

17 May, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

As we begin our examination of What We Believe as Anglican Christians, we look at the first article of the Thirty Nine Articles -**The Holy Trinity**- which is a foundational doctrine.

When the Anglican Church first formed as part of the English Reformation in the 16th Century, the founding fathers wanted to lay the foundation for what it is that we believe as Anglican Christians and that begins with the Holy Trinity... One God in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the HolyGhost." (Article 1)*

Belief in the Trinity is an essential aspect of being an Anglican Christian because it gives us an understanding of who God is and how He functions within the primary relationship with himself and His creation. God the Father created out of nothing—everything—bringing chaos into order. (Genesis 1) God the Son redeemed by his death and resurrection mankind so that he may be saved from the chaos of hell and live eternally in the order of heaven. (Matthew 27) God the Holy Spirit lives and dwells on the earth ordering the unruly hearts and minds of men. (Acts 2)

While three- Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are one... just as creation came into being through the cosmic dance so too Redemption, was not won only by Jesus but by the Triune God. The Father initiated Redemption: *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,"* (Galatians 4:4). Redemption was accomplished through the Son: *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the*

*spirit,"* (1 Peter 3:18). And Redemption is applied by the Holy Spirit: "...*he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,"* (Titus 3:5).

Ultimately the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is important because, for Anglicans-and all Christians, there is no salvation apart from the Triune God. The more we reflect upon the Holy Trinity, the more we can learn to love and appreciate God for Who and What He truly has revealed himself to be.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

24 May, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,



This week in the Bishop's Note we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we looked at the Holy Trinity—One God in three persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Today we examine the Word of God (Jesus) made man.

Article 2 of the Articles of Religion states: *The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.*

What is so important about a correct understanding of the Word made flesh? Here it is if we don't understand that Jesus is God made man, then our tendency is simply to say that Jesus is a Man who represents God and there is a vast difference in those two men.

In the first—"God made Man" we understand that Jesus was at all times God—he didn't stop being God so that he could play man—he became man so that he could redeem mankind from the curse of sin and death.

In the second "Man who represents God" we have a human who while representing God on earth was able to do some nifty things— heal the sick and feed the 5,000 for example—but NOT REDEEM mankind from sin and death.

The first understanding lifts us up from the miry pit and the second just barely keeps us afloat, perhaps keeping our head above the muck and water...for a while. The first is the real deal and the second is only an illusion you

tell me which would you have?

The Gospel of John says it best in the opening verses  
*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*(John 1:1-5 ESV)

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

31 May, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we looked at Jesus as the Word made Flesh—God become man.

This week we examine Article 3 of the 39 Articles: "As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed that He went down into Hell."

1st Peter 3 speaks of Jesus' descent to to hell in order to proclaim liberty to those held in captivity. Jesus' descent into hell is found specifically in the Apostles Creed - the earliest statement of faith for Christians. However, from early on this concept has been questioned as to whether or not it was fitting that Jesus entered into hell to offer salvation to those lost souls who had never had the opportunity to hear the Word of God. Of course it was fitting in that it demonstrates the great love that God has for his creation - even his lost creation.

Approximately 300 years prior to the writing of the 39 Articles Thomas Aquinas addressed the question of Jesus' descent into hell in his Suma Theologica arguing that it was indeed fitting for three reasons:

First of all, because Jesus came to bear our penalty in order to free us from penalty. As the prophet Isaiah said "Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:3) But through sin man had incurred not only the death of the body, but also descent into hell. Consequently since it was fitting for Christ to die in order to deliver us from death, so it was fitting for Him to descend into hell in order to deliver us also from going down into hell. Hence it is written: "O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite." (Hosea 13:14)

Second, because it was fitting when the devil was overthrown by the Passion that Christ should deliver the captives detained in hell, according to: "Thou also by the blood of Thy Testament hast sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit." (Zechariah 9:11) And it is written: "Despoiling the principalities and powers, He had exposed them Confidently." (Colossians 2:15)

Third, that as He showed forth His power on earth by living and dying, so also He might manifest it in hell, by visiting it and enlightening it. Accordingly it is written "Lift up your gates, O ye princes," (Psalm 24:7); and so "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," not only "of them that are in heaven," but likewise "of them that are in hell" as is said in Philippians 2:10.

Christ died for love, he descended into hell for love and he rose from the grave for love. If he was willing to go even into Hell to save sinners, we can trust that he continues to come to earth to save sinners like us! And to that I say...AMEN!

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

7 June, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we looked at Christ's descent to the dead. This week we look at Jesus' triumph over death with his resurrection. Article 4 of the Articles of Religion is "Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherefore He ascended into heaven, and there sits until He returns to judge all men at the last day."

In the sixteenth century it was essential to affirm the literal and physical resurrection of Jesus. Death was a daily reality for the people who were not sheltered from death the way that we are. The assurance of Jesus' triumph over death and His resurrection reminded believers of the resurrection from the dead that awaits them upon their death.

In the twenty-first century it is equally important for us to daily affirm the literal and physical resurrection of Jesus and his ascension into heaven for several reasons:

First, to reaffirm our own faith in the resurrection from the dead. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, the promise of the gospel is that we too will rise from the dead. When we give our lives to Christ, His promise to us is that when we take our last breath on earth the very next second we will take our first sweet breath in heaven with Jesus.

Second, in an era where we believe we are so advanced, the rumors and innuendos of the first century are making their comeback. These include rumors which promote the idea that there was no real resurrection, and that it was all a hoax. They also include rumors that there was no real resurrection but that the people of the first century "believed" there was a resurrection. They argue that the church was formed on the belief of those first Christians so it doesn't really matter if there was a resurrection as long as they believed there was. The truth is that the real and literal resurrection of Jesus from the dead does matter! The disciples believed because Jesus appeared to them in the upper room (John chapters 20-21) as well as to many others: "Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive." (1 Corinthians 15:6) This past Easter

Season we examined many of the twelve different resurrection appearances of Jesus. Because the first Christians had experiences with the risen Lord, their lives were transformed and they were willing to make the greatest sacrifice when put to the test.

We too can encounter the risen Lord and our lives are also changed and transformed! We encounter Jesus when we spend time in His Word; we encounter Jesus when we receive the sacraments; we encounter Jesus when we serve the lost, the poor, the sick and alone - "as you did it to the least of these you did it to me." (Matthew 25)

These are the encounters that transform our lives and shape our world view - all because Jesus really did Rise from the Dead and Ascend into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf day in and day out. Jesus' resurrection and ascension are fundamental doctrines of the church that are real not because we believe in them; we believe in them because they are real...and to that I say AMEN.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees



14 June, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we looked at Christ's resurrection from the dead this week we look at third person of the Trinity... God the Holy Spirit. Article 5 of the Articles of Religion states "The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God."

On this, the first week in the Season after Pentecost it is only right that we examine The Holy Spirit promised by Jesus as the Comforter, Counselor & Guide.

What does Holy Spirit do? He makes holy the souls of believers by His presence. How does He do that? The Holy Spirit transforms the soul by making it capable of taking in the infinite streams of knowledge and love that flow within the Holy Trinity. Thus we "**may become partakers of the divine nature**" (2 Peter 1:4ESV). This is a blessing & joy so great that any earthly honor is insignificant in comparison. What does it mean to "partake of the divine nature" of God? Well, scripture and experience teaches us that the Holy Spirit grants spiritual gifts and imparts special characteristics to the believer.

These gifts are listed in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians: "**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.**" (1 Corinthians 12:4-11 ESV) It is not simply that the Holy Spirit has these gifts but he desires to grant them to us...IF we but ask!

When we invite God the Holy Spirit into our lives He also imparts character traits: These traits are granted to those who are open to the movement of the Spirit in their lives and who both ask for and are willing to use them to the glory of God and not their own glory. What are these traits?

Scripture tells us: "**And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear**" (Isaiah 11:2-3 ESV) in other words: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Might, Knowledge, Fear of the Lord & Piety (Reliance upon God.) These traits were given as signs of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God. Those who partake in the divine nature share these traits.

On that first Pentecost the Holy Spirit came down visibly on the Apostles and other believers, transforming them from selfish and timid men into giants of courage and faith, and He can and will transform us if we are willing to allow him into our lives Thanks be to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

21 June, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we looked at the Third Person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit today we look at Article 6 of the Articles of Religion on the sufficiency of the Holy Scripture for Salvation... **"Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."**

This is one area where the Anglican Church worldwide separates itself from other "mainline" Christian denominations. Other churches have jettisoned the scriptures, seeking to interpret them not according to their plain & simple teaching, but in light of trying to justify a modern worldview.

Positively, we believe that the Holy Scriptures are indeed the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures are inspired by God: **"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)

"Profitable for teaching" means that we need to be humble enough to be open to learning from God and His Word, trusting that He reveals Himself to us in His Word. "For reproof , for correction" means that we are to be humble enough to recognize that the Holy Scriptures ARE the Authority that can reprove and correct us. "For training in righteousness" means that when we place ourselves under the authority of Holy Scripture we are doing so to grow closer to Jesus and to reflect him more perfectly in the world. The whole point of being a Christian is to reflect Christ in the world and we can only do that if we are obedient to God and his Word. That is what is meant by "that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Of course, Paul was speaking to his apprentice Timothy who was to become a Bishop, but the advice goes for each and every one of us who believe and accept the Bible as the Word of God.



All of this being said—the key here is that God is perfectly revealed in His Word and through His revelation comes salvation. Therefore, the Holy Bible contains "all things necessary for Salvation," meaning that we need not look beyond the bible, to the traditions of man. With the Bible being the standard, we need to make sure as the church that we are careful not to teach anything that is outside of Holy Scripture or require anything in addition to Holy Scripture. Plain and Simple Gospel Truth!

Bishop Menees

28 June, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,



This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the Holy Scriptures as the Inspired Word of God. Today we look at Article 7 of the Articles of Religion on the Old Testament as reflecting the Salvation of God...

**"The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore there are not to be heard which feign that the oldfathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral."**

Last week we were reminded that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God: **"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV)

Notice that St. Paul wrote ALL SCRIPTURE not simply the New Testament. Unfortunately, over the last one hundred years or so the mainline denominations, including the Anglican Church, have discounted the Old Testament, feeling that it is too archaic or too bloody or too rigid and just too out dated. People argued "I can't believe in a God who is so violent or who allows such violence."

What they fail to acknowledge is that God is Sovereign. It was because of allowing that same violence—namely the Crucifixion of His Son Jesus—that the bridge was formed and Salvation offered to all believers. The Truth is in the Old Testament from Genesis 1:1 **"In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth"** to Malachi 4:6 **"And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers..."**. From the beginning to the end of the Old

Testament, God reveals how after Creation and the Fall He will restore his creation to Himself in and through His Son Jesus Christ. God is clear after the fall as he addresses Satan to say that the day is coming and already planned when He will restore things as they originally were. **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."** (Genesis 3:15 ESV)

When we read the Old Testament we need to remember that it is the Word of God and in it and through it God points the reader toward His Son Jesus Christ and the Salvation that is found in him alone! And to that I say AMEN!

Bishop Menees

July 12, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,



This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Two weeks ago (I was on vacation last week) we examined the Old Testament as being the Inspired Word of God fulfilled in the New Testament today we look at Article 8 of the Articles of Religion on the "Three Creeds" as a sufficient statement of faith... ***"The Three Creeds: Nicene Creed, Athanasius' Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture."***

I have a personal pet peeve and that is when people in our own churches ask me "so what do we believe as Anglicans?" It is a bit distressing because every Sunday and every time we gather for worship we boldly profess our faith in either the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed depending on whether or not we are celebrating Morning or Evening Prayer or Holy Eucharist. Now, I know that what they are really saying is: Where is the Church on distinctive issues such as Sacraments - Life/Death/Afterlife - Sanctity of Life - Saints and the like... However, if you really want to see what we believe as Anglican Christians is based upon, you need to look no farther than the Holy Scriptures and The Creeds as a simple statement of faith. These creeds date back to the early Church of the First through Fourth Centuries. The Church Fathers realized immediately that because Christianity was unique in crossing Cultural, Ethnic, National and Economic lines there would need to be a commonality of faith easily expressed in a Statement of Faith called a Creed.

Now, because we recognize Holy Scripture as being the revealed Word of God, the Church naturally turned to the scriptures for that statement of faith and thereby the Apostles' Creed was born in the late 1st century & early 2nd century. In the 4th century it was felt that a bit of clarification was needed on the divinity of Jesus so the Nicene Creed was born clearly stating that Jesus was/is the Only Begotten Son of God—and co-equal with God. In the 5th century further clarification was desired

regarding the Holy Trinity and so the Athanasian Creed was agreed upon as well. Ultimately, when we look to what we believe as Anglican Christians we need look no farther than these three creeds based on Scripture and proclaiming the Truth about God!

Bishop Menees



July 19, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the Nicene, Athanasian & Apostles' Creeds as being an authentic and sufficient statement of faith in the Anglican Church.

Today we look at Article 9 of the Articles of Religion On the concept of Original Sin . . . **"Original sin is not found merely in the following of Adam's example (as the Pelagians foolishly say). It is rather to be seen in the fault and corruption which is found in the nature of every person who is naturally descended from Adam. The consequence of this is that man is far gone from his original state of righteousness. In his own nature he is predisposed to evil, the sinful nature in man always desiring to behave in a manner contrary to the Spirit. In every person born into this world there is found this predisposition which rightly deserves God's anger and condemnation. This infection within man's nature persists even within those who are regenerate (Born Again). This desire of the sinful nature, which in Greek is called *fronema sarkos* and is variously translated the wisdom or sensuality or affection or desire of the sinful nature, is not under control of God's law. Although there is no condemnation for those that believe and are baptized, nevertheless the apostle states that any such desire is sinful."**

It may surprise you to learn that this doctrine of Original Sin—and our corrupt/fallen nature— is an essential aspect of being a Christian. Why? Because if we do not understand and accept our being sinners and by our very nature unable to save ourselves then we will fall into the lie of believing that: "we're really not all that bad." In fact, I would argue that the doctrine of Original Sin and the Corrupt Nature of Man is the most counter cultural aspect of Christianity.

This doctrine runs counter to the popular belief that we are all "good." Of course, what is meant by "good" is really "decent" - meaning that we don't harm anyone else. This concept took a major leap forward in the early 1970's with the book by Thomas Harris *I'm OK You're*



OK. The major point of the book is that through "Transactional Analysis" counseling and therapy we can come to the position of accepting our natural goodness and thereby accept the natural goodness of everyone else. We as Christians argue just the opposite. I'm not OK, I am a sinner in need of salvation and so are you! This moves the center of attention from the actions of self to the saving action of Jesus on the Cross who paid the penalty meant for us and opened salvation to all believers! It is only when we can humbly accept our true nature that we can truly seek the help we need found in Jesus Christ! Ultimately, I should write a book entitled "I'm all Messed Up and So are You!"

Bishop Menees

July 26, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Original Sin and how since birth we are all corrupt and in need of Salvation which is found in Jesus Christ. Today we look at Article 10 of the Articles of Religion on the concept of Free Will. **"The condition of man since the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works for faith and for calling upon the name of the Lord. Hence we have no power to do good works which are pleasing and acceptable to God, unless the grace of God through Christ goes before us so that we may have a good will, and continues to work with us after we are given that good will."**

Generally, speaking you might read the above article and say to yourself, "Self what has this to do with Free Will?" Well, that is a good question allow me to offer an answer if I may This article is in the midst of three articles that deal with sin, salvation and the condition of man. Article 9 clearly states that all descendents of Adam & Eve are fallen creatures. When our first parents disobeyed God, we fell from Grace - we lost the gift of righteousness, but maintained our God given nature. That means we still have the ability to choose to do what God requires of us, and so as men, we are endowed by our creator with independent thought, desires and actions. Still, however, strong willed we are our will is "free" but limited. Therefore, try as we might to do the right thing, say the right thing and believe in God, left to our own devices we still cannot attain that which we lost in the fall. So, simply said, without the help of God's Grace and Mercy we are lost, even to believe in God. This is what St. Paul was teaching in his Epistle to the Philippians when he wrote: "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

As Anglican's we stand between two poles with regards to Free Will. This is a complex theological issue, but most simply put at one end are the Calvinists who argue for "pre-destination" meaning that God Chose before time who would be saved and who would not; and "Arminians"



(after Jacobus Arminius) who argue that salvation is offered to all people but only those who freely choose to place their faith in Jesus are saved. In other words Calvin said JESUS Chose you and Arminius said YOU Chose Jesus. Modern day Calvinists are in the Reformed Church and modern day Arminians are in the Methodist church. Anglicans believe that it is a combination of God's Spirit impelling us toward accepting Christ and our submission to the Spirit of God that allows us to accept His love and Grace.

We cannot accept Him without the Help of the Spirit but we are FREE to reject His love and Grace. Without the ability to reject Him we cannot truly love Him. Now, that should have cleared things up nicely. :)

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

August 2, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Free Will and how we as Christians are free to reject the love of Christ. Today we look at Article 11 of the Articles of Religion on the Justification of Man...

***"We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deserving. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort; as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."***

This is the third article on Sin and Salvation—#9 was the fall and recognizing that we are fallen creatures in need of Christ & #10 is that we have free will to reject the Saving Grace of Jesus offered to us from the Cross. The doctrine of justification (Article 11) teaches that God has dealt with sin, punishing Christ for it on the cross of Calvary. Because of Jesus' selfless act on the cross we do not need to do anything to "win" our salvation, because Jesus has given that to us freely. That is a difficult concept for us to accept, especially in America where we have such a strong sense of individualism - an "I can do it myself, thank you very much" sort of attitude. Because we are justified before God, we do not need to earn God's favor because Jesus already did it. We do not need to atone for our sins, because Jesus received the punishment due to us. We do not need to be good to receive Salvation because God accepts the goodness of Jesus in our place! When someone asks you..."Are you saved?" the answer is "Yes, from the Wrath of God because Jesus received that for us." For more detail on this I recommend R.C. Sproul's Saved from What.

St. Paul spoke to this in his epistle to his assistant Titus: **"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being**

**justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7 ESV)**

Not only has God dealt with our sin by justification. He also continues to work with us for His good purpose. He prepares us, accepts us and changes us. In Article 10, we read that *'the grace of God in Christ goes before us so that we may have a good will.'* Even my first vague thoughts about God, and my first prayer asking if he even existed were not really my doing, but the results of His working in me. The doctrine of justification teaches that for Christ's sake God accepts me as righteous and perfect. Article 10 goes on to describe the state of the redeemed Christian: now saved and forgiven but still depending on God to enable him to live a good life and grow in holiness not to win salvation but to respond to God's love—a love more deep and profound than we could ever imagine—a love that redeems the sinner and justifies a believer.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

August 9, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Justification and how we as Christians are Justified before God because of what Jesus did on the cross. Today we look at Article 12 of the Articles of Religion on the topic of Good Works.

"Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit."

This article is very important because without it, and only looking at the last few articles, one might imagine that our faith is a passive faith requiring nothing of us. The fact is that our faith demands service in the name of Jesus. James, our Lord's brother wrote **"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."** (James 2:14-17 ESV)

As I travel about the diocese visiting with the leaders of our congregations I always ask two questions: "What are you most passionate about?" and "What are you most concerned about?" Often the response about what they are most passionate about is their outreach to the community. Programs to help kids after school, work with single moms, feeding the homeless etc. etc. These responses gladden my heart because the Good News of Jesus propels us from the altar into the world!

Outreach ministry or Mercy Ministries are taken as a way to express our love of God and the fulfillment of his commandment: **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all**

**your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39 ESV)**

An analogy that I often use with regards to our understanding of Good Works is to think of my wife, Florence. I can say that I love her but if I show no acts of kindness and love do I really love her? Now, on the other side, do those acts of kindness make my wife love me? No. She loves me for who I am, warts and all. That being said our good works will not earn us God's love but they are a response to HIS LOVE.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees



August 16, 2012



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Good Works and how we as Christians are called to respond to God's love by "loving our neighbor as our self" (Mark 12:31).

Today we look at Article 13 of the Articles of Religion on the topic of Works before Justification: **"Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, for as much as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea, rather for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."**

This article addresses the very common question—both in the sixteenth century and now "Don't all "good" people go to heaven? Does it really matter what you believe? After all people of all religions do good by helping the poor and sick?" The question that this article addresses is related to the previous article on Good works.

The question here is on the definition of Good. Often when people say that someone is "good" what they really mean is that he is decent. He doesn't harm anyone, he keeps most of the Ten Commandments which require doing no harm rather than good. Another common understanding is that which is "Good" is anything that has a "positive outcome" for self or another. I do "good" at work and I receive a reward—bonus pay or time off.

The problem is, of course, that because we live in a fallen world these good things can and will become tainted or corrupted eventually. A good action done for selfish reasons isn't really good at all but only bears the appearance of Good.

However, in the Christian sense that which is Good comes from God the source of all Goodness and not from

man who is tainted with evil. **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."** Therefore that which is Good is inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit and has eternally good consequences—uncorrupted and untainted. Because of this, that which is good and inspired by the Holy Spirit is generally done behind the scenes not looking for reward by the one doing the good. Jesus said; **"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."** (Matthew 6:1 ESV)

That which is good by worldly standards often springs out of selfish and hypocritical motives—wanting to give the impression of goodness—wanting the rewards of acclaim or attention. Thus, that which the world says is Good may not be good at all but, bad because rather than good consequences they may actually lead you farther away from God having eternally bad consequences. However that which is Good in the Christian sense is simply the response to God's having loved us in the first place—the only reward is the knowledge that we are loved beyond measure.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

August 23, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Works before Justification and were reminded that the works done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are the works that are filled with the fruit of the Spirit.

Today we look at Article 14 of the Articles of Religion on the topic of **"Works of Supererogation: Voluntary works besides, over and above, God's commandments which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for His sake than of bounden duty is required: Whereas Christ said plainly, When you have done all that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants."**

OK, well I'll bet you are saying to yourself "Self, what the heck is...Supererogation?" Well the Reader's Digest condensed answer is "to pay over and above"... over and above ... As in a person who gives a lavish tip to a waiter in hopes of receiving nice favors in return. This article follows along with the two previous two articles on "Works." In this case the question is asked...do good works earn you favors from God? This was in response to the burning question of the time - paying Indulgences. Of course, indulgences were the practice of paying the church to win favors from God for yourself or another and was greatly abused in the 15th & 16th centuries. Martin Luther and the other key leaders of the Reformation rebelled against the practice.

The roots of the practice of paying indulgences began in the early church when during the persecutions people would recant their belief to stave off persecution. Many later sought re-admission to the church and would go to "confessors" (those who didn't recant but weren't killed) to ask them to intervene on their behalf to the clergy. Later, that intervention would come at a cost and would have the condition that no penitential actions would be required to be able to rejoin the church and receive the



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sacraments. In time people began to believe that if they took vows of celibacy that would help to make them extra holy and would earn favors for themselves. Others would do public acts of self-mutilation, (like crawling for miles on their knees to the steps of the church) in hopes of winning God's favor. Eventually the Roman Catholic Church began accepting either money or these acts of Supererogation.

The Anglican Church at its formation said NO! You cannot win what God has already given, namely a greater love than anyone has ever known. Jesus died for our sins and we cannot earn more than the love he shares we can only respond to that love by: **"loving God with our whole heart, mind and strength and loving our neighbor as our self."** (Matthew 22:36-40) What a relief to know we can't earn it we can only accept it!

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

August 30, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Works of Supererogation which is the idea that some have that you can by doing good works beyond what are requested and required by scripture, somehow earn the favor of God; which is just not true—we cannot earn what God has already given us through His Son Jesus Christ.

Today we look at Article 15 of the Articles of Religion on the topic of On Christ Without Sin: **"Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which He was clearly void, both in His flesh and in His spirit. He came to be the lamb without spot, Who by sacrifice of Himself once made, should take away the sins of the world: and sin, as Saint John said, was not in Him. But all we the rest, although baptized and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things: and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."**

This is a doctrine that is unique to our faith and one of the distinguishing factors of Christianity. That God would deign to come to earth and take on human form. He did so without reservation and without exception of any of our weaknesses. Jesus knew loneliness and sadness. Jesus knew hunger and pain. Jesus knew joy and peace Jesus also knew temptation. Temptation to cut corners and take the easy way out. Temptations to cheat and lie and steal. Temptations of immediate self-gratification and even sexual temptations. Jesus knew, and knows, everything that we've felt—and yet with one great exception—Jesus knew and knows no personal guilt over sin because Jesus is the one person in all of history that while tempted to sin **HE DID NOT SIN!**

It is precisely because Jesus was able to remain pure that he was the perfect offering for our sins—the unblemished lamb. And it is precisely because Jesus took on human flesh that he was able to redeem humans from sin and death. How amazing and wonderful it is to know that when I am feeling sad and alone Jesus knows what



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that is like. That when I am feeling tempted to sin Jesus also knows what that is like. This is what the author of the letter of the Hebrews was saying when he wrote: **"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."** (Hebrews 4:15 ESV)

It is precisely because Jesus is able to sympathize and identify with us we can sympathize with him and re-dedicate ourselves to fighting against sin in our lives. Knowing that Jesus felt temptation as I do and yet overcame tells me that with the power of the Holy Spirit I too can fight sin in my life. What a blessing to know I don't have to give in but can triumph with His help!

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

September 6th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined the issue of Jesus being the only one without sin. We read that Jesus was fully human yet knew no sin and therefore was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Today we look at Article 16 of the Articles of Religion on the topic of Sin after Baptism:

**"Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent."**

In defining who we are as Anglican Christians this article seeks to dispel two errors in thinking. One error is that if you sin after baptism you have lost your salvation, and the other is that after baptism a Christian cannot sin because he has received the Holy Spirit. This article argues against both of those ideas.

Baptism is predicated upon our repentance (or our parents' if infants and confirmed at as young adults) and the promise that if we truly repent of our sins God, in his mercy, will forgive us those sins. So when we are baptized, we exit the waters of baptism clean and forgiven. This does not mean that our fundamental nature has been changed. We are fallen creatures in need of salvation precisely because we are sinners and continue to be. If you believe, as so many in the first centuries did, that if you sin after baptism then you have lost your salvation you will put off your baptism until the very last moment—ergo deathbed baptisms—and the birth of the concept of "Last Rites."

However, Jesus' promise is that if we ask forgiveness of our father in heaven it will be granted us. "Forgive us



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our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" (Matthew 6:12) we say daily in the Lord's Prayer. While Jesus taught us to repent daily we do not need daily the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a priest as we can go directly to the Father but Sacramental Confess is available and vitally important.

At the Reformation Anglicans did not dismiss this sacrament as so many Protestant denominations did—no we understand that there are times to confess our sins before men ("Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." James 5:16 ESV) and to hear those words "I absolve you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Equally, while the Holy Spirit does lead us from Temptation and Sin it does not mean that we do not sin after receiving the Holy Spirit. Then, we would be perfect and no longer in need of salvation—that kind of thinking runs head long into the reality of sinful lives and leads people to believe that they were never saved in the first place.

The truth is that we need God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit daily in our lives. We need forgiveness of our sins and daily power and Grace to move forward... and when we do sin, to repent and return to the Lord confident that Jesus' forgiveness awaits all who truly turn to Him!

Godspeed -

Bishop Menees



September 13th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined Article 16 and the issue of Sin after Baptism and learned that baptism is not an inoculation against a virus known as sin but it is a booster shot allowing us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to fight off sin, receive forgiveness and begin again by the Grace of God.

Today we examine one of the most controversial (and longest) of the articles dealing with the question of Predestination and Election: *"Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind. and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.*

*As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.*



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*Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture: and, in our doings, that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God."*

Most of the controversy has been in peoples desire to look toward poles - in this case between "Calvinism" by which is often meant as an extreme predestination (and honestly unfair to John Calvin) and Arminianism - the theory of Jacobus Arminius - that relies on complete and unfettered Free Will. So what appears to be the case is a statement of opposites - on the one hand God has predestined some for salvation and some for destruction and on the other God allows complete free will to accept or deny God as we so desire. Frankly there are scriptures that point to each of these ideas: ***"This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*** (1 Timothy 2:3-4 ESV) Would seem to argue for Arminianism and ***"And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*** (Matthew 24:31 ESV) Would seem to argue for Calvinism.

I would argue that the extreme in Arminianism is incorrect for it fails to acknowledge the movement of the Holy Spirit prompting us and moving us. If I could freely choose salvation without any help from the Holy Spirit then salvation would be based on a work that I can accomplish myself and that is not true. Jesus said, ***"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."*** (John 6:44 ESV) In our salvation God plays the central role not us. Equally, with those who argue for extreme Calvinism seem to say that we have no free will at all, and that is just not true either . . . you'll remember that I spoke a couple of weeks ago about Article 10 on Free Will - we have the ability to reject the Father's Love.

So what do we believe with regards to Predestination and Election? Clearly what Predestination and Election are all about God's Love and Grace. He chooses us even though we have rejected and turned our backs on him. He loves us even though we are callous to his love. He is faithful to us even though we doubt and question him. Already knowing from the beginning of time that we would be unworthy, he choose us to come to him. The fruit of our election is seen in our willingness to repent, our willingness to love, our willingness to sacrifice for His

sake and the sake of the Kingdom of God that is both here and now and yet to come. Remember what St. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, *"And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."* (Romans 8:30 ESV)

So how do we know who is elect and who is not? Thankfully we don't know - that is up to God. We can only seek Him and Love Him and be obedient to his commandment, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28: 19-20 ESV)

Godspeed -

Bishop Menees

September 20th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This week we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we looked at Article 17 on Predestination and Election where we learned that God has called us by name and moves us with His Holy Spirit to come to him. Often Article 17 is considered controversial by believers asking whether or not God would pre-ordain that some be saved and some not...Article 18 is equally controversial but generally to non-Christians because Article 18 teaches that salvation is through Jesus Christ alone.

***"They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the light of Nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."***

A few years back I remember watching the funeral of President Gerald Ford on TV as it was televised from the National Cathedral. Fr. Robert Certain read the gospel and preached that day. Fr. Certain was the Rector of the Ford's parish in the Diocese of San Diego and a good acquaintance of mine. I was thrilled to see him climb into the ornate pulpit and to hear those first words so familiar from the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John... ***"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me"*** but oh how crest fallen I was when Fr. Certain left off the last sentence of that gospel reading "Jesus said to him, ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*** (John 14:6) By leaving out that crucial proclamation for salvation Fr. Certain, with a national audience of millions, missed the opportunity to truly preach the Good News of Jesus Christ...that Jesus is the ONLY way to the Father.

Of course, Fr. Certain is not alone, many mainline denominations now teach that Christianity is one way to God that ultimately ALL paths lead to God. In my opening address to diocesan convention in 2011 I said how much I admired the Diocese of San Joaquin for stepping away from the Episcopal Church because the Episcopal Church was willfully leading people to hell. I realize that is a very strong statement but because the leadership in the Episcopal Church directly teaches that "All paths lead to God" they are leading people to hell. If we think about it, if all paths lead to God then Jesus' suffering on the cross, his death and resurrection, are of no consequence.



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Therefore, every time Eucharist is said and Jesus' death and resurrection are remembered the words become hallow if not believed. I stand by my statement at convention and I am proud to be the Bishop of the Diocese of San Joaquin.

So why is Jesus the only way to God? Simply because, unlike all other religions, only Christianity deals with sin - present sin that you and I commit - and the past sin of our original parents Adam & Eve who fell from Grace in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Jesus dealt with this sin for us by receiving the punishment due to us and by doing so he and he alone opened the door to heaven for all who would put their faith and trust in him. As St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans...*"because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (Romans 10:9 ESV)

Godspeed -

Bishop Menees

September 27th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians with our examination of the Articles of Religion. Last week we looked at Article 18 On Salvation Only by the name of Jesus Christ - an aptly named article that reaffirms our faith and the biblical teaching that Salvation is ONLY through Jesus Christ - nothing and no one else can lead to eternal salvation.

Today we look at Article 19 ON THE CHURCH- ***"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly- ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.***

***As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred; so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.***" As I stated in the beginning of this series on the Articles of Religion in *The Bishop's Note* these articles were part of the new identity that the Anglican Church had separate and distinct from the Roman Catholic Church. Clearly part of the Reformation the Anglican Church, unlike most of the other Reformation Churches maintained much of the outward signs and symbols of the church. However there came real and obvious differences and in Article 19 we see one of them and that is the definition of the church. In the Roman Catholic Church the church was defined on a "top down" basis - the Pope was not simply the Bishop of Rome but the Head of the Church and without error when speaking from the cathedra on matters of faith. The Anglican Church, in part of her reformation defined the church almost in reverse. The church is the gathering of the faithful for the purpose of worship, fellowship and discipleship - the New Testament Greek term for church is ***Ekklesia*** (ek-klay-see-ah) which is most often translated "assembly" or "congregation." That term originally referred to a political gathering of people but Jesus and the Apostles transformed the term from purely political in the earthly sense to political in the spiritual sense - a gathering of people called out and into a new kingdom - the Kingdom of God. And isn't that true? When we gather together as men and women of faith to hear the 'pure Word of God preached and to receive the Sacraments administered faithfully according to Jesus' teaching then we are entering into a new kingdom - we taste and see and touch the Kingdom of God.



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This Ekklesia has one head and that is Jesus Christ who is the head of the church and author of salvation (Ephesians 5:23) It is in the midst of that sacred assembly that Jesus is recognized as being powerfully present in fulfillment of his promise, "whenever two or three are gathered in my name I will be in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

It is a sacred and awesome responsibility to be part of that assembly because the church is not simply passive but active - for while we are called to come together to hear the Word of God preached and to receive the Sacraments we also know that we are then sent forth as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) of Good News to a broken and sinful world.

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

October 4th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians with our exploration of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Last week we looked at Article 19 On the Church and this week we examine number 20 with a continuation of that theme on the Authority of the Church: ***"The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority- in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation."***

Article 20 speaks clearly to the Reformation - defining the Church as being constituted by believers gathered to hear the Word of God and to receive the Sacraments and they may form without permission of the Bishop of Rome. This is a significant article because it establishes the authority of the church to organize herself, to set her liturgies (ie. establish the Book of Common Prayer), and to determine, without the Bishop of Rome, matters of faith. However, while the Roman Catholic Church sets the Pope as the highest authority, the Anglican Church sets the Word of God as the highest authority requiring nothing outside of scripture be required for belief or understood to be necessary for salvation.

This is not to say that tradition (teaching of the church throughout the ages) is not important...it is! However, while the Roman Church will place great importance upon the private revelation of the Pope, the Anglican Church takes into account the traditions of the church and weighs them against scripture and where it is or has been contrary to scripture then scripture takes precedence.

This reliance upon scripture is reflected in all aspects of our identity as Anglicans. In my last parish, when we started out, we printed up the liturgy each week in separate bulletins and eventually developed our own permanent booklets which allowed us to site the scripture references. People were often surprised to see that the liturgies in the Book of Common Prayer is, if I would have to guess, 85% scripture. This was especially important to those who found themselves worshiping with us from the non-denominational or evangelical backgrounds. People who valued scripture but desired to experience



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the majesty and beauty of the ancient liturgy lived out were attracted  
to the Anglican Church.

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

October 11th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue to examine what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined Article 20 on the Authority of the Church which set the ultimate authority of the church upon the Holy Scriptures, asserting that the church has the authority to establish rites and ceremonies, but is bound to the limitations of God's Word.

Article 21 continues to define the boundaries of the churches' authority to God's Word. This article speaks not to the local Church, but to General Church Councils. It is significant to note that in 1801 the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States omitted this article due to its association with local and civil authority . . . re: "princes"...and the belief that the rest of the points of the article fall into other articles.

Article 21 reads as follows: ***"General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes. And when they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof of all not be governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture."***

Keep in mind that the Articles were written in 1552 in large measure as a means of self identification by both assertion of faith and differentiation from the Roman Catholic Church. Article 21 was written by the English Reformers and was at that time intended as a clear declaration that the Anglican Church would not be bound by the decisions of the Council of Trent. The Council of Trent (1545 - 1563) was called by the Roman Catholic Church in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Ultimately, we as Anglican hold a great deal in common with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters - where we differ tends to be on doctrines that fall outside of the bounds of scripture.

Have a blessed week!



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October 18th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue to examine what we believe as Anglican Christians. Last week we examined Article 21 on the Authority of the General Councils which set the limit and scope of the councils to the scriptures limited to the canonical books of the bible.

This morning we examine Article 22 which continues that theme of limiting our doctrine to what is contained in the Word of God. Article 22 on Purgatory states: ***"The Roman [Catholic] doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, worshipping and adoration as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saint, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture; but rather repugnant to the word of God."***

Belief in Purgatory did not become an official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church until the Council of Florence in 1439. It was again reaffirmed at the Council of Trent in 1545-1563. Article 22 is again the self identification of the Anglican Church over and against the Roman Catholic Church. What is Purgatory? According to the Catholic Encyclopedia it is, *"a place of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are, not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions."* Essentially it based upon the idea that there are two basic categories of sins - venial & mortal. Mortal sins are those sins worthy of damnation but venial sins need to be atoned for in that period between death and the return of Christ. The problem with this is that it doesn't take enough into account the redemption earned by Jesus on the cross and NOT by anything that we do - Jesus' death was sufficient once and for all.

As Anglicans we do not believe in the existence of "purgatory" a place between heaven and hell in order to atone for sins. We do believe in an intermediate place where we live in the presence of Christ but not the fullness of Christ. Jesus said to the repentant sinner - ***"Today you will be with me in paradise."*** (Luke 23:43) And St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians and Thessalonians that there are those who "sleep" in Christ. I would argue that for believers in Christ the moment after



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we take our last breath on earth we take our next sweet breath in heaven. There we will await the glorious return of Jesus who at that time will come as judge. Following that final judgement our bodies will be renewed and there will be a *"new heaven and a new earth."* (Rev. 21:1)

The article goes on to speak of *"Pardons, worshipping and adoration as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saint,."* These were and are seen as abuses in that if we look to anything other than Jesus and him alone as our intermediary between God and Man. At the time of the Reformation this was a major issue and distinction between the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches. Pardons were purchased or earned by good works . . . i.e. giving to the church (indulgences). The worship of relics was seeking miracles or the invocation of Saints in order to act as an intermediary between God and Man. We do not believe in these because Jesus is the one and only intermedicator we need. This does not mean that we do not study the lives of the saints and learn from their faith - or even to ask the saints to pray for us with the same understanding that we ask a Christian brother or sister to pray for us - not an an intermedicator but as an intercessor.

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

October 25th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Last week we examined Article 22 "On Purgatory" and saw how there is nothing in scripture to support the notion of an intermediary place to atone for sins - Jesus has done it for us.

Today we examine Article 23 - On Ministering in the Congregation: *"It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he is lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which are chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."*

As I write this week's Bishop's Note I am in Laos visiting with Fr. Martin, our missionary here. The church is young and vibrant and eager to grow and learn under the constraints that they have, economic & political. There are several men that Fr. Martin has raised up and the key thing that they asked of me... *"when can you come back to lay hand on us so that we can officially represent Jesus and the church?"* I explained to them that they can and do represent Jesus; by virtue of their baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit they are not only able to but are called to serve Jesus by loving the people, sharing the good news, visiting the sick etc..

But to represent the church as a deacon or priest they needed to be recognized and trained up so that we know that they are teaching and preaching the orthodox faith AND that they are under authority in the teaching and preaching of that faith. The men immediately understood and are desirous of learning and growing as leaders and especially being under authority. Currently, Fr. Martin is that authority and they serve as his assistants. In time, God willing, they will be fully trained and can be ordained to represent Christ and His Church under the authority of the Bishop Rennis Ponniah and the Diocese of Singapore which has oversight of Laos along with Vietnam, Cambodia & Thailand.



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Now you may ask, "Why can't someone simply feel the call and "self-appoint to the office of priest or deacon?" Because we are so easily self-deceived. "I feel a call and therefore it is from God!" For the church it begins there but does not end there. After someone feels a call we test that call - is there fruit? Has God anointed that person for ministry? Do others easily recognize that call and affirm it? Are they able to serve under authority or do they chaff at being accountable? Are they able to adequately learn the scriptures and doctrine of the church and then clearly express that to others? Do their lives reflect the fruit of transformation and holy living? Are they able to reflect Christ and bring honor to His bride the church?

Why is it important that the church raise up and appoint ministers? Very simply -because they are entrusted with men's souls. A false teacher - however well meaning - can do irreparable harm, not only to an individual but to a community.

The New Testament is full examples. In his letter to the Corinthians St. Paul combats these "false apostles" saying: ***"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workman, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ."*** (2 Corinthians 11:12-13) or St. John wrote: ***"Beloved, do not believe every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."*** (1 John 4:1) The mark of these men was their unwillingness to be under authority and accountable. The harm that they can and have caused is great and so it was with no small amount of wisdom that the English Reformers undertook Article 23. It is essential for the health and life of the church that we raise up, train, equip and send men into the Lord Vineyard!

Have a blessed week!

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

November 1st, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our exploration of what we believe as Anglican Christians with our examination of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Last week we looked at Article 23 On Ministering in the Congregation...in which it was made clear that church as the right and the responsibility to call forth, train and license ministers of the Gospel. In today's article we look at the question of public worship. Article 24 states, ***"It is a thing plainly repugnant to the word of God and the custom of the primitive Church, to have public prayer in the Church, or to minister the sacraments in a tongue not understood by the people."***

Article 24 is yet another way that the Anglican Church separated herself from the Roman Catholic Church which had all of her worship in Latin. With the reformation the language of worship as well as translations of the bible was changed to the language of the people. In Germany the language became German; France - French and in England - English. In fact with the tongue understood by the people became known and continues to be known as "the King's English."

Last week while in Laos visiting Fr. Martin, our missionary in Laos, I attended worship in Lao and found myself unaware of what was going on. I knew the liturgy, of course, but did not really understand anything. I imagine that for the people in the church who were uneducated and untrained in Latin knew what the liturgy was but understood very little of what was going on and little to none of the teaching.

Of course, the Roman church argued that they were in fact trying to unify the church under one common language. They argued that one of the things that made the church Catholic, that is universal, was a common language. The Reformers argued that it was not the language that was "catholic" but the faith.

St. Paul confirmed the need to speak in a language understood by the people when he wrote to the churches about speaking in tongues or *"glossolalia."* Paul argued that the gift of tongues is important but in public worship it is more edifying to the body of believers if the tongue



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spoken can be easily understood by the people. *"I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue."* (1 Corinthians 14:18-19 ESV) Instructing others in the faith, building up the body of believers in prayer, giving comfort to a grieving brother or sister...these are the things that the church is to do and how much more can be accomplished when the language spoken can be understood by the people.

Have a blessed week!

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees



November 8th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of our beliefs as Anglican Christians with our study of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Last week we looked at Article 24 and discussed the importance of using a language that the people of the church understand and can engage in. Today, that language is God's Grace given through the Church.

*Article 25 - The Sacraments - Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's good will towards us, by which He works invisibly in us, and not only quickens, but also strengthens and confirms, our faith in Him. There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Those five, commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not the like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God. The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon or to be carried about, but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, have they a wholesome effect or operation: but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves damnation, as S. Paul said."*

The sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. which is the definition from the 1979 BCP for the Sacraments. Anyone who has faithfully approached the altar and received the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ has received the wonderful, life giving and forgiving Grace of our Lord Jesus. That's what Richard Hooker meant when he said that we receive an invisible Grace through an outward and visible sign.

The article is clear to state that the two primary sacraments were instituted by Jesus and are demonstrated in the scriptures - **Eucharist/the Lord's Supper** - and **Baptism**. However, the early church also noted those passages in life that were and are moments of



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transition - spiritual, physical and ministerial. **Holy Matrimony** - the coming together of one man and one woman in a life long union. **Confession & Absolution** make for a spiritual reconciliation between God and Man in a powerful and holy manner. **Unction** - the anointing with oil for healing marks the ministry of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit. **Ordination** is the setting aside of individuals for the special ministry of the Episcopate, the Priesthood and the Deaconate. **Confirmation** is that sacrament that marks the transition to a mature faith along with a formal confession of faith and public acceptance of ministry.

The Anglican Church affirmed the sacraments of the universal church but also noted potential abuses. There was an emphasis in some parts of the church of what is known as ocular communion - meaning by gazing upon the sacrament one received the Grace of God. The abuse came with the conception that only the clergy were worthy to receive Holy Communion - that "common laity" were not in a sufficient state of Grace to receive the body and blood of Christ. Thus they could look upon the consecrated elements and receive God's grace. This error failed to understand that God's Grace is not earned nor merited but given to those who come in faith with a contrite heart.

Some have argued that this article, taken in a literal fashion, would mean that communion could not be taken to the sick or venerated in the Mass. I would disagree with this interpretation and argue that the last paragraph of the article was meant to address abuses that had occurred in the Roman Church with Ocular Communion and the Purchase of Indulgences.

Ultimately, the sacraments are a mystery - God's Grace poured out through His Church in His Sacraments feed the soul and nourish the body of Christ - which is the Church.

Have a blessed week!

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

November 15th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of what we believe as Anglican Christians with our investigation of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Last week we took a look at Article 25 On the Sacraments and noted the two primary sacraments of Baptism & Holy Communion along with the five succeeding sacraments of Reconciliation, Extreme Unction, Marriage, Ordination & Confirmation. Each of these sacraments is administered by a priest or bishop. The problem is, through out the years, some of the priests and bishops have been scoundrels and all have been sinners - does that mean that the validity of the sacrament for which they administered was in question? Article 26 addresses this question...

*"Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometime the evil has chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments; yet because they do not do so in their own name, but in Christ's, and minister by His commission and authority, we may use their ministry both in hearing the word of God and in the receiving of the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from those who by faith and rightly receive the sacraments ministered unto them, which are effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, although they are ministered by evil men.*

*Nevertheless it is part of the discipline of the Church that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offenses; and finally, being found guilty by just judgement, be deposed."*

Clergy are called by God and anointed for service in the Church. Those sensing a call and desiring ordination are put through background checks, the required education, interviews and internships. Through all of that they have been examined inside and out - but does that mean that ministers are all righteous and holy? Sadly, no we are all sinners in need of salvation! Clergy do seek, by the power of God the Holy Spirit, to live righteous and holy lives but alas we all fall short. So the question would exist if the clergyman is a sinner is the sacrament somehow tainted? The answer is NO. The validity of the sacraments is based upon Christ and his Grace alone. Therefore when received in a spirit of faith by a Christian we do receive that inward and spiritual Grace!

It is important to note that the 26th Article is clear to state that the



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church holds the responsibility to investigate allegations of wrong doing and, if found guilty, impose discipline upon the offending minister. This is a sacred responsibility of the Bishop as the chief pastor of the church to protect the sheep of the fold.

Have a blessed week!

Godspeed -  
Bishop Menees

November 29th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our exploration of what it means to be an Anglican Christian with our examination of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion. Two weeks ago, having taken last Thursday off for Thanksgiving, we looked at Article 26- On "The unworthiness of Ministers does not hinder the effect of the Sacraments" where we were reminded that the validity of the sacrament is not based upon the righteousness of the minister administering the sacrament.

Today we look at Article 27 on Baptism - *Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference by which Christian men are discerned from other that be not christened, but is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Spirit are visibly signed and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.*

As I travel around the diocese visiting different churches, what a joy it is to baptize new believers. Recently, I was honored to baptize a baby just two and a half months old and I've baptized believers in their sixties. Both are a joy because both represent new believers coming into the Kingdom of God and becoming a member of Christ's One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Baptism is that primary sacrament upon which all the other sacraments are founded. The baptismal examination makes it so clear:

*Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of evil that rebel against God?*

*I renounce them.*

*Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?*

*I renounce them.*

*Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?*

*I renounce them.*

*Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your savior?*

*I do.*



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*Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love?*

*I do*

*Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?*

*I do.*

Upon answering these all important questions, the candidate is baptized with water in the name of the Trinity and anointed with oil being "marked as Christ's own forever." With this outward and visible sign we recognize and acknowledge the transforming Grace of God working in and through our lives.

I will often conclude my sermon just prior to a baptism by stating that the sermon isn't really going to end because the life of the new Christian will be the sermon.

Have a blessed week!

Bishop Menees

December 13th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our study of the 39 Articles of Religion. Last week we departed from our norm with a short teaching on Prayer and Fasting as I made the call to the diocese to pray and fast on Fridays in Advent asking God's favor in the lawsuits. We are in that section of the Articles about the life of the church and specifically the sacraments. Article 27 dealt with Baptism and article 28 deals with Holy Eucharist aka the Lord's Supper. I should mention at the outset that books have been written on this article and the doctrine of the Eucharist I cannot, in the space provided address all the issues but rather give an overview of the Article. Article 28 read: *"The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves, one to another, but rather it is [also] a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death: to those who rightly, worthily, and with faith receive it, the bread that we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Scripture, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthrowes the nature of a Sacrament, and has given occasion to many superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means by which the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped."*

The issues raised in Article 28 are a direct response to what had come to be understood as abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. By abuse I mean to say that the church had taken practice and ritual beyond the scope of scripture and into the realm of superstition.

The first and primary issue is **Transubstantiation** - or the belief that in the consecration of the elements the bread and wine literally become the physical body and blood of Jesus though maintaining the outward appearance of bread and wine. This lead to the teaching of the "sacrifice of the mass" and the belief that Jesus was sacrificed every time that the Lord's Supper was or is celebrated. The problem here is that this idea is contrary to scripture which states that Jesus' sacrifice was a once for all event...**"And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."** (Hebrews 10:10 ESV) This idea of a repeated sacrifice lead to the false idea that Jesus atoned repeatedly for our sins.



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In addition, two other errors arose from the doctrine of transubstantiation...first, that one must receive the Lord's body and blood to be cleansed of sin each week. If in the intervening time if one would die unexpectedly having missed communicating then the issue of the souls salvation was at risk. Secondly, was the idea that being the literal body and blood of Christ it was so holy as only to be viewed by the common man and to be received by the priest. This was known as "ocular" communion - that to look upon the sacrament was sufficient. In 1549 those who opposed Archbishop Cranmer wrote: *"We will have the Sacrament to hang over the high altar, there to be worshipped and only to be delivered to the lay people at Easter, and then only in one kind."* *"We will have the Mass in Latin, as was before, and celebrated by the priest without any man or woman communicating with him."* (Carter, *The English Church and the Reformation*, p. 127.)

Both of these ideas are contrary to the teaching and practice of the Apostles and the early church where the common practice was to receive communion weekly when the church gathered...***"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight."*** (Acts 20:7 ESV) Luke writing about the ministry of Paul simply states that the norm was to gather on the first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread together as the body of Christ.

For many of us today a second controversial part of this article is the last sentence which can be understood as a prohibition against the reservation of the sacrament or taking it to the sick or being maintained in a monstrance.

I believe Archbishop Cranmer and the English Reformers recognized the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist making it more than a memorial but less than the literal body and blood. This became known as the doctrine of Consubstantiation - that Christ is mystically present in the sacrament meaning that the elements are both the body and blood of Christ while maintaining all the properties of bread and wine. Thus while Jesus did not specifically say that the elements were to be reserved or carried about to the sick he also did not forbid it, neither did the early church as we know that deacons would take the elements from the assembly to those who were infirm.

We have such treasure in the Anglican Church with our understanding of the Holy Eucharist. It was that mystical presence of Christ that first quickened my heart when I first received, having been baptized but not a believer. It was the moment that I came home - home to Christ - home to the Church - HOME!

A blessed week to you all!



December 20th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of the 39 Articles as we explore Anglican Christianity. Last week we looked at Article 28 on the Lord's Supper and the question of how the Lord is present in the sacrament. Article 29 is an extension of Article 28 responding to the question of what happens if a person who is in a non-believer or a person who is living in sin receives Holy Communion.

***Article 29 - The wicked which do not eat the body of Christ, in the use of the Lord's Supper: The wicked and those who are void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth (as S. Augustine said) the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ, but rather to their condemnation do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing.***

In part I believe that this article is meant to address a potential error that accompanies the belief in Transubstantiation . . . can someone who has been living in sin receive the sacrament and magically be cleansed from sin without true faith, belief or amendment of life? Said another way is the sacrament efficacious on its own without the faith of the recipient?

In my own experience the first time I received Holy Communion I was invited to church and an usher insisted that I go forward and receive the sacrament. I can tell you that I didn't have the foggiest idea of what was happening and what the significance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was. To my knowledge I was not baptized;\* however, I was searching for God and exploring opportunities.

The role of faith is important in the proper reception of the Lord's Supper, but because the Lord is objectively present in the sacrament, the efficacy is not solely dependent upon faith but our faith does enhance the efficacy of the Lord's Supper.

What then about someone who approaches the table in an unrepentant manner? St. Paul is clear in his First Letter to the Corinthians... ***"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."*** (1 Corinthians 11:27-29 ESV)



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This is what makes the current move in some denominations for "open communion," meaning that baptism and belief are not required for receiving Holy Communion, dangerous. This is a very dangerous move - not to the church but to the soul of the recipient. Holy Communion is a sacred affair and should be approached and received with respect, honor and the fear of the Lord.

This next week as we receive the Lord's Supper on the anniversary of His Incarnation we should approach in a manner worthy of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Merry Christmas to you All!

Bishop Menees

\* Turns out I was secretly baptized by an over zealous nun at St. Francis Hospital

January 4th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of the 39 Articles as we explore Anglican Christianity. Two weeks ago we looked at Article 29 the Wicked receiving Holy Communion...the question asks whether or not the sacrament is efficacious without the faith of the recipient - and the answer is yes but that the sacrament is all the more efficacious when received by a believer and that the sacrament should be limited to believers. Today we continue our examination of the sacraments with Article 30 On Receiving in Both Kinds - meaning both the bread and wine the body and blood of Christ.

***Article 30 - Both Kinds The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both parts of the Lord's sacrament, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.***

The Articles of Religion address in several ways the Church and her sacraments and article 30 continues that discussion. It was the Roman practice that communion was considered too holy for lay people except, perhaps, once a year...instead it was considered good enough to participate in "ocular" communion - simply looking upon the sacrament. Archbishop Cranmer wanted to make sure that the lay people and the clergy together participated in the sacraments both receiving in both kinds the bread and wine the body and blood of Jesus.

This is another way in which the separation between the orders was lessened. In the Roman tradition the priest was, and perhaps continues to be, an intermediary between God and Man. In the Anglican tradition the priest plays a very important role in the celebration and administration of the sacraments. He is an aid to the people and a representative for the church and, at in the celebration of the sacraments he is an "Alter Christus" or another Christ. This is not to say that the priest is Christ but that as he celebrates the Eucharist it is Christ who transforms the bread and wine through the priest speaking the words of Institution.

When we, all of us, receive Holy Communion in both Kinds we follow Christ's example and command... ***"Take, eat: This is my***

***Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.... Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new***



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*Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."* (BCP 362)

Merry Christmas and a Blessed Epiphany to you all!

Bishop Menees

January 10th, 2012

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This morning we continue our examination of the 39 Articles as we explore Anglican Christianity. Last week we looked at Article 30 and examined why it is that we receive both the bread and wine - the body and blood - of Jesus at Holy Communion. Like many of the articles, it was meant as a correction to what had become the practice of, not the official policy of, the Roman Catholic Church. We continue that theme with Article 31 in which Archbishop Cranmer and the Anglican Reformers addressed the Roman practice of teaching that at each Mass Jesus was re-sacrificed for the atonement of sin.

***Article 31 - The one oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross***

***The offering of Christ once made is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is no other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in which it was commonly said that the priests offered Christ for the living and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.***

As I have mentioned before, it had become the custom and practice in the Roman Church to teach that at each mass Jesus was re-sacrificed in order to atone for sin - therefore if you missed mass, had sinned and died prior to being able to attend another mass, then your new sins could be enough to drag you into hell or at the least require more time in purgatory.

Scripture clearly teaches us that this is simply not true - the author of Hebrews addressed the issue of continued sacrifices that had been offered in the Temple but the overall message is clear - Jesus offered himself once and for all for the forgiveness of sin... ***"When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*** (Hebrews 10:8-10 ESV)

This is an essential aspect of the Good News of Jesus Christ and an



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This is an essential aspect of the Good News of Jesus Christ and an essential aspect of Anglicanism. If attendance at the Mass is obligatory in order for the forgiveness of sin, then we are working out our own salvation - by attendance at Mass. When we come before Christ and ask his forgiveness and receive him into our lives then we receive the benefit of his sacrifice on the cross. What a relief to know that I don't have to earn salvation - rather I simply accept the love that Christ has already poured out upon me.

Does this mean that attendance at Holy Communion is not important? BY NO MEANS! We attend and worship Jesus in our Sunday Services as a way of saying Thank You for his love and mercy - for that reason it is called Holy Eucharist - Eucharist comes from the Greek *eucharistia* (eucharistia) meaning thanksgiving!

Bishop Menees

January 17th, 2013

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This week we continue our discussion of the 39 Articles of Religion. Last week we explored how it is that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was a once for all sacrifice that is not repeated and there is no necessity for it to be repeated. Today we explore the question of marriage for clergy and most specifically priests. The Roman Catholic Church required vows of life long celibacy and this was questioned by the Reformers and specifically the Anglican Reformers.

***Article 32 - The Marriage of Priests - Bishops, Priests, and Deacons are not commanded by God's laws either to vow the estate of single life or to abstain from marriage. Therefore it is lawful also for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness.***

The question of whether clergy should marry or take life vows of Chastity continues to this day and remains as distinguishing factor between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church.

Jesus, of course, was single and chaste but the disciples he called were, for the most part married. St. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth that those who are called to marriage should marry and those called to singleness should remain single. (First Corinthians 7:25ff.) This instruction applied to clergy and laymen alike. In St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy he directly addresses clergy both Deacons and Bishops or Pastors whom he calls "overseers" when he says, ***"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,"*** (1 Timothy 3:1-2 ESV)

The issue of the church asking clergy to remain celibate for life began in the fourth century but wasn't full required (or enforced) across the church until the eleventh century. At the time of enforcement the elder children who stood to inherit the family lands turned the land over to the church. This was understandably a very popular idea with the Church and a very unpopular idea with the governing authorities i.e.. Kings. Theologically and pastorally the big idea was that a priest should marry the church and be the father of the

congregation. The question for the Anglican Church was not whether or not Christians should be chaste outside of marriage that is a given



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based on scripture. But, did scripture prohibit or even strongly

encourage clergy to take life vows of chastity and the answer was and is clearly NO. Article 32 simply states that clergy be allowed to marry and the answer is YES that ALL CHRISTIANS should be allowed to marry but none must.

Since the formation of the Anglican Church clergy have been allowed to marry and the church has greatly benefited from the fruits of Article 32. However, with marriage in a fallen world clergy have also divorced and this has been a fruit of our fallen natures as humans and a painful occurrence in the church. In the Anglican Church in North America the church has taken a very high view of Covenant of Marriage and set a standard higher for clergy than for laymen believing that clergy should set the example. Since our formation in 2009 bishops who have been divorced are not admitted to serve in the College of Bishops. Clergy who are divorced and desire to remarry must receive approval from the Archbishop and clear biblical standards for the divorce must be evident as well as clear proof that the clergyman made every attempt at reconciliation and is taking responsibility for his minor children and ex-wife when appropriate.

The issue of marriage is a vital one to us as Christians in the modern age and I am thankful to the Anglican Reformers for recognizing the importance of marriage.

This week in our parishes the Gospel lesson is Jesus' attendance at the Wedding in Cana - somehow that seems very appropriate.

Godspeed,

**Bishop Menees**



January 31st, 2013

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This week we continue our discussion of the 39 Articles of Religion. Two weeks ago we explored the question of marriage being an honorable estate and how the church should not require life vows of chastity. Today the subject changes to order in the church. We cannot exist without structure and order and an important aspect to that is discipline.

***Article 33 - Excommunicated Persons, how they are to be avoided That person which by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church and excommunicated, ought to be taken by the whole multitude of the faithful as an heathen and publican, until he is openly reconciled by penance and received into the Church by a judge that has authority to do so.***

Specifically this article speaks to the discipline of Excommunication - the barring of people from receiving Holy Communion which places a person outside of the life of the church and her fellowship. This discipline is taken when people make an open denunciation of the church and her faith both in words and in practice by living in open sin and rebellion without remorse or repentance.

Over the years the church practiced discipline but something seemed to change in the 1960s when Bishop James Pike of the Episcopal Diocese of California (San Francisco) openly denied the central tenants of the faith including the very existence of God. Upon his denunciation of the faith the church failed to act to discipline him and that failure to act has had consequences that have led to the very sad state of affairs that the Church finds herself in at the moment. The list of failures to discipline in the Episcopal Church grew through the years since James Pike and include Bishop Spong of New Jersey who denies the resurrection and the current Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church who argues that "all paths lead to god." Thus proclaiming that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was pointless and without redemption. When the church fails to exorcise discipline among its leaders she invites the wolves into the sheep pin. When the church fails to exorcise discipline among the sheep she invites a virus into the church...a virus that erodes the vitality of the congregation.

Church discipline needs to follow the biblical principle laid out in Matthew 18: 15-17 ***"If your brother sins against you, go and tell***



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*him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you,*

*you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."*

In essence - go in private - if that doesn't work go with a brother - if that doesn't work involve the church, (the clergy) and if he fails to repent then he is to be set aside and refused the sacrament. An all too common example of this, and one I have had to confront, comes when a parishioner is accused of adultery. When confronted, the person justified and rationalized. After bringing proof and their refusal to repent, they were denied communion. This happens only with serious prayer, discernment and, if excommunication is required, with the permission of the bishop. Not to address an issue like this in the congregation ends up by splitting the congregation and diminishing the teaching of the clergy and thus damaging the ministry of the church. I am pleased to say that in more cases than not the person recognized their error, repented and the church community was strengthened, the persons own relationship with Christ was restored and the ministry of the church spread.

Godspeed,

Bishop Menees

February 7th, 2013

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

This week we continue our discussion of the 39 Articles of Religion. Last week we explored the question of Church Discipline and its importance for the health of the church. Today we continue the discussion of order in the church. The Anglican Church is a Communion that began as a National Church, not a Congregational Church. Article 34 weighs the tensions that existed between breaking from a multi-national church headed in Rome with a central authority to a national church with the crown as the Defender of the Faith.



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### **Article 34 - The Traditions of the Church**

*It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word.*

*Whosoever through his private judgement willingly and purposely openly breaks the traditions and ceremonies of the Church which are not repugnant to the word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly that others may fear to do the like, as he that offends against common order of the Church, and hurts the authority of the magistrate, and wounds the conscience of the weak brethren.*

*Every particular or national Church has authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying.*

In the English Reformation, the Anglican Church formed a national church that asserted the right to establish her own rites and traditions. With that assertion came the formation of the Book of Common Prayer which sought to recapture the traditions of the primitive church and connect everyone across England and the English Colonies. This took a fine balancing act to develop a common liturgy and common practice of prayer while allowing some freedom of expression.

What the Article seeks to stop are individual clergy and

What the Article seeks to stop are individual clergy and

congregations developing their own rites and liturgies outside of the bounds of the Book of Common Prayer. Submission to the Book of Common Prayer had the benefit of unifying the nation in a common discipline of church polity and prayer while maintaining a strong connection to the ancient church.

It is for this reason that we in the Anglican Church in North America have allowed for individual expression of liturgies as long as they conform to the original doctrines and beliefs of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

Soon congregations in the Diocese of San Joaquin will be able to worship with the trial liturgies of the ACNA Book of Common Prayer.

May the Lord bless your week ahead and your worship on the Lord's Day!

Godspeed,

**Bishop Menees**

June 13, 2013

This week we return to our discussion of the 39 Articles of Religion. You may remember that we'd made it to Article 34 On The Traditions of the Church at the end of Epiphany and then we took a break during Lent and Easter to examine the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Godly Virtues.

This week we pick up where we left off with **Article 35 On the Homilies**. Article 34 on the Traditions of the Church allowed for some flexibility in the worship but following a Common form. We see that same flexibility today throughout the Anglican Communion in what is often referred to as the "Three Streams: Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical and Charismatic." As I travel around the diocese, I see these three streams demonstrated, and I love it because the three streams together provide the fullness of who we are as Anglican Christians.

However, while we have three basic styles of worship - with many variations in between - it is absolutely vital that we have a common faith!

That need existed following the Reformation. To help teach and express a common faith, Archbishop Cranmer wrote a series of homilies to teach the basics of the faith. Article 35 brought together Cranmer's homilies with others and stated:

### **Article 35 - Of Homilies**

*The second Book of Homilies, the various titles of which we have joined under this Article, contains a godly and wholesome doctrine and necessary for these times, as does the former Book of Homilies which were set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth: and therefore we judge them to be read in Churches by the ministers diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood by the people.*

The Names of the Homilies

1. Of the right Use of the Church
2. Against peril of Idolatry
3. Of the repairing and keeping clean of Churches
4. Of good Works: first of Fasting
5. Against Gluttony and Drunkenness
6. Against Excess of Apparel
7. Of Prayer
8. Of the Place and Time of Prayer
9. That Common Prayers and Sacraments ought to be ministered in a



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known tongue.

10. Of the reverend estimation of God's Word
11. Of Alms-doing
12. Of the Nativity of Christ
13. Of the Passion of Christ
14. Of the Resurrection of Christ
15. Of the worthy receiving of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ
16. Of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost
17. For the Rogation-days
18. Of the state of Matrimony
19. Of Repentance
20. Against Idleness
21. Against Rebellion

You will note that the homilies are divided up into theological and practical homilies laying out the foundation of the faith and how Christians are to live faithfully. While twelve of the homilies are attributed to Archbishop Cranmer, the rest are attributed to other prominent clergymen of the time including John Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury.

It is important to note that the homilies were provided as an aid to the Church so that this infant church in the midst of reform would be sure to teach the Truth of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Today we live in a similar time of reformation when we must rely upon the Truth of Jesus Christ and His Church. What separates us from many mainline denominations that are straying from the faith is our steadfast adherence to the Truth of the Word of God, the Redemption found in Jesus Christ alone and the Power of the Holy Spirit!

May the Lord bless your week ahead and your worship on the Lord's Day!

Bishop Menees

June 20, 2013

The name of my weekly articles on life, faith and the Church is "The Bishop's Note" . . . I can use that name because, well, I am a Bishop! I am a Bishop because the Anglican Church raises up Bishops who are in the line of Apostolic Succession dating back to St. Peter. Today's Article of exploration from the 39 Articles of Religion is #36 On the Consecration of Bishops and Ministers.



### Article 36 - Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers

*The Book of Consecration of Archbishops and Bishops and ordering of Priests and Deacons, lately set forth in the time of Edward the Sixth and confirmed at the same time by authority of Parliament, contains all things necessary to such consecration and ordering; neither has it anything that of itself is superstitious or ungodly.*

*And therefore whosoever are consecrated or ordered according to the rites of that book, since the second year of King Edward unto this time, or hereafter shall be consecrated or ordered according to the same rites, we decree all such to be rightly, orderly, and lawfully consecrated or ordered.*

The Orders of the church, Bishops, Priests and Deacons, lend a historic and scriptural structure to the church found throughout the Book of Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament.

It is important to note that the structure does not exist for itself but for the Glory of God through the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord, the faithful administration of the sacraments, and the equipping and deploying of all baptized Christians who, in fact, form the body of Christ.

Over the first eighteen months of my episcopate I have been asked by many, "Did you always want to be a bishop?" The answer to that question is an unqualified NO. I believe that those who desire positions in the church, no matter what they may be, probably shouldn't hold those positions. Rather, the desire should be to serve God and Him alone and, therefore, if He calls you to that position then it would be disobedient not to pursue that calling.

For Priests and Deacons in the ACNA, and specifically the Diocese of San Joaquin, that process begins with a person sensing that call from the Lord. He or she then goes to their parish clergy to seek guidance and prayer. A parish discernment committee is

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established to assist that person and, after a season of testin, the call, they ask the Vestry or Bishop's Committee to recommend an interview with me as Bishop and the Commission on Ministry. This process is not designed to eliminate anyone but to prayerfully discern a call to ministry. Remember that all baptized Christians have a call to ministry the question is simply, to what specifically is that call - Layman, Deacon, Priest or Bishop!

May the Lord bless your week ahead and your worship on the Lord's Day!

Bishop Menees



# Bishop's Note: Article 37—Of the Civil Magistrates

Today, we continue our examination the 39 Articles, shifting our attention from Church matters only, to the relationship of both individuals and the Church to the State. I found this article difficult to read in the Original Kings English, therefore I have used the more modern English translation below. This article concerns four different aspects of Civil Authority, and I'm going to break it up a bit in order to explain each part:

## Article 37 - Of the Civil Magistrates

**The King's Majesty has the chief power in this Realm of England and his other dominions. The chief government of all aspects of this realm, including both ecclesiastical and civil, belongs to him. The government is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction.**

In 1553, King Henry VIII established the Act of Royal Supremacy, which made official what was already in practice—the King served as the Head of the Church, as well as the Head of State. Queen Elizabeth I changed the wording, in 1563, to state that Christ was the Head of the Church. The English monarch continues to be the head of the Church of England, but shares responsibility with Parliament for many actions—primarily the confirmation of all Bishops and Archbishops in the Church of England.

**Some slanderous people are offended when we attribute to the King's Majesty the highest government. But we do not give to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments. The Injunctions recently set forth by Elizabeth our Queen plainly testify to this. We only give that right, which we see in the Holy Scriptures was always given to godly Princes by God himself. That is, that they should rule all positions and classes committed to their charge by God, whether they are ecclesiastical or civil. And that they should restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evildoers.**

Prior to the Act of Royal Supremacy, people could appeal to the Pope for relief in both civil and religious matters. This article only recognizes the monarch as having authority in those areas. However, it also limits that authority to the boundaries laid out in scripture for rulers. Therefore, the monarchs do not have authority to officially preach the Word of God or administer the Sacraments.

**The Bishop of Rome has no jurisdiction in this Realm of England.**

This statement is quite clear, and was incredibly bold for the sixteenth century.

**The Laws of the Realm may punish Christians with death, for terrible and serious offenses. It is lawful for Christians, at the commandment of the Ruler to carry weapons and serve in the wars.**

This paragraph permits the practice of capital punishment by the State, and authorizes military service by members of the Church of England, which set the Church

of England apart from the Anabaptists (now known as Amish & Mennonite), who argued for pacifism.

As the Church of England spread throughout the world, so spread the biblical understanding that we are to recognize and respect those in authority over us. St. Paul wrote to the church in Rome: ***“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”*** (Romans 13:1 ESV)

However, this does not mean that we cannot question authority when the state acts in a manner opposed to scripture. Because of the authority of scripture, when that happens, we are to uphold scripture while still respecting authority.

For us in the Diocese of San Joaquin, we are living this out by submitting ourselves to the authority of the civil courts. While we disagreed with the decision of the judge in Kern County, we respected his authority and submitted to his decision. We pray that the other judges will make godly decisions, but ultimately we trust in the great Judge, Jesus Christ!

May the Lord bless your week ahead and your worship on the Lord's Day!

Bishop Menees

# Bishop's Note: Article 38 -

## Christian Mens Goods That Are Not In Common

The Church of England and Anglicanism, in general, have always seen themselves as both Catholic and Protestant, but that means they must define themselves in a very specific way. Anglicanism seeks to take the best of both Catholic and Protestant worlds, while letting go of any abuses or extraneous requirements.

Article 38 seeks to address one of those extraneous requirements within the Protestant realm. In the Anabaptist movement—now known as Mennonites—emphasis was placed on re-baptism for adults, and they clung very closely to New Testament ideals, including requiring the practice of living in community—sharing everything in common. This has been a long standing practice in the Roman Catholic Church's monastic movement, and in time, the Anglican Church voluntarily developed monastic communities as well. I, myself, experienced this for a time in El Salvador living in community where people shared all things in common. This followed the example of the early church in Acts: ***“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”*** (Acts 4:32-35 ESV)

### Article 38 - Christian men's goods which are not common

***The riches and goods of Christians are not common, concerning their right, title, and possession, as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast; still, every man ought of such things as he possesses liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.***

While we are not required to live in common with other Christian brothers and sisters, we are absolutely required, “liberally to give alms to the poor, according to our ability.”

Since the first century, Christian generosity has been a distinguishing characteristic of the Church. When a drought caused famine in Jerusalem, the church in Macedonia (Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea) gave freely to aid the believers there. ***“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”*** (2 Corinthians 8:1-5 ESV) This generosity drew the attention of the Roman authorities, and in fact was threatening to them—it frightened them that people of different city-states, ethnicities, and economic levels, would give of themselves in order to help people that they had never met.

That type of generosity—that type of Love—is what marked the Christian Church in

# Bishop's Note: Article 38 -

## Christian Mens Goods That Are Not In Common

the first century, and still marks the Church in the twenty-first century!

May the Lord bless your week ahead and your worship on the Lord's Day!

Bishop Menees

# Bishop's Note: Article 39 - A Christian Man's Oath

In this, the last of the 39 Articles, we see again a sense of distinguishing Anglicans from Anabaptists. You see, the Anabaptists and the Quakers made a pretty big deal about not swearing oaths to one another or to the Crown. Because a Christian man's word is to be his bond the feeling that to swear an oath was considered offensive - as in... "I've given you my word why would I need to swear to it."

Of course, we Anglicans feel the same way - we are to speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth as is said in TV courtroom dramas. The issue for the thirty-ninth article is divided into two parts - "vain and rash swear" and "oaths" to the Crown or to the magistrate.

## **Article 39 - A Christian man's Oath**

***As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, so we judge that Christian religion does not prohibit a man from swearing when the magistrate requires in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet's teaching in justice, judgement, and truth.***

Regarding vain and rash swearing - using the Lord's name in vain or speaking lightly about the Lord would fall under this provision and all Christians should oppose this sort of speech.

However, it is important to note that in the first century the use of oaths permeated society both religious and economic. The Torah spoke to the importance of fulfilling your words: ***"If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth."*** (Deuteronomy 23:21-23 ESV) the problem was that people would swear an oath on anything and everything and thereby trivialized the Word of God. Jesus opposed this when he said during the Sermon on the Mount: ***"But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil."*** (Matthew 5:34-37 ESV)

This seems straight forward and direct and yet, the scriptures of full of examples of godly men taking oaths and if one followed this literally then they could not fulfill scriptures admonishment to obey those in Authority for the authority comes from God - Romans 13:1-7.

Furthermore St. Paul himself swore by heaven ***"I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit"*** (Romans 9:1 ESV)

Ultimately, the argument of this article is simple: our words are important and should always be made in honesty. Because scripture allows for oaths and in order for

Christians to assist in the administration of the law by testifying in court - and since in the sixteenth century English government and courts were admittedly Christian - Christians should not be prohibited from service by forbidding the taking of an oath.

I end the series on the 39 Articles of Religion with an exhortation to the Diocese of San Joaquin to always speak the truth in Love - to be honest to a fault - and to allow your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no.

May the Lord bless your week ahead and your worship on the Lord's Day!

Bishop Menees