latin “anathemtizandi”), so this Article might seem to address the worst error of them all. But I suspect the use of this formula is mere carrying-over from another document. These are all indications of sloppy workmanship. But there is nothing sloppy about

the argument. There is only one way of salvation. How God deals with the many who have never had a chance of knowing Christ is a matter for God, and we simply don't know. Paul suggests that any good which they do benefits them, just as it benefitted the Jew, but does not give details. Neither the Article nor Paul says that they are damned. It can usefully be added that we are not saved by our choice of Christian denomination! Nor of course, as has already been made clear in earlier Articles, do we earn salvation by our works.

19. You may note the inconsistency that the title is “Of the Church” but the Article is about the “visible church”. This is not in distinction from an invisible church which the Articles never mention; if it existed, we could know nothing about it and it is a simple distraction from what any Christian body has to be about. For a “congregation of faithful men” is indeed visible – it meets together, and is defined by that very fidelity to God. It is further marked by the preaching of the “pure word of God”. The compilers knew that most of their priests could not preach; the reformation had if anything made matters worse as preaching was potentially dangerous both to the preacher and to the state. Still, they set the right target. They did not on paper wholly neglect the Sacraments; but while baptism was, we presume, usually duly ministered they must have known that even the three communions a year supposedly required of the faithful were often not made available (quite apart from the imperfections of the 1559 rite for which a botched solution was provided in 1662). So the right requirements, but very poor performance. To their credit, the compilers did not claim in the Article that the Church of England was perfect. The second paragraph of the Article is anti-Roman. It only makes sense if controversialists on both sides were familiar with the errors of the three other Churches named. Unfortunately, these errors are not identified and speculation is pointless. There is a certain weakness in the wording. That a body has historically fallen into error is a good reason for saying that it is not infallible; but it is another matter to say that it is still in error. (Papal infallibility was still a disputed topic, even in Rome, and so is not addressed here.) Yes, historically Rome has sometimes fallen into error “not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith”. (The English is only loosely related to the Latin but the point is the same in both languages.) But the Article only asserts the past “hath erred” and not the present “is still in error”. Presumably the compilers thought Rome was still in error, but they have managed not to say so!
20. It is suspected that the positive teaching, the “power” and “authority” of the Church, was added by the Queen; however, this is not very important as the current wording was eventually adopted by Convocation. Those who thought the English reformation inadequate denied the “power to decree Rites or Ceremonies” existed; nothing could be done without explicit Scriptural warrant. Rome also denied such power other than for itself, and Trent was to be a major step in Roman centralisation. Historically (and not least in the discretion given by the pope to Augustine for his English mission) the local power had existed. Since explicit Scriptural warrant will not even establish Sunday worship, let alone define most of its content, the power has to exist. And a power to decree is a power to change. “Authority in controversies of Faith” is also unavoidable at a regulatory level, though it is obviously much more important for all parts of the Church to agree on the faith than to worship in the same way, and this Article ignores that point. This is not the same as authority to define new articles of faith (though even Rome likes to think that it does not do so!) The restrictions on the Church are mostly ones we have already encountered. They are devastating against modern innovations. The result is not quite the same as “quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus” because a better interpretation of Scripture than before is not precluded by the Article. Nevertheless, it is rightly restrictive – and at much the same time those clergy who preached were being instructed by the same authority to confine themselves to Scripture and its interpretation by the Early Church. The Church of England did not think it was innovating, or should be. Nor should Rome be in the business of innovating, as we will eventually see concerning Transubstantiation.
21. There is an important textual difference: English “it may be declared” but Latin “ostendi possint” which (ignoring the grammatical difference) would be “it may be shown”. The Latin is a much higher standard of proof. This Article is thought to imply that Trent is not a General Council, because only convened by the Pope, and that even if it were, it would not be infallible. But why not simply say so?! In the early period of the reformation and for a time before it the idea that a General Council was the

supreme authority and could settle all disputes had been around. Later, Luther had found it convenient to reject this idea. Now it is a fact that the undoubted Ecumenical Councils had taken place at least under imperial authority (though Constantine rightly insisted that the Gospel must preside, not the Emperor). But bishops had long before the period of the Ecumenical Councils met in council without any form of state authority, and continued to do so. So it is hard to justify “the commandment and will of Princes” as necessary except by invoking the Supreme Headship of Henry VIII as a universal principle, but the Article does not say this. Maybe this is an indirect way of saying that General Councils, whose members would relate to various different monarchs (not all even Christian), were simply impossible. (Even more so now, as there are very few Princes who have authority in their own persons now reigning.) There is plenty of evidence from the fourth century of seemingly General Councils convened by emperors which did err; that point is certainly true. The conclusion of the Article is almost valueless; all the erring Councils claimed to follow Scripture, so the mere making of the claim achieves little. The claim has to be made good (as the Latin form says) – but who is to decide? The Article says nothing about the modern theory of “reception” sometimes used to decide which Councils were in fact sound; that means a period, perhaps quite long, of uncertainty whether a Council's decisions are to be respected or not.

22. A simple anti-Roman article. It may be noted that an earlier draft condemned the “doctrine of school-authors” which is more precise. “Romish” (Latin “Romanensium” which is “of the folks at Rome”) is by comparison vague. One has to say that the compilers had not visited Rome and done a survey of public opinion! It is unproven whether the opinion of Trent was known in England when the Article took its final form. The Article is not well worded; doctrines (plural) concerning unrelated topics are treated as if they were only one thing under a single condemnation. Mostly the issues are simple, but “pardons” (Latin “indulgentiis”) might for those familiar with Luther be better rendered ‘indulgences’. Now purgatory and indulgences is indeed a medieval development not known to the East and not grounded in Scripture but in alleged subsequent revelations. The remaining points, those connected with the cult of saints, are by comparison much older and more universal in the Church, and indeed approved (carefully) by the Seventh Ecumenical Council, which was well aware of the duty not to disobey the Ten Commandments which the iconoclasts had alleged! (Even Trent knew that superstitious abuses had to be repressed.) So we are back with the view that General Councils have erred in spite of their appeals to Scripture, and that the local Church of England had all the authority required for the reformation iconoclasm.
23. We might be surprised at English “in the Congregation” but Latin “in Ecclesia” (in the Church) both in the title and in the body of the Article. This is a distinction without a difference; ministry obviously happens in the visible Church, which as an earlier Article asserts, is a congregation of the faithful. The Article is silent about what it opposes, but that silence has the effect that the Church of England knows of no “inner call” (which can only be recognised). Ministers are made by the conferring of Holy Orders – see Article 36. Their assignment to a particular sphere of work does not depend on the congregation but on process of lawful authority. The Article does not say it is a matter for the Bishop (possibly because the origins of the text are in an attempted agreement with Lutherans who did not have bishops), but clearly that is what is meant in an English context, though the role of the patron should not be ignored. The compilers could not foresee the “Bishop of Exeter's case” which in the nineteenth century much weakened the Bishop's power to regulate (“call and send”) ministers.
24. Again Congregation and Church, which can be ignored as in the previous Article. The Article goes beyond the facts in “plainly repugnant”. Early worship, so far as we can recover it and if the language of the New Testament reflects it, was in a rather distorted vernacular (Greek with large elements of Hebrew usage). Nowhere did a genuine vernacular persist even when missionaries endeavoured to provide it. Everywhere worship (and the text of Scripture) came by persistence to be in an archaic form (Latin in the West is an extreme case). In the English reformation, the Prayer Book was not a “tongue understood of the people” in Cornwall and Wales, and its English was not fully intelligible in many other parts of England. The Article cannot of course be blamed for the fact that this strange language persisted in use until the late twentieth century! But certainly the obligation alleged in the Article was never properly discharged. Now the Article is not wholly wrong. There may be a case for use of a

genuine vernacular – it is just that it is very hard to do and even harder to keep up to date. The modern experience of attempted vernacular liturgy whether in Anglicanism or Romanism is that the Holy Spirit does not seem interested in supplying to the Church people with the ability which would be needed (or that the Church has an inveterate habit of rejecting those so supplied!) And Scripture if accurately translated will always be odd compared to modern usage. One might question the implication that worship is about conveying information, so that a “tongue understood” is essential. That is indeed part of the truth; but worship is also about giving glory to God, and a much wider repertoire of responses than the purely intellectual is naturally involved.

25. This Article falls into several parts. The first part is positive teaching (against the wilder reformation as often). Sacraments are not mere “badges or tokens” which we ought to comply with to show we belong. They are “effectual signs of grace” - God is achieving things by means of them. In an earlier draft, it was denied that the Sacraments achieved their effects “*ex opere operato*” (roughly, simply by being performed). The removal of this statement is important, but cannot be used to say that the contrary teaching was therefore adopted. But it is hard to find a way to accept the positive affirmations (which are not qualified even by the need for the right disposition in the recipient) without accepting “*ex opere operato*”. The Article is on firm ground in asserting that Baptism and the Eucharist were ordained by Christ. That is what the Scriptures say, whatever some modern scholars think. As for the other five, “commonly” does not mean or imply wrongly. After all, “sacrament” is not a scriptural term, so this is a question of human usage. Given that confirmation is properly part of baptism (the Queen had received both together) and the others are not essential to all Christians, there is obviously a difference. The Church of England was clearly performing all of them except “extreme Unction”. That alone is a “corrupt following of the apostles” as it was no longer the anointing of the sick with a view to recovery (clearly a Gospel practice) but a preparation for death. That said, it is a failure in the Church of England that it has never restored the proper use of this ministry! The last paragraph is more polemical. It is simply true that the Sacraments (actually the issue is solely about the consecrated Bread and Wine) were not by positive institution of Christ gazed upon or carried about. It does not follow from that fact that this behaviour is forbidden, for the Article does not assert that nothing may be done without a positive institution of Christ, and indeed other Articles deny the restriction. That said, medieval worship, in which gazing upon the Sacrament was normal and communion rare, was a serious distortion. Unfortunately, the reformation though it for a time eliminated the gazing (strangely, low church piety in the nineteenth century came to insist on it) did not much improve the frequency of communion. Carrying about of the sacrament is in fact two very different things. It was widely thought that communion ought to be available to the sick and that bedside celebration was not always possible. Carrying about for that purpose was very ancient, universal and innocent – even Calvin had a good word for it. Carrying about in for example a Corpus Christi procession was far less ancient, not universal, and not a main-stream use of the Sacrament. The concluding sentence is a wholly scriptural warning; damnation (which may mean only harm or loss) is possible.
26. Textually, the title is a mess. English “unworthiness” but Latin “*malitia*” which is more like “ill will”. English “Sacrament” (singular though perhaps the meaning is general) but Latin “*institutionum divinarum*” which is more like “God-given ordinances” and so applies to much more than the sacraments. There was teaching by the wilder reformation (going back indeed to Wycliffe) that only the worthy could preach or administer sacraments to any effect. The compilers of the Article knew only too well the poor quality of many of their clergy, who could not preach and were negligent in conduct of worship (let alone their moral behaviour). So it was essential to make the argument that the Sacraments have effect “because of Christ's institution and promise” (as we have seen before, this is very close to “*ex opere operato*”). This does not solve the problem of inadequate preaching. Nobody doubts that “evil Ministers” should be removed, but in general it has proved possible if difficult to remove the positively and visibly evil, but much harder to do anything about preachers of doubtful doctrine, or the merely negligent.
27. This is another polemical article directed against the wilder reformation, which tended to think that baptism could not achieve anything, and in some cases to say that the baptism of infants must be wholly vacuous. Textually, English “that be not christened” but Latin “*non Christianis*” which is

simply non-Christians. The difference is not very important. “New birth” in the English corresponds to nothing in the Latin; it is a correct gloss. Now baptism is “a sign of profession and mark of difference”; we must receive that truth. But it is also effective “as by an instrument”. (See also Article 25.) God is using it. (Obviously, there are exceptions – hence “rightly”.) “Confirmed” is not just intellectual reassurance; God strengthens the faith of the candidate. Remarkably for the period, this analysis works naturally with adult baptism (originally a total rite with no separate “confirmation”). The vehement insistence on the legitimacy of infant baptism, in which there can be no response of the candidate, is noticeable. It is stretching Scripture to say that Christ, who baptised nobody let alone infants, instituted infant baptism merely because of a few positive words about children. Christ did of course command the Church to baptise and did not restrict this to adults.

28. Another polemical Article, against in different parts the wilder reformation and Rome. Textually, “one to another” corresponds to nothing in the Latin but is again a correct gloss. Similarly, “the change of the Substance of Bread and Wine” is a correct gloss. The compilers thought they knew what was meant by “substance” (in Aristotelian terms); very few now understand the philosophy of substance and accidents. Now again, there is nothing wrong with the “sign”; we must receive that truth. But there is much more. The Article should be read in conjunction with the restoration of the 1549 words “the Body of Christ . . .” on delivery of the Sacrament in 1559. The Queen had insisted on this doctrinal reversal (which had good scriptural authority). Nobody, of course, should doubt the caveats “rightly, worthily and with faith”. As for transubstantiation, it is a doubtful matter whether the Rome known to the compilers (or not!) understood it in the same way as Aquinas, and a further doubt whether modern Rome understands it in the same way. But it is quite obvious that scripture knows nothing of Aristotle! As to “repugnant”, Paul talks of “bread” after consecration in 1 Cor. 11. (Bicknell adds that the Roman canon, as generally used until very recently, does the same. This is slightly unfair “holy bread of eternal life” is not mere bread.) As to “overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament”, the Prayer Book catechism was to be revised (not very long after the Articles) to insist that there was “an outward and visible sign” and an “inward and spiritual grace”. If the sign is a sham (because the substance of bread and wine is not present), the point is made. As for “many superstitions” there had been too many stories of bleeding hosts, to say the least. As to the “heavenly and spiritual manner”, we do for once know who wrote it and what he said he meant. He said that his intent was not to “exclude the Presence of Christ's Body from the Sacrament, but only the grossness and sensibleness in the receiving thereof”. As already warned, his intention cannot be conclusive for the meaning of the paragraph, but it is reasonable to accept his formulation. (It is also irrelevant that an earlier draft had rejected the “real and bodily presence” and that this formulation was abandoned.) The final paragraph is simply true, but only has condemnatory effect if we are confined strictly to Christ's positive ordinances. This repeats points already made. Reservation and carrying about (both with a view to communion) are ancient and universal practices. Reservation for devotional purposes, carrying about in procession, and lifting up (the Elevations) with a view to worship are much later practices confined to the West. That said, none of them would now be an impediment to regular communion or a substitute for it, so it might fairly be questioned to what extent they are harmful now.
29. This Article is about a fairly minor topic. It is accepted that the wicked derive harm rather than benefit from the Sacrament. The question is by what mechanism? Does Christ withdraw his presence, so that they do not receive him (but whatever they receive is to their harm)? This seems to be the view of the Article. The alternative is that they do receive him, to their harm. The Corpus Christi sequence says “Good and evil men are sharing one repast, a doom preparing varied as the heart of man”. So this Article might be held to be anti-Roman. It is not very important.
30. The Article is simply correct. Strictly, the Cup was (Rome said legitimately) denied to everybody other than the celebrant, rather than just to the lay people. But both kinds is the undoubted early and universal practice. One kind is late medieval and only Western (and as often happened, Rome initially resisted the change). It is not to be denied that there are people who for good reason can only receive in one kind, that they should be free to do so, and that there is an argument that Christ will not deny them the full benefit of the Sacrament. But what is necessary for a few should not be imposed upon many. We should not think we can improve on Christ's ordinance when we have it.

31. This is anti-Roman in some sense, but probably more against unofficial opinions than the official teaching of Trent, which was only formulated after the text of the Article had stabilised. The Article opens with positive teaching, which is wholly acceptable. If God saves the adherents of other religions and those with no possibility of knowing the faith, he will achieve this because of the “offering once made”. This is not to deny the value of any good such people have done; but it is not that good, but Christ's saving work, which saves them. Now as for the rest of the Article, there was a view that the Cross only dealt with original sin and that the Mass was needed to deal with actual sin. This is wrong. There was also a view that the Mass could be used to shorten time in purgatory. This obviously falls with the whole concept. It is false opinions that are “blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits”, not the proper use of the Mass. And this is true. The Article has no positive teaching about the relationship between the Cross and the Eucharist. Obviously the Cross was an event in time, though the offering completed in heaven is eternal; and each Eucharist is an event in time. But the relationship between the Eucharist and the completed offering is neither a mere act of remembering nor a new sacrifice, but some form of earthly participation in the benefits of the eternal offering. I do not think my speculations about the relationship between earthly temporal events and eternal verities would be of any value.
32. Some textual confusions. The title agrees (English “priests” and Latin “sacerdotum”) but in the body of the Article the Latin switches to “presbyteris”. This might be thought to be theologically different. But the Article is not about the sacerdotal nature of the Christian ministry. It is simply true that there is no scripture against married clergy, and some passages which could be read to require it. Historically, it was several centuries before it was generally accepted that married men could not be bishops. There also eventually came to be a general view that those in holy orders could not marry. There also eventually came to be a Western view that married men could not enter holy orders. The Western view had undesirable consequences. Many clergy in England at all levels from archbishop downwards had mistresses. The allowing of clergy marriage potentially removed the hypocrisy. And if it was to be allowed, then there was no obvious reason why special rules should be required. (That said, I have known clergy ordained between the wars who were told by their bishops that should not marry, and if they did they would not get a better-financed living so as to be able to support a wife and family.) The hidden point is this. How much discretion exists in the local (national or provincial) Church and how much only more centrally? Clearly it is very undesirable (though this is more an issue now when travel is easy) that somebody be recognised as a priest in one part of the Church and not in another. The Article rather assumes that there are no factors to be considered outside England. But the topic is better considered under Article 34.
33. There is nothing wrong with this Article except practicality, given the current state of secular law. It is appropriate for any organisation whatsoever that the power should exist to expel those who want to belong but not conform, unless and until they change their mind.
34. The opening sentence of the Article is completely sound. “It is not necessary” not least because it has never been the case in the entire history of the Church. No doubt clear departure from Scripture is rightly excluded, but as we have already seen the Church is not limited to only doing what is clearly required in Scripture. Practically, the Church of England had practices (the surplice, the ring in marriage, the sign of the cross in baptism) which the wilder reformation rejected. Hence it was necessary to reject those who followed “private judgement”, particularly if they carried that judgement into non-compliance. So far so good, though it is not to our taste that the “authority of the Magistrate” (which probably meant the Queen) should be dragged into the matter. Eventually we reach the principle involved: “every particular or national church hath authority”. Anciently, it would be every diocese under its Bishop – though local bishops consulted together so that no serious divergencies developed. Nations are fluid concepts; the current United Kingdom is only just at its centenary and it may reasonably be doubted whether it will achieve a second. Besides, the Church of England is not coextensive with any nation, even England. So the status given to “national” may be thought excessive. What the Article actually requires is that Henry VIII and successors had as Magistrate the right to reorder the particular Church which was under their control as they chose (though perhaps that Mary did not have the right to return it to Rome as that meant features “against God's word”). The caveat “so that all things be done to edifying” is vacuous as it is not stated who is to judge –

presumably the Magistrate, because of the rejection of private judgement. I doubt there are now many who think that either King or Parliament should have such authority over any Church.

35. This is the most modern of the Articles as it was revised in 1571 to include a huge homily “against rebellion”. Given the lack of preachers, the compilers could only require the reading of authorised homilies in most parishes. Note “distinctly”: the Minister is not allowed to mumble passages he dislikes! For once I propose to mention Tract 90 here. Newman alleges that some people thought that every proposition in the Homilies was to be received as the doctrine of the Church of England to which subscription was required. He denies that this was the case; and supplies a list of very un-protestant propositions in the Homilies which would be obligatory if it were! Actually, the Homilies do repay study and are generally sound, but (even as chopped up for use) too long.
36. This is a polemical Article. The wilder Reformation did not believe “consecration” was possible and thought that aspects of the Ordinal were “superstitious or ungodly”. Rome eventually (but not rapidly) adopted the view that the Ordinal was inadequate. (Gregory Dix claimed to have found no evidence that clergy ordained using it were generally treated as lay persons under Mary and her Archbishop Pole.) I do not propose to address the nineteenth century controversy. This Article is in fact vacuous. The Ordinal explicitly and carefully identified has not been in use for over three hundred and fifty years! There are important changes in the Restoration Ordinal, let alone in modern texts. So clergy of the modern Church of England are free to think they have not been “rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated and ordered”, so far as assent to the Article goes!
37. We are now at what was for the compilers the heart of the matter. The title is disingenuous, for the text is about the Royal Supremacy and does not mention “Civil Magistrates” except in the very last sentence. Largely, the point is to deny any papal authority in England. There seems to be a need also to teach the wilder reformation its duty of submission. Both objectives are achieved by exalting the authority of the Sovereign “in all causes”. It is alleged that there is a “prerogative” of rule given by God to “godly princes”. This is of course the “divine right of kings” in all but name. It has no place for parliament except as a tool. To put it at the least, no king or queen from the Dutch usurper and his wife onwards has been allowed such authority in England. Now as to the “Bishop of Rome”, the compilers were right in law at the time, for all his jurisdiction had been taken away and given to others. It is simply not true now, when he exercises a very great deal of jurisdiction in England which the secular law will uphold. But the Article does not say that he ought to have no jurisdiction. We should note that the state church to which all do or ought to belong has vanished, so we are no longer in the Old Testament kingdom of Judah even if that model is capable of being applied under the Gospel. But as a matter of fact no organisation, however much it tries to be independent, escapes secular law. Now as to capital punishment, the compilers took it for granted (and could have appealed to Romans 13). Their only reason for mentioning it was the implication *even* Christian men, lest any think that no Christian could possibly commit “heinous and grievous offences”. There is an important textual point in the last paragraph. English “the wars” but Latin “*justa bella*” which means “just wars” and so implies a whole set of theories about when a war is to be recognised as just. Presumably the compilers took the view that the issue (and potentially the guilt) was for the Magistrate and not the conscript.
38. There is a textual problem in the title. English “Of Christian men's Goods, which are not common” but Latin “*de illicita bonorum communicatione*” which is more like “Of the unlawful holding of goods in common”. To some extent this is distinction without difference; but the explicit restriction to Christians carries the implication that even among Christians this is not a required practice. For once, we have a clear opponent – the Anabaptists. That a high degree of sharing had been practised in the early Church (see Acts) was not disputed. The Article simply denies that this is a universal obligation. Very clearly, it had disappeared even within the New Testament period. But charitable giving was a clear moral obligation found in the Old Testament and so, in the compilers' view, remained in force.
39. There is again a textual problem, for the English is “Of a Christian man's oath” but the Latin simply “*De jurejurando*” which is “of taking oaths”. The wilder reformation read the New Testament simply and correctly, and wanted to obey “swear not at all”. The state (and the Church) could not imagine how to conduct business without oaths and so the compilers without warrant reduced the New Testament rule to “vain and rash Swearing”. As so often, they leave the responsibility with the

Magistrate. This was not honest, as they knew (for instance) that the Universities required oaths and this was nothing to do with the Magistrate. I make no comment on what we should now do.

So ends a brief study of the Articles. What follows is an earlier paper, which was when written more practical but is in part no longer so. I have not revised it at all as to do so would be to force two documents composed at different times and for different purposes to a complete harmony.

- i. It was a natural response for continuing Anglicans, who knew that the Church had betrayed the gospel and themselves by departing from well-established truth, to affirm anything which seemed to be part of the definition of that truth. The 39 Articles seemed (in England) to be an obvious recourse as they were part of “the Book of Common Prayer” as commonly published (strictly, they are a separate document). However, this may be an over-simplistic response.
- ii. It should be noted that neither the Affirmation of St. Louis nor the TAC Constitution mention the 39 Articles. There are good reasons for this. Many parts of the Anglican Communion even while it was sound had never included the Articles in their fundamental documents, or required their clergy to make any commitment to them. Some of the Articles made no sense except in the context of a state church. Consequently, even if used, they had had to be modified, as happened in the United States (where, in addition, the Athanasian Creed was removed from Article VIII). They would not, therefore, be an effective means of unity for a world-wide body.
- iii. For the 39 Articles to be useful, we need a basis for determining what they mean, and also to decide who should undertake what commitments in relation to them.
- iv. Now the question of meaning is not straightforward. Some of them are perfectly clear and also perfectly orthodox, and do exactly what continuing Anglicans would wish. But this is not true of all of them. At the lowest, do we want to put the legitimacy of conscription and capital punishment on a par with the great truths of the faith (XXXVII)? Do we know *how* “the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch, have erred” (that is, what were the errors, how long did they last, how important were they), because if we don't how can we possibly evaluate the assertion that “so also the Church of Rome hath erred (XIX)? There are further technical problems, because it is not certain whether the Latin or English version has priority, and they sometimes differ. For instance, the Latin of XXXVII legitimises conscription into just wars (*iusta bella*) but the English leaves out the critical adjective. Dr. Pusey commented in his analysis of the Tract 90 controversy: “Every one must have observed that the Articles are drawn up with very different degrees of precision or dogmatic character. Some are framed with great precision (as the five first and the Ninth); some (like the Sixth) have to be supplemented out of some other Article; Art. XXV., as far as relates to the “five commonly called Sacraments,” is ungrammatical; Art. XXIX., though plain and intelligible in itself, can by no possibility be made to mean what is often understood by its heading; some Articles are negative only, disclaiming certain opinions but not stating any positive truth” . . . (“Tract XC on certain passages in the XXXIX Articles” by Newman, with a historical preface by Pusey and a letter by Keble, A. D. Innes & Co 1893 page xl)
- v. An instinctive approach is to assume the meaning is that of the original compilers. Unfortunately, many of the articles went through a long process of development. Occasionally, we gain some sense of what the final Article does *not* mean from the earlier stages of the process. For example, since a rejection of the “real and bodily presence, as they term it” was considered but not included in the final text of Article XXVIII, then it is a tenable view that the compilers chose not to exclude this doctrine by an unambiguous form of words (which is not the same as saying that they believed it). In the same way, a rejection of “*ex opere operato*” was dropped from Article XXV. The difficulty is that whereas we think the Prayer Book of 1549 is effectively the consistent work of one person, Cranmer, at one stage in the development of his theological thought, this is not true of the Articles. Many people had a hand in them over a long time. (Nor is it true, incidentally, of subsequent versions of the Prayer Book.) There can be no antecedent certainty that the various compilers agreed with each other, or with doctrines which those of the compilers we can identify (some of them we do not know) elsewhere asserted.
- vi. Ultimately, we may assume that the complete text satisfied the Queen (since she accepted it) for

whatever purposes she had in mind. These were probably more to do with national stability than theology (and she was very discrete about her theological opinions). Likewise, the complete text was agreed by Convocation, but the meaning or intention of a large body of men is not a useful concept. We may suspect that their intention was to head off Parliament from demanding something worse, and to avoid provoking royal displeasure. The one hint which may be taken into account is that the same Convocation required preachers to conform themselves to Christian antiquity (Councils and Fathers). Even this is of limited value. Everybody tended to develop a collection of early Christian proof texts to show that their version of the faith was authentic in these terms. For the mentality, see Jewel's "Apology" of 1562, a work contemporary with the later stages of the Articles: "Further, if we do show it plainly that God's holy Gospel, the ancient bishops, and the primitive Church do make on our side, and that we have not without just cause left these men, and rather have returned to the Apostles and old Catholic fathers; and if we shall be found to do the same not colourably or craftily, but in good faith before God, truly, honestly, clearly, and plainly; and if they themselves which fly our doctrine, and would be called Catholics, shall manifestly see how all these titles of antiquity, whereof they boast so much, are quite shaken out of their hands; and that there is more pith in this our cause than they thought for; we then hope and trust that none of them will be so negligent and careless of his own salvation, but he will at length study and bethink himself to whether part he were best to join him." None of these collections of early Christian proof texts would stand critical scrutiny now. No modern priest, aware of the hundreds of closely printed volumes which make up the Fathers, could successfully so conform his preaching. We do not have the time to read them all!

- vii. In 1628, the appeal to the meaning of the compilers was rejected. His Majesty's Declaration (customarily prefixed to the Articles) insists on "the literal and grammatical sense". That is to use the same rules as apply to Acts of Parliament; the intention of the legislators consists in the text and the courts should not look beyond the text even if the Government has stated its intentions elsewhere. It is thus evident that the Articles were not thought to convey an unambiguous meaning less than sixty years after they were adopted. This is hardly surprising. The original compilers were mostly theologians with a normal Western training. Long before 1628, the Articles would be criticised (or accepted) not in terms of such training, nor on the basis of disputes in the period from 1530 to 1570, but in terms of Calvin's Institutes and subsequent disputes such as the Synod of Dort.
- viii. It is however a puzzle how long this rule remained in force. In the Tract 90 controversy everybody seemed to behave as if it did, and that therefore evading "the plain and full meaning" was a grave accusation because that meaning was obligatory. However, the Church of England Doctrine Commission reported that in 1662 "the Declaration was not given any legal or constitutional force" and therefore has ever since been of purely historical interest ("Subscription and Assent to the 39 Articles" SPCK 1968 para. 23). One might add that the variety of opinions expressed by different commentators on the articles who thought they were expounding them in the manner required by the Declaration suggests that this approach was not transparently successful, though of course it does put some limit on the possible range of meanings.
- ix. The other possible meaning is that of whoever currently requires assent to the Articles. This is of course hideous – it would imply every Bishop his own meaning. Or do we mean the Bishops of a province (and so their meaning might change every time one of them does some thinking, or at the least, whenever there is a new Bishop anywhere in that province)? Clearly this is not a useful approach unless a synod of Bishops makes a public declaration of its meaning, to be binding until there is a subsequent declaration. But if a Synod is competent so to fix the meaning of the Articles, it might be more sensible to declare its meaning directly rather than make assertions about the meaning of the Articles.
- x. If we could find something which was "the" meaning, it would of necessity be a statement about 1571. We might assume that the Articles were consistent with the 1559 Prayer Book, and Article XXXVI specifically affirms the Ordinal then in force. However, we do not live in 1571. There is no certainty that the Articles would remain consistent with the 1604 Prayer Book (which added the sacramental section to the Catechism) or with the 1662 Prayer Book (which imposed new meanings on the

Communion service) or with the 1662 Ordinal (to which that Article, not having the gift of prophecy and never having been revised, makes no reference). Much less with any subsequent developments in England, or with the various Prayer Books now in force within TAC. Now most Continuing Anglicans in England use a form of Communion Service which at the very least reorders 1662, deletes much material from it, and arguably conforms better with the practice of the early Church. But all this takes it a long way from 1559. Even if the 1559 Communion Service was consistent with the Articles, what we all (I mean all, not just those who affect the English Missal) now take for granted in our worship might not be.

- xi. Again, the Articles do not always address important questions. Yes, we know from them what books constitute Scripture (VI) and that worship ought to be in a language understood by the people (XXIV), which implies a biblical translation. But from what text is that translation to be made? In 1571 one might argue for the Vulgate or the Received (Byzantine) Greek of the New Testament; for the Vulgate, Septuagint or Hebrew of the Old Testament. The Articles are silent on what was a matter of current dispute. Necessarily they do not authorise the “authorised version”, which came later. Nor do they address our modern problems. Should one translate the New Testament from the Received Greek or from the best critical text one can assemble, and with awareness of underlying Hebrew or Greek? For the Old Testament, do we work from the Hebrew with vowels (a millennium after Christ) or without the vowels (only a couple of centuries after) or from the best critical text including the evidence of early translations and the Dead Sea scrolls? What theory of translation do we adopt – more or less word for word, as in the Revised Version, or trying to convey the meaning?
- xii. It might be added at this point that Article VI is simply false. We cannot historically assert that there is a list of books “of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church”. The Reformers were not, perhaps, to know the full depths of this problem, though I think they did know that the “Shepherd” had sometimes been accepted as part of the New Testament, and that some books (Hebrews and the Apocalypse in particular) had been disputed for a long time. We do know, for example, that the New Testament (Jude 14-15) quotes the First Book of Enoch as if it were authoritative scripture (and that the Ethiopian Church drew the obvious conclusion). Like it or not, the New Testament is what the Church came eventually to accept (by no formal process) it was, and the exact limits of the Old Testament and Apocrypha were *never* agreed.
- xiii. Since mention has been made of Tract 90, it might be useful to make a few remarks about it. The text is readily obtainable from “Project Canterbury” on the Internet. Newman was *not* trying to prove that one could believe all contemporary Roman doctrine and honestly subscribe to the Articles (though Ward did think this). Newman was trying to argue that one could be a follower of the Early Church and honestly subscribe the Articles – that what was precluded by them was not ancient, and that what was enforced by them was at least consistent with the Early Church. This might be said to be a simple following of Jewel's “Apology”, again: “Surely we have ever judged the primitive Church of Christ's time, of the Apostles and of the holy fathers, to be the Catholic Church”. And from the same source: “we are come as near as we possibly could to the Church of the Apostles and of the old Catholic bishops and fathers; which Church we know hath hereunto been sound and perfect, and, as Tertullian termeth it, a pure virgin, spotted as yet with no idolatry, nor with any foul or shameful fault: and have directed, according to their customs and ordinances, not only our doctrine, but also the Sacraments and the form of common prayer”.
- xiv. Newman was explicitly rejecting a particular contemporary Protestant myth, which read the Articles in the light of its own (not very Reformation) assumptions rather than in accordance with His Majesty's Declaration. He was trying to use historical methods, though we now have more information at our disposal, so not all of his arguments will work. Nobody has to accept Tract 90, and yet he identified many problems correctly. Tract 90 leads neither to Rome nor to infidelity – Pusey and Keble totally endorsed it because they were committed to the legitimacy of “Catholic Subscription” (Keble's phrase) and yet remained faithful members of the Church of England. Both of them identified the particular danger that what was in practice at stake was a party in the church imposing upon the whole its peculiar views under cover of the “correct” interpretation of the Articles. This is what the Protestant

party was trying to do; Tract 90 merely argues (often rightly) that the Articles leave more topics more open than contemporary Protestants alleged.

- xv. Now there is little point in having the Articles unless they are to do some work. It seems universally admitted that they were never a complete theological position in the way that some Reformed confessions were, and that possibly the decrees of the Council of Trent were, or the current Roman Catechism is. At best, they set limits (sometimes rather wide limits) on a range of points. They were in effect designed to exclude some people from the entering the ranks of the clergy in future (or taking new livings), on the (surprising) assumption that candidates for ordination or for posts in the Church would not be hypocrites, and so would not subscribe to a document they believed to contain doctrinal errors. The Articles were not designed to control public worship (that was achieved by secular legislation) or to control the content of preaching (I have already mentioned the separate instruction given on this point, and most clergy were not licensed to preach at all). It was in fact only in 1604 that a form of subscription was imposed: “I do willingly and *ex animo* subscribe to these three articles above mentioned [the Royal Supremacy, the Prayer Book and the Articles] and to all things that are contained in them”. On the face of it, a person who did not accept one solitary proposition, however trivial, somewhere in Prayer Book or Articles could not hold office.
- xvi. The exact form of subscription varied over time, and after 1865 there was a myth that only a “general” assent was required to the Articles taken with the Prayer Book and Ordinal, not “complete legal acceptance”. This is for example stated as fact in Bicknell (E. J. Bicknell, “A Theological Introduction to the 39 Articles of the Church of England”, Longmans, 1933, page 27). The Doctrine Commission demonstrated (para. 8) that this was false. However, it also noted that even complete legal acceptance might cover a range of positions, from not contradicting the items assented to in public to “inward commitment to their every proposition”. There is no benefit in giving a status to the Articles unless it is also clear what kind of commitment is demanded.
- xvii. The Articles assume a state church (XXXVII in particular). But this is not our condition. We are not the state religion in England; nowhere else is a TAC body the state religion. We do not expect this; we probably do not want it. There is no point in retaining this Article – indeed, if we in England believed it, should we not return whence we came?
- xviii. Some people are interested in the Articles because they might be thought to have a bearing on the current approach by TAC to Rome. As already indicated, TAC does not have the Articles as a constitutional source and so far forth they are simply irrelevant. However, it might be useful to consider what those who do value the Articles should make of the Roman question. As already indicated, we do not ascribe to the compilers the gift of prophecy. The Articles *may* address the position of the Church of Rome in 1571. Whether they do or not is a matter of historical research. They *cannot* directly address the current situation unless it is assumed first that they correctly addressed the position in 1571 and second that Rome never changes anything. We know that the second position is false. Rome no longer uses “a tongue not understood of the people” (XXIV). It no longer denies the Cup of the Lord to the Lay-people (XXX). Rome has changed. So even if the Articles were right about Rome in 1571, they cannot be assumed to be right about the present.
- xix. It is therefore necessary to investigate exactly what was asserted or rejected in the Articles and in each case whether it is still true. This is not an easy task. The Council of Trent was in session in 1571, and therefore its completed work had not yet been ratified or received. In some cases, the compilers could have known of a particular (unratified) decision in isolation. So they *could* have explicitly and in so many words condemned that decision recently expressed at Trent. But they *never* do so. They always use vaguer references which have ever since left the question arguable whether the known and deliberately formulated doctrine of the Church of Rome was condemned or merely prevalent errors (some of which Trent indeed also condemned).
- xx. We might simplify as follows. The early Articles merely summarise the true faith, so there is no dispute (they may be inelegant, but that is not the same as opening out an intended dispute). As to the middle group of Articles, we tend to forget that both the Church of England (before and after the

reformation) and Trent were heavily under the influence of St. Augustine, and so the gap between the Articles and Trent is much narrower than between either and the wider body of Church Fathers. (Compare Kung on Justification – Rome accepted his thesis that there was no discernible gap between Trent and Karl Barth!) So in respect of the middle group it is only the most expert scholar who can be confident of proving a major disagreement then – and St. Augustine is not infallible or in himself normative now. So we are best give detailed attention to the Articles from XVIII onwards. Some even of this group do not generate an issue in relation to Rome.

- xxi. XIX “the Church of Rome hath erred” is only important if it is stretched to mean that the Church of Rome persisted in 1571 and persists now in fundamental error. If that were the case, the error should have been identified. The weight of the polemic in Jewel is against abuses, rather than a demonstration of important errors on matters of faith. So all it *has* to mean is that the Teaching Office has at some time in the past made a mistake (which for anything the Article says it may swiftly have corrected). Now while Rome claims that its teaching has a high degree of accuracy, so that the believer can generally rely on it, it is only of a tiny group of doctrines that it claims infallibility. Not being prophetic, the Article does not deny infallibility either as defined in 1870 or in the sense that the Church of Rome now claims it.
- xxii. XX of the Authority of the Church might well be agreed by Rome. The limiting conditions for infallible decrees as defined at Vatican I make it very hard to decree anything beyond a legitimate inference from Scripture to which there is early witness. Now Jewel's “Apology” denies the possibility of a papal ministry: “we say that there neither is, nor can be any one man, which may have the whole superiority in this universal state: for that Christ is ever present to assist His Church, and needeth not any man to supply His room, as His only heir to all His substance: and that there can be no one mortal creature, which is able to comprehend or conceive in his mind the universal Church, that is to wit, all the parts of the world, much less able rightly and duly to put them in order, and to govern them rightly and duly.” It would be easy for this proposition to have been included in the Articles. It seems important enough. But it is not there. Something like it might, indeed, be found casually asserted in the Homilies – but as Tract 82 puts it: “Romanism surely is innocent, compared with that system which should impose upon the conscience a thick octave volume, written flowingly and freely by fallible men, to be received exactly, sentence by sentence: I cannot conceive any grosser instance of a pharisaical tradition than this would be.”
- xxiii. XXI of the Authority of General Councils is in part ridiculous. Nobody would now “think that the commandment and will of princes” had anything essential to do with the faith. The rest of the Article is probably not controversial, as it is a truth of history that even large Councils broadly representative of the Church have fallen into error. The last clause is vacuous – any Council is likely to allege it is following Scripture and what authority can rule on the claim? Since the Church of England indubitably endorsed the first two General Councils (or what is the status of the “Nicene” creed), probably the first four, and some would say the first six or all seven, there certainly have in its opinion been Councils which did not err. The Article does not explain how to identify them.
- xxiv. XXII of Purgatory. It is a matter of dispute what “Romish” means. Earlier drafts had referred to the Schoolmen, which would have been an identifiable group with identifiable teachings, so the Article may be taken as *not* referring to them. It is not disputed that there were many vulgar errors in all these areas which Trent to some extent corrected, let alone more recent Roman reformation. Those however who are determined to find fault will note that the Roman Catechism still has a section on indulgences (though Rome does not sell pardons). The remaining topics condemned suffer the same problem that we do not know what “Romish” meant then and whether it still applies now.
- xxv. XXV see also the end of XXVIII. Both articles truthfully deny “Christ's ordinance” for various practices concerned with the Eucharist. They nowhere assert that we are limited only to what has the explicit and direct institution of Christ - which would condemn many New Testament practices! The Articles do not say that any of these things are wrong – that is a classic instance of reading into the Articles what some people think they ought to have said. Reservation and carrying about of the Holy Communion was positively required for the Communion of the Sick in the 1549 Prayer Book, and is

certainly a practice of the Early Church. Worship of Christ present in the Sacrament is not so clearly a practice of the Early Church or of the Universal Church, but the modern Roman encouragement of frequent communion has arguably much reduced the risk of gazing on the Sacrament as a substitute for communicating worthily.

- xxvi. XXVIII transubstantiation is (unusually for the Articles) quite tightly defined, and the issue is thus made dependent on a particular philosophical theory. It is probably fair to say that in 1571 the Church of Rome was committed to that theory. Clearly a philosophical theory such as “substance and accidents” cannot be necessary for salvation. The question for these times is whether the Roman Catechism now agrees with what was then asserted and condemned. Naughty people might add that it is also very unclear what the Church of England believed after the changes to the 1662 Communion Service. The charge of “*hocus pocus*” can be thrown at both jurisdictions.
- xxvii. XXXI depends on the weight given to the plural “sacrifices of Masses” and “it was commonly said” - this may never have been intended as a condemnation of the text of the Roman liturgy in itself, but only of errors in the use thereof. Again, the Council of Trent did itself reform at least some of the errors. There is an interesting question for historically minded Anglicans how much weight should be given to the reply of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the condemnation of Anglican Orders, commonly known as *Saepius Officio*. That reply asserts the substantial functional equivalence of the Prayer Book Holy Communion and the (Tridentine) Roman liturgy rather than denounces the latter, so the Archbishops gave their signatures to a carefully written document which suggested they did not have a problem with the text of the Mass as such, only with theories which were applied to that text. I presume the Archbishops therefore did not think this Article condemned the Roman Mass of their own time. Of course, Anglicans are not committed to the private opinions of their Archbishops never approved in Convocation, yet it would seem that the Archbishops were exercising that authority in controversies of faith which the Articles assert the Church must have. I have written about this controversy elsewhere.
- xxviii. XXXII Rome has married priests in Uniate rites, as do the Eastern jurisdictions. Between the world wars, Bishops of the Church of England did forbid priests to marry, because of financial restrictions. I know this from personal testimony of a victim! Similarly even Protestant missionary societies have found the need to place restrictions on marriage, for entirely practical and godly reasons. Certainly in the early church there were married bishops and priests continuing to live with their wives and to have children after ordination. I agree therefore that the permission in the Article is not repugnant either to Scripture or early practice, but the general subsequent placing of restrictions did have some good reasons behind it (and some mistaken). This is not a fundamental matter, but within the limits of ecclesiastical judgement.
- xxix. XXXVI it seems that Rome did accept ordinations using the Edwardian ordinal when tidying up under Queen Mary. The issue of Anglican Orders is more about the intention to be assumed when that ordinal was brought back into use in 1559 and later, though an aspect of the text which might be thought to bear on the question of intention was changed in 1662 (allegedly for completely different reasons than the dispute about intention). Again, those who wish to know more about this should revisit *Saepius Officio* (if they think it has authority). Note that the Church of England never denied the validity of Roman Catholic ordinations (many of its priests in 1571 had been so ordained, and this was a scandal to the more thoroughly “reformed”).
- xxx. XXXVII the issue is “of the civil magistrate” and so in modern terms would merely say that the Pope cannot issue a binding instruction to Parliament to pass or repeal a law. (In 1571, it meant that the Pope's ruling that Elisabeth was not Queen, for reasons which Henry VIII had also found compelling, was not binding.) If more is meant, it would mean that the Church of England makes it a truth of faith that Parliament could and should forbid anybody in this country to be a Roman Catholic. I repudiate any such doctrine. It is now simply the case that as a matter of the law of the land people are free to accept the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope. Whatever we decide to do about the Roman question, we do not denounce the adherence to the Pope by Roman Catholics in England. The Article no longer conforms with the law of the land, as it once did.

- xxxii. The Articles were designed for the purpose of requiring subscription. So we have to consider who should subscribe. It is an irony that the original controversy about Tract 90 was in the context of every member of Oxford University, even undergraduates, having to subscribe. Only later did it become an issue about clergy subscription in the Church of England. Now the original practice was to require subscription whenever a position in the Church was accepted, thus binding the active clergy. This is reasonable enough, but there is a clear case for extending subscription to Readers and Deaconesses (as was done in the revised canons of the Church of England). If the laity are to have any say in matters of doctrine, as they clearly do in the modern Church of England, it would make sense for members of General Synod to be so bound, but notoriously they have not been. It is not clear whether in the more limited role which TTAC gives its Synod subscription should be required of the lay members.
- xxxiii. Subscription should always be seen as a moral action of the utmost significance. Keble was very clear that the imposition of some forms of subscription would require his abandoning the Ministry and retiring into lay communion. Better no subscription than one which almost everybody does not take seriously. But is it now possible to devise a subscription to the Articles such that it can be taken seriously, and if so, how many priests (and therefore parishes) are we prepared to lose?
- xxxiiii. What would an attempt to take the Articles seriously mean in practice? I think there is little point in having them without subscription, and nobody should be asked to make such a commitment without the knowledge to do so intelligently. So if we were to take the Articles seriously, we (presumably the TAC Bishops?) must first decide how the Articles are to be understood. Secondly, we must choose an existing commentary on the Articles which is written in terms as little divergent as possible from that understanding (we do not have the resources to write and publish a new commentary, a work of several hundred pages). Since whichever commentary we choose will be out of print and unlikely to be reprinted, we will have to be sure that every person who is to subscribe now and in future anywhere in the world can obtain a copy, which will be far from easy and incidentally imposes the English language upon everybody. Thirdly, since the commentary will inevitably not be acceptable at every point, and will certainly not address the situation of a non-established Church, we must publish a Supplement to address these points. The Bishops will then be able fourthly to require their Examining Chaplains to examine candidates as to their knowledge of the Articles so interpreted. We will also fifthly have to draw up a form of subscription, decide who is to be required to subscribe, and what is to be done about somebody whose subsequent teaching is inconsistent with his subscription. This is a monstrous programme. I suggest it is impossible to perform. But anything less merely puts the Articles on a pedestal.
- xxxv. This is not to deny that we need a definite understanding of what it is to be Christian and (within that) Anglican. Nor is to deny the need for clergy discipline, not merely about moral living, but also about forms of worship and the content of teaching. It is merely to say that, in England at least, the appeal to the Articles (for teaching) and, I would incidentally add, to the letter of the Prayer Book (for worship) is not a fruitful route without an enormous amount of explanation – and the explanation thus becomes the effective source of authority, not the Articles and Prayer Book.
- xxxvi. The underlying reality has already been hinted at. The claim of the early reformed Church of England was that it was a scriptural church, with the interpretation of scripture to an important extent controlled by the experience of the primitive church. Now, like it or not, this exposes a dichotomy. Was the Anglican reformation perfect, so as to be in effect a new revelation? This is occasionally imagined, but what is the evidence that God so acted? If not, then we must admit that the Church of England knew little enough of the scriptures, for their knowledge of languages and texts was very inadequate by modern standards, and even less of the primitive church, for so many documents of first importance were only rediscovered later. Yet it was to scripture and the primitive church that they appealed. Therefore our greater knowledge means that we cannot be bound by their conclusions, however honestly reached. They may for the most part be right. They may be less wrong than those reached by anybody else at their time. It might be that we should endorse their foundation documents in the tortuous sense that “if I had been alive in 1571, I would on balance have been an Anglican rather than anything else” (compare “Subscription and Assent” para. 61). But this is a very tenuous endorsement. I

am alive now. I have, with whatever personal limitations, the knowledge of recent (not perhaps contemporary) scholarship. My obligations (and therefore the ability of others to criticise me) are surely best expressed in terms of the situation now.

- xxxvi. TAC has committed itself, much as the early reformed Church of England did, to scripture and the primitive church. I think we have to accept that, by these standards, the official documents of the sixteenth century cannot be final for us. The Church of England moved on, as did the other Anglican churches (not all of them “daughters”). TAC does not start from 1559 – 1571 as if nothing happened since. Even the Church of England changed quite radically in the period from 1571 to 1662. TAC is not based on the early reformed Church of England in the way that (perhaps) Sydney and its associates are. It starts (see its Constitution and the Affirmation of St. Louis) from scripture and the primitive church as now known, and accepts the wise continuing reforms of various Anglican bodies at least down to the 1920s, if not further.
- xxxvii. The inability of the Church of England to make changes after 1662 (until the errors of the last forty years or so) is unusual and cannot bind the rest of the world. Anglicanism (whether “Continuing” or not) is not defined by the English state religion.
- xxxviii. The 39 Articles simply cannot now be made the object of a morally convincing subscription. The positive programme of TAC, as stated in its constitution, could be – but is too short to cover all the issues. I suppose a modern “syllabus of errors” or “anti-modernist oath” could be added (and frequently revised), but the precedents for such devices are not good.
- xxxix. Alternatively, one could subscribe (inevitably in a somewhat more general sense) a comprehensive theological statement. Which leads me to the conclusion that our Bishops acted wisely and perceptively in signing the Roman Catechism! There was simply no other document available which was adequate to convey their good faith.

Concluding unscientific postscript: and we know how well that worked out!

True; but that does not end the matter. There is a plausible case that we should have both a standard of doctrine and a standard of worship (which is what subscription and assent originally addressed). These would seem to be proper cards to lay on the table if corporate reunion is ever to be an option.

Now that we are the Traditional Anglican Church, the former would need to be a single document for the whole organisation. The Affirmation is an unavoidable beginning, but it is not comprehensive. The 39 Articles are similarly too short, too entangled with the Tudor state, and again not comprehensive (and not part of the heritage of all the provinces, certainly not in their English form). It is of course true that the early Church did not have such a document (and attempts to write one such as Origen “de principiis” didn't work out well), but in the world as it now is there are definite advantages. It is consequentially obvious that the early Church did not require bishops, let alone junior clergy, to subscribe such a document (though Marcellus of Ancyra, suspected of heresy, was admitted to communion in Rome on the basis of his assent to the Old Roman baptismal creed). But in these difficult days there are advantages in having a positive standard of doctrine (not just a list of errors) for the clergy and for others who may have powers which may affect doctrine. It is inevitable that the longer and more comprehensive the document, the more general the assent has to be.

There is however no possibility of a TAC standard of worship. The English 1662 Book of Common Prayer as it stands is not in use amongst us. Those whose worship is derived from it in practice formally or informally revise it, and some of us (not least the Americans) have a different heritage. We now know that 1662 is largely pragmatic – such changes only as Parliament would stand – and so did not well reflect the views even of its revisers. Both they and we know better. Quite apart from the various languages in use amongst us, a common form of worship is impractical. It is also not the way the early Church behaved. Clearly the various forms of worship in use in TAC ought to be mutually accepted, and it is a proper matter for the clergy to be expected to conform to whatever is locally prescribed. In England we seem to survive on the basis that whatever was tolerated while the Church of England was still sound might as well be continued. But this is not a permanent solution.