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KNOTS UNTIED.

BEING

PLAIN STATEMENTS

ON DISPUTED POINTS IN RELIGION,
FROM THE
STANDPOINT OF AN EVANGELICAL CHURCHMAN.

BY THE LATE BISHOP

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THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

Chapter IV.

I MUST begin this paper with an apology. My subject may seem at first sight dry, dull, and uninteresting. But I ask my readers to believe that it is not so in reality. There are few points about which it is so important for English Churchmen to have clear and correct views, as about the nature, position, and authority of the Thirty-nine Articles.

Marriage settlements and wills are not very lively reading. Like all carefully-drawn legal documents, they are extremely unattractive to general readers. The language seems cramped and old-fashioned; the amount of verbiage and circumlocution in them appears positively astounding; yet none but a child or fool would ever dare to say that wills and marriage settlements are of no use. The happiness of whole families often turns upon the meaning of their contents. It is even so with the Thirty-nine Articles. Dry, and dull, and uninteresting as they may appear to some, they are in one sense the backbone of the Church of England. Surely some knowledge of them ought to be sought after by every sensible and intelligent member of our Communion.

Who is the “true Churchman”? That is a question which is shaking the Established Church of England to the very centre, and will shake it a good deal more, I suspect, before the end of the world comes. It is becoming a very large and serious question, and one which imperatively demands an answer.

It is not enough to say that everybody who goes to church is a “true Churchman.” That reply, I think, will content nobody. There are scores of people occupying our pews and benches every Sunday, who know nothing whatever about religion. They could not tell you, if life depended on it, what they believe or don’t believe, hold or don’t hold, think or don’t think, about any doctrine of Christianity. They are totally in the dark about the whole subject. Politics they know, and business they know, and science perhaps they know, and possibly they know something about the amusements of this world. But as to the composition of a “true Churchman’s” creed, they can tell you nothing whatever. They “go to church” on Sundays; and that is all. Surely this will never do! Ignorance, complete ignorance, can never be the qualification of a true Churchman. But perhaps it is enough to say that everybody who goes to church, and is zealous and earnest in his religion, is a “true Churchman”? That is a very wide question, and opens up an entirely new line of thought. But I fear it will not land us in any satisfactory conclusion. “Earnestness” is the attribute of men of the most opposite and contradictory creeds. “Earnestness is the character of religionists who are as wide apart as black and white, light and darkness, bitter and sweet, hot and cold.—You see it outside the Church of England. The Mohametans who overran the rotten Churches of Africa and Western Asia, crying, “the Koran or the sword,”—the Jesuit, who saps and mines, and compasses sea and land to make one proselyte,—the Mormonite, who crosses half the globe to die in the Salt Lake City, and calls Joe Smith a prophet,—all these undeniably were and are earnest men.—You see it inside the Church of England at this very day. The Ritualist, the Rationalist, the Evangelical, all are in earnest. Yet every one knows that their differences are grave, wide, deep, and irreconcilable. Surely this will never do. Earnestness alone is no proof that a man is a true Churchman. The devil is in earnest. Infi-

dels are in earnest. Deists are in earnest. Socinians are in earnest. Papists are in earnest. Pharisees were in earnest. Sadducees were in earnest. Earnestness alone proves nothing more than this,—that a man has a good deal of steam and energy and “go” about him, and will not go to sleep. But it certainly does not prove that a man is a “true Churchman.” What is the man earnest about? This is the question that ought to be asked, and deserves to be answered.

Once for all, I must protest against the modern notion, that it does not matter the least what religious opinions a man holds, so long as he is in “earnest” about them,—that one creed is just as good as another,—and that all “earnest” men will somehow or other at last find themselves in heaven. I cannot hold such an opinion, so long as I believe that the Bible is a revelation from God. I would extend to every one the widest liberty and toleration. I abhor the idea of persecuting any one for his opinions. I would “think and let think.” But so long as I have breath in my body, I shall always contend that there is such a thing as revealed truth,—that men may find out what truth is if they will honestly seek for it,—and that mere earnestness and zeal, without Scriptural knowledge, will never give any one comfort in life, peace in death, or boldness in the day of judgment.

But how are we to find out who is the “true Churchman”? someone will ask me. Men complain with good reason that they feel puzzled, perplexed, embarrassed, bewildered, posed, and mystified by the question. Rationalists, Ritualists, and Evangelicals, all call themselves “Churchmen.” Who is right?—The name “Churchman” is bandied about from side to side, like a shuttlecock, and men lay claim to it who on many points are diametrically opposed to one another. Now how are we to settle the question? What are we to believe? What are we to think? How shall we distinguish the good coin from the bad? In one word, is there any test, any legal, authorized test of a true Churchman?

My answer to all these inquiries is short, plain, and most decided. I assert confidently that the Church of England has provided a test of true Churchmanship, and one that is recognized by the law of the land. This test is to be found in “the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.” I say, furthermore, that the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion form a test which any plain man can easily understand, if he will only give his mind to a study of them. An honest examination of these Articles will show any one at this day who is the best, the truest, the most genuine style of Churchman. To exhibit the authority, nature, and characteristics of the Thirty-nine Articles, is the simple object for which I send forth the paper which is now in the reader’s hands.

I. Now, first of all, what are the Thirty-nine Articles? This is a question which many will be ready to ask, and one to which it is absolutely necessary to return an answer. It is a melancholy fact, explain it as we may, that for the last 200 years the Articles have fallen into great and undeserved neglect. Thousands and myriads of Churchmen, I am fully persuaded, have never read them, never even looked at them, and of course know nothing whatever of their contents. I make no apology therefore for beginning with that which every Churchman ought to know. I will briefly state what the Thirty-nine Articles are.

The Thirty-nine Articles are a brief and condensed statement, under thirty-nine heads or propositions, of what the Church of England regards as the chief

doctrines which her chief members ought to hold and believe. They were, most of them, gathered by our Reformers out of Holy Scripture. They were carefully packed up and summarized in the most accurate and precise language, of which every word was delicately weighed, and had a special meaning. Some of the Articles are positive, and declare directly what the Church of England regards as Bible truth and worthy of belief. Some of them are negative, and declare what the Church of England considers erroneous and unworthy of credence. Some few of them are simple statements of the Church's judgment on points which were somewhat controverted, even among Protestants, 300 years ago, and on which Churchmen might need an expression of opinion. Such is the document commonly called the Thirty-nine Articles; and all who wish to read it will find it at the end of every properly printed Prayer-book. At all events, any Prayer-book which does not contain the Articles is a most imperfect, mutilated, and barely honest copy of the Liturgy.

When and by whom were these Articles first drawn up? They were first composed by our Reformers in the days of that admirable young King, Edward the Sixth. Who had the chief hand in the work, history does not reveal; but there is every reason to believe that Cranmer and Ridley our two most learned martyrs, had more to do with it than any. When first sent forth, they were forty-two in number. Afterwards, when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne, they were reduced by Archbishop Parker and his helpers, of whom Bishop Jewell was probably the chief, to their present number, with a few unimportant alterations. They were finally confirmed and ratified by Crown, Convocation, and Parliament, in the year 1571, and from 1571 down to this day not a single word in them has been altered.

The object for which the Articles were drawn up is clearly stated in the title of them, which any one will find in a proper Prayer-book. They are called "Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy, in the Convocation holden at London in the year 1562, for avoiding of diversities of opinion, and for the establishment of consent touching true religion." About the real, plain, honest meaning of this title, I think there ought to be no doubt. It proves that the Thirty-nine Articles are intended to be "the Church of England's Confession of faith." Every well-organized Church throughout Christendom has its Confession of faith: that is, it has a carefully composed statement of the main things in religion which it considers its members ought to believe. Every reading man knows this. The Augsburg Confession, the Creed of Pope Pius IV., the Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Westminster Confession, are documents with which every student of ecclesiastical history is familiar. Common sense shows the necessity and convenience of such Confessions. In a fallen world like this the terms of membership in any ecclesiastical corporation must be written down in black and white, or else the whole body is liable to fall into disorder and confusion. Every member of a Church ought to be able to render a reason of his membership, and to say what the great principles of his Church are. To do this his Church supplies him with a short creed, manual, or Confession, to which at any time he may refer inquirers. This was the object of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. They were intended to be "the Churchman's Confession of his faith."

The substance of the Thirty-nine Articles is a point on which I shall say but little at present, because I propose to dwell on it by and by. Let it suffice to

say that they contain most admirable, terse, clear statements of Scriptural truth, according to the judgment of our Reformers, on almost every point in the Christian religion. The titles overleaf speak for themselves.

Some of these points are handled in a more firm, strong, and decided manner than others, and the curiously different tone of the Articles, according to their subject-matter, is a matter on which I shall have more to say by and by. But taking them for all in all, as a Church's statement of things to be believed, I think that no Church on earth has a better "Confession of faith" than the Church of England. I have no wish to find fault with other Churches. God forbid! We have faults and defects enough to keep us humble within the Anglican Communion. But after carefully examining other Confessions of faith, I find none which seem comparable to our own. Some Confessions are too long. Some go into particulars too much. Some define what had better be left undefined, and shut up sharply what had better be left a little open. For a combination of fulness, boldness, clearness, brevity, moderation, and wisdom, I find no Confession which comes near the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.¹

A List of the Articles

1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.
2. Of Christ the Son of God.
3. Of His going down into Hell.
4. Of His resurrection.
5. Of the Holy Ghost.
6. Of the Sufficiency of the Scripture.
7. Of the Old Testament.
8. Of the Three Creeds.
9. Of Original or Birth-sin.
10. Of Free-will.
11. Of Justification.
12. Of Good Works.
13. Of Works before Justification.
14. Of Works of Supererogation.
15. Of Christ alone without Sin.
16. Of Sin after Baptism.
17. Of Predestination and Election.
18. Of obtaining Salvation by Christ.
19. Of the Church.
20. Of the Authority of the Church.
21. Of the Authority of General Councils.
22. Of Purgatory.
23. Of Ministering in the Congregation.
24. Of Speaking in the Congregation.
25. Of the Sacraments.
26. Of the Unworthiness of Ministers.
27. Of Baptism.
28. Of the Lord's Supper.
29. Of the Wicked which eat not the Body of Christ.
30. Of both kinds.
31. Of Christ's one Oblation.
32. Of the Marriage of Priests.
33. Of Excommunicate Persons.
34. Of the Traditions of the Church.
35. Of Homilies.
36. Of Consecrating of Ministers.

37. Of Civil Magistrates.
38. Of Christian Men's Goods.
39. Of a Christian Man's Oath.

So much for what we mean when we talk of the Thirty-nine Articles. For dwelling so much on the point, I shall make little apology. The intrinsic importance of it, and the singular ignorance of most Churchmen about it, are my best excuse. The times we live in make it imperatively necessary to look up and ventilate these old questions. The perilous position of the Church of England requires all her sons to spread light and information. He that would know what a true Churchman is, must be content to begin by finding out what is meant by "the Thirty-nine Articles."

II. I must now take up a question which is of great and serious importance. To prevent mistakes I shall state it as clearly and logically as I can. "What is the precise rank, authority, and position of the Thirty-nine Articles? Are they, or are they not, the chief, foremost, primary and principal test of true Churchmanship?"

My reasons for going into this point are as follows. Some clergymen and laymen in the present day are fond of saying that the Prayer-book, and not the Articles, is the real measure and gauge of a Churchman. "The Prayer-book! the Prayer-book!" is the incessant cry of these people. "We want no other standard of doctrine but the Prayer-book."—Is it a controverted point about the Church? What says the Prayer-book?—Is it a doctrine that is disputed? What says the Prayer-book?—Is it the effect of baptism, or the nature of the Lord's Supper, that is under discussion? What says the Prayer-book?—To the Articles these gentlemen seem to have a peculiar dislike, a hydrophobic aversion. They seldom refer to them, unless perhaps to sneer at them as the "forty stripes save one." They never quote them, never bring them forward if they can possibly help it. What intelligent observer of religious questions among Churchmen does not know perfectly well the class of men whom I have in view? They are to be found all over England. We meet them in newspapers and books. We hear them in pulpits and on platforms. They are ever thrusting on the public their favourite "Diana of the Ephesians," their darling notion that the Prayer-book, and not the Articles, is the test of a Churchman.

Now, with all respect to these worthy people, I venture to say that their favourite notion is as real an idol as the Ephesian "Diana" was of old. I shall try to show the reader that in exalting the Prayer-book above the Articles, they have taken up a position that cannot possibly be maintained. I shall try to show, by evidence that cannot be gainsayed, that the true state of the case is exactly the reverse of what they are so fond of proclaiming. I am not going to say anything against the Prayer-book. It is a matchless book of devotion. But I am going to say, and to prove, that the Articles, and not the Prayer-book, are the first, foremost, and principal test of a true Churchman.

I shall dismiss briefly four points that I might dwell upon at length, if it were worth while.

(a) I pass over the obvious suspiciousness of any Churchman ignoring the Articles, giving them the cold shoulder, and talking only about the Prayer-book, when he is speaking of the tests of a Churchman's religion. That many do so it is quite needless to say. Yet the fifth Canon, of 1604, contains the following words: "Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that any of the Thirty-nine

Articles agreed upon by the Archbishops and Bishops of both provinces, in the Convocation holden at London in the year of our Lord God 1562, for avoiding diversities of opinion, and establishing of consent touching true religion, are in any part superstitious, or erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe unto, let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not restored but only by the Archbishops, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors.” Plain language that! Certain Churchmen who are fond of pelting Evangelical Churchmen with Canons would do well to remember that Canon.

(b) I pass over the implied insinuation that there is any contradiction between the Articles and the Prayer-book. Many talk and write as if there was. It is a notion unworthy of any one of common sense. The man who supposes that divines of such grace and learning as the Elizabethan Reformers would ever with the same hands draw up Articles and a Prayer-book containing two different doctrines, must be in a strange state of mind? Reason itself points out that the Prayer-book and Articles were meant to teach the same doctrines, and that no interpretation which makes them jar and contradict one another can be correct. Lord Chatham’s famous dictum, that the Church of England has a Popish Liturgy, an Arminian clergy, and a Calvinistic set of Articles, was doubtless very smart, but it was not true.

(c) I pass over the unreasonableness of setting up a book of devotion, like the Liturgy, as a better test of Churchmanship than a Confession of faith like the Articles. Prayers, in the very nature of things, are compositions which are not so precisely framed and worded as cold, dry, dogmatic statements of doctrine. They are what the rhetorical speech of the advocate is, compared to the cautiously-balanced decision of the judge. “In the Prayer-book,” says Dean Goode, “we have a collection of national formularies of devotion, written at a time when a large proportion of the people were inclined to Romanism, and at the same time compelled to attend the services of the national Churches,—and consequently carefully drawn up, so as to give as little offence as possible to Romish prejudices. Is such a book calculated to serve the purposes of a standard of faith?”—“In the Articles,” he adds, on the other hand, “we have a precise Confession of faith on all the great points of Christian doctrine, drawn up in dogmatic propositions, as a test of doctrinal soundness for the clergy.” The Liturgy is an excellent book. But to say that in the nature of things it can serve the purpose of a standard of faith so well as the Articles, is absurd.

(d) I pass over the glaring foolishness of the common remark, that those who are fond of maintaining the primary authority of the Articles cast discredit upon the Creeds. The authors of this notable charge must surely have forgotten that one whole Article—the eighth—is devoted to the three Creeds! So far from the admirers of the Articles dishonouring and disparaging the Creeds, they are specially bound to honour, reverence, and defend them. Such vague argumentation goes far to show that many who speak slightly of the Articles do not even know what the Articles contain! They “speak evil of things which they know not.” (Jude 10.)

But I pass over all these points. I desire to go straight to the mark, and to give direct proofs of the position that I take up. What I deliberately assert is, that the Thirty-nine Articles were always intended to be, and are at this day, the first, foremost, chief, and principal test of a Churchman, and that in this

point of view there is nothing else that stands on a level with them. In proof of this assertion I shall now bring forward a few witnesses.

(1) My first witness shall be a very simple one. I mean the title of the Articles, which is prefixed to them in every complete and unmutated Prayer-book. They are called, "Articles agreed upon for the avoiding of Diversities of Opinion, and for the stablishing of Consent touching true Religion." This title was first given to them by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Edward VI., 1552; and afterwards given a second time by Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, in 1562. I want no plainer language than the words of this title. The man who tries to get away from it and evade it is like a viper biting a file.²

(2) My second witness shall be the statute law of the realm. I refer to two Acts of Parliament. One is called the 13th of Elizabeth, cap. 12, and entitled "An Act for *Ministers of the Church to be of sound religion.*" The other Act is called the 28th and 29th Victoria, cap. 122, and is entitled "An Act to Amend the Law as to the declarations and subscriptions to be made, and Oaths to be taken by the Clergy," and was passed in the year 1865.

The Act of Elizabeth, in the second section declares, that "if any person ecclesiastical, or which shall have any ecclesiastical living, shall advisedly maintain or affirm any doctrine directly contrary or repugnant to any of the said Thirty-nine Articles; and being convicted before the Bishop of the Diocese, or the Ordinary, or before the Queen's Commissioner in causes ecclesiastical, shall persist therein, or not revoke his error, or after such revocation affirm such untrue doctrine, such maintaining, or affirming, or persisting shall be just cause to deprive such person of his ecclesiastical functions; and it shall be lawful for the Bishop of the Diocese, or Ordinary, or such Commissioner, to deprive such person."

Comment on the evidence of this witness is needless. There is no way of honestly evading the edge and point of this yet unrepealed Act of Parliament. In a decision of all the judges, in the twenty-third year of Elizabeth, it was declared that the Act of 13th Elizabeth was made for avoiding a diversity of opinion, and that the "prevention of such diversity was the scope of the statute." (*Coke's Institut.* 1865.) The provisions of this Act of Elizabeth are in full force at this very day, and form the basis of any proceedings against a clergyman in matters of religion.

The Act of the 28th and 29th of Victoria is even more remarkable than the 13th of Elizabeth. The seventh section requires every person instituted to any living, on the first Lord's Day in which he officiates in his church, "publicly and openly in the presence of his congregation, to read the whole Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and immediately after reading to make the declaration of assent to them."

Up to the year 1865, we must remember, a clergyman was required to read over the whole Morning and Evening Service as well as the Articles, and then declare his assent and consent to the use of the Book of Common Prayer. This was dispensed with by the Act of Victoria. But *the requirement to read the Thirty-nine Articles was carefully retained!* The result is, that every beneficed clergyman in the Church of England has not only declared his assent to the Thirty-nine Articles, but has done it in the most public way, after reading them over before his congregation.

(3) My third witness shall be the Royal Declaration prefixed to the Articles in 1628, by King Charles I. It is a document which will be found at length in every complete and unmutated Prayer-book. It contains the following passage: “We hold it most agreeable to this our Kingly office, and our own religious zeal, to conserve and maintain the Church committed to our charge, in unity of true religion, and in the bond of peace; and not to suffer unnecessary disputations, altercations, or questions to be raised, which may nourish faction both in the Church and Commonwealth. We have therefore, upon mature deliberation, and with the advice of so many of our Bishops as might conveniently be called together, thought fit to make this declaration following:—

“That the Articles of the Church of England (which have been allowed and authorized heretofore, and which our clergy generally have subscribed unto) do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God’s Word: which we do therefore ratify and confirm, requiring all our loving subjects to continue in the uniform profession thereof, and prohibiting the least difference from the said Articles.” Admirable words these! Well would it have been if the unhappy Monarch who put forth this declaration, had afterwards adhered more decidedly to the doctrine of the Articles, and not ruined himself and the Church by patronizing and supporting such men as Archbishop Laud.

(4) My fourth witness shall be a remarkable letter or circular issued by the Crown in 1721, entitled “Directions to our Archbishops and Bishops for the preservation of unity in the Church and the purity of the Christian faith, particularly in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.” The charge given to the Bishops in these directions is as follows: “You shall, without delay, signify to the clergy of your several dioceses this our Royal command, which we require you to see duly published and decreed: viz., that no preacher whatsoever in his sermons or lectures do presume to deliver any other doctrines concerning the great and fundamental truths of our most holy religion, and particularly concerning the blessed Trinity, than what are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and are agreeable to the three Creeds and the Thirty-nine Articles of religion.” The circular proceeds to direct the Bishops to put in force the famous statute of Elizabeth already quoted. But not one word do we find about the Prayer-book, from beginning to end. Of course these “directions” have no binding force now, but as evidence of what men thought the test of Church religion in 1721, they are remarkable.

(5) My fifth witness shall be Thomas Rogers, chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, who published in 1607, the first Exposition of the Articles which ever appeared. This book, we must remember, was written within forty years of the time when the Articles were finally ratified. It was a work of great authority at the time, and was dedicated to the Archbishop. In the preface to this work Rogers says:—

“The purpose of our Church is best known by the doctrine which she does profess: the doctrine by the Thirty-nine Articles established by Act of Parliament; the Articles by the words whereby they are expressed: and other doctrine than in the said Articles is contained, our Church neither hath nor holdeth, and other sense they cannot yield than their words do import.”

Strong language that from an Archbishop’s chaplain! I heartily wish we had a few more chaplains like him.

(6) My sixth and last evidence, for brevity’s sake, I will give you all at once, in the words of five well-known Bishops of the Church, who have long

passed away. They were men very unlike one another, and belonged to very different schools of thought. But their testimonies to the value and rightful position of the Articles are so curiously harmonious, that it is interesting to have them brought together.

(a) Let us hear then what great and good Bishop Hall says, in his work on “The Old Religion:” “The Church of England, in whose motherhood we have all come to pride ourselves, hath in much wisdom and piety delivered her judgment concerning all necessary points of religion, in so complete a body of divinity as all hearts may rest in. These we read, these we write under, as professing not their truth only, but their sufficiency also. The voice of God our Father, in His Scriptures, and, out of them, the voice of the Church our mother, in her Articles, is that which must both guide and settle our resolutions. Whatsoever is beside these, is either private, or unnecessary, or uncertain.”—*Hall’s Works*. Oxford Edition. Vol. ix., p. 308.

(b) Let us hear next what Bishop Stillingfleet says in his *Unreasonableness of Separation*: “This we all say, that the doctrine of the Church of England is contained in the Thirty-nine Articles; and whatever the opinions of private persons may be, this is the standard by which the sense of our Church is to be taken.”—London, 4to edition, p. 95. 1631.

(c) Let us hear next what Bishop Burnet says: “The Thirty-nine Articles are the sum of our doctrines, and the confession of our faith.”—*Burnet on Articles*, pref., p. 1. Oxford Edition. 1831.

(d) Let us hear next what Bishop Beveridge says, in the preface to his great work on the Articles: “The Bishops and clergy of both provinces of this nation, in a Council held at London, 1562, agreed upon certain Articles of Religion, to the number of thirty-nine, which to this day remain the constant and settled doctrine of our Church; which, by an Act of Parliament of the 13th of Queen Elizabeth, 1571, all that are entrusted with any ecclesiastical preferments, are bound to subscribe to.”—*Beveridge on Articles*, vol. i., p. 9. Oxford Edition. 1840.

(e) Let us hear, lastly, what Bishop Tomline says: “The Thirty-nine Articles are the criterion of the faith of the members of the Church of England.”—*Elements of Theol.*, vol. ii., p. 34. 1799.

Such are the testimonies which I offer to the attention of my readers, in proof of my assertion that the Articles, much more than the Prayer-book, are the true test of Churchmanship. The title prefixed to the Articles by Cranmer and Parker; the famous statutes of the 13th Elizabeth and 28th and 29th Victoria; the Royal Declaration of Charles I., in 1628; the Royal Circular to the Bishops in 1721; the express opinion of Rogers, Archbishop Bancroft’s private chaplain; the deliberately expressed judgment of five such men as Hall, Stillingfleet, Burnet, Beveridge, and Tomline,—all these witnesses, taken together, supply a mass of evidence, which to my eyes seem perfectly unanswerable. In the face of such evidence I dare not, as an honest man, refuse the conclusion, that the truest Churchman is the man who most truly agrees with the Thirty-nine Articles.

It would be easy to multiply witnesses, and to overload the subject with evidence. But in these matters enough is as good as a feast. Enough, probably, has been said to satisfy any candid and impartial mind that the ground I have taken up about the Articles has not been taken up in vain. He that desires to go more deeply into the subject would do well to consult Dean Goode’s writings

about it, in a controversy which he held with the late Bishop of Exeter. In that remarkable controversy, I am bold to say, the Dean proved himself more than a match for the Bishop. (Goode's *Defence of Thirty-nine Articles, and Vindication of Defence*. Hatchard. 1848.)

One remark I must make, in self-defence, before leaving this branch of my subject. I particularly request that no reader will misunderstand the grounds I have been taking up. Let no one suppose that I think lightly of the Prayer-book, because I do not regard it as the Church of England's standard and test of truth. Nothing could be more erroneous than such an idea. In loyal love to the Prayer-book, and deep admiration of its contents, I give place to no man. Taken for all in all, as an uninspired work, it is an incomparable book of devotion for the use of a Christian congregation. This is a position I would defend anywhere and everywhere. But the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer was never intended to be the Church's standard of doctrine in the same way that the Articles were. This was not meant to be its office; this was not the purpose for which it was compiled. It is a manual of public devotion: it is not a Confession of faith. Let us love it, honour it, prize it, reverence it, admire it, and use it. But let us not exalt it to the place which the Thirty-nine Articles alone can fill, and which common sense, statute law, and the express opinions of eminent divines unanimously agree in assigning to them. The Articles, far more than the Prayer-book, are the Church's standard of sound doctrine, and the real test of true Churchmanship.³

III. One more point now remains to be considered, which is of so much importance that I dare not pass it by unnoticed. What the Articles are we have seen. What their position and authority is in the Church of England we have also seen. Ought we not now to see what are the great leading characteristics of the Articles? I think we ought, unless we mean to leave our subject unfinished. There are certain grand features in them, without descending into particulars, which stand out prominently, like mountains in a landscape. What those features are we ought to know. I shall therefore proceed to point them out to the reader, and try to impress them on his attention. If those who are induced to read them with attention, in consequence of this paper, are not struck with the singular distinctness and prominence of these leading features in the Articles, I shall be greatly mistaken. To my eyes they stand out in bold, clear, and sharply-cut relief. I ask the reader to give me his attention for a very few minutes, and I will show him what I mean.

(1) Let us mark, then, for one thing, as we read the Articles, the strong and decided language which they use in speaking of things which are essential to salvation.

Concerning the nature of God and the Holy Trinity,—concerning the sufficiency and authority of Scripture,—concerning the sinfulness and helplessness of natural man,—concerning justification by faith alone, concerning the place and value of good works,—concerning salvation only by the name of Christ; concerning all these grand foundations of the Christian religion, it is hard to conceive language more decided, clear, distinct, ringing, and trumpet-toned than that of the Thirty-nine Articles. There is no doubtfulness, or hesitancy, or faltering, or timidity, or uncertainty, or compromise about their statements. There is no attempt to gratify undecided theologians by saying, "It is probably so,"—or, "Perhaps it may be so,"—or, "There are some grounds for thinking

so,” and all that sort of language which is so pleasing to what are called “broad” Christians. Nothing of the kind! On all the points I have named the Articles speak out boldly, roundly, frankly, and honestly, in a most unmistakable tone. “This is the Church of England’s judgment, “they seem to say; and “these are the views which every Churchman ought to hold.”

I ask special attention to this point. We live in days when many loudly declare that it is not right to be positive about anything in religion. The clergyman who dares to say of any theological question, “This is true, and that is false,—this is right, and that is wrong,”—is pretty sure to be denounced as a narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable man. Nothing delights many Churchmen so much as to proclaim that they “belong to no party,”—that they are “moderate men,”—that they “hold no extreme views.” Well! I only ask these Churchmen to settle matters with the Thirty-nine Articles. I want no clergyman to go a bit beyond the authoritative statements of his own Church; but I do want every clergyman not to fall below them. And I shall always maintain, publicly or privately, that to call any one an “extreme” man, or a “party” man, because his doctrinal views are in harmony with the bold, decided statements of the Articles, is neither just, nor fair, nor reasonable, nor consistent with common sense. Give me the clergyman who, after reading the Articles to his congregation, and solemnly promising to abide by them, acts up to his promise, and speaks out boldly, decidedly, and unhesitatingly, like a man, about all the leading doctrines of Christianity. As for the clergyman who, after declaring his assent to the Articles, flinches from their doctrinal distinctness, and preaches hesitatingly, as if he hardly knew what he believed, I am sorry for him. He may be a charitable, a liberal, a learned man, but he is not in the right place in the pulpit of the Church of England.

(2) Let us mark, in the next place, as we read the Articles, their *studied moderation about things non-essential to salvation*, and things about which good Christian men may differ.

About sin after baptism,—about predestination and election,—about the definition of the Church,—about the ministry,—about the ceremonies and rights of every particular or national Church,—about all these points it is most striking to observe the calm, gentle, tender, conciliatory tone which runs throughout the Articles; a tone the more remarkable when contrasted with the firm and decided language on essential points, to which I have just been referring.

It is clear as daylight to my mind, that the authors of the Articles intended to admit the possibility of difference on the points which I have just been enumerating. They saw the possibility of men differing about predestination and election, as Fletcher and Toplady did. How cautious are their statements, and how carefully guarded and fenced!—They believed that there might be Churches differently organized to our own, that there might be many good Christian ministers who were not Episcopalians, and many useful rites and ceremonies of worship unlike those of the Church of England. They take care to say nothing which could possibly give offence.—They scrupulously avoid condemning and denouncing other Churches and other Christians. In short, their maxim seems to have been, “*in necessaries unitas, in non-necessaries libertas, in omnibus caritas.*”

I greatly admire this moderation in non-essentials. I heartily wish that the spirit of it had been more acted upon in days gone by, by the rulers of the

Church of England. To the blind intolerance and fanaticism of days gone by, to the insane and senseless wish to cram Episcopacy and Liturgy down the throats of every man by force, and excommunicate him if he would not swallow them,—to this we owe an immense proportion of our English Dissent. And the root of all this has been departure from the spirit of the Thirty-nine Articles.

I frankly own that I belong to a school in the Church of England, which is incorrectly and unfairly called “low.” And why are we called so? Simply because we will not condemn every Church which is not governed by Bishops; simply because we will not denounce every one as greatly in error who worships without a surplice and a Prayer-book! But I venture to tell our accusers that their charges fall very lightly on us. When they can prove that our standard is not the standard of the Thirty-nine Articles,—when they can show that we take lower ground than our own Church takes in her authorized Confession of faith,—then we will allow there is something in what they say against us. But till they can do that, and they have not done it yet, I tell them that we shall remain unmoved. We may be called “low” Churchmen, but we are “true.”

(3) Let us mark, in the next place, as we read the Articles, their *wise, discreet, and well-balanced statements about the Sacraments*. They declare plainly the divine authority of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. They use high and reverent language about them both, as means of grace, “by the which God doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but strengthen and confirm our faith in Him.”

But after saying all this, it is most instructive to observe how carefully the Articles repudiate the Romish doctrine of grace being imparted by the Sacraments “*ex opere operato...*”. “The Sacraments,” says the Twenty-fifth Article, “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 they have a wholesome effect or operation.”

Now if there is any one thing that is laid to the charge of us Evangelical clergy, it is this, that we deny sacramental grace. “Excellent, worthy, hard-working men,” we are sometimes called; “but unhappily they do not hold right Church views about the Sacraments.”—Men who talk in this manner are talking rashly, and saying what they cannot prove. Evangelical clergymen yield to none in willingness to give rightful honour to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. All we say is, that grace is not tied to the Sacraments, and that a man may receive them, and be none the better for it. And what is all this but the doctrine of the Thirty-nine Articles?

(4) Let us mark, in the fourth place, as we read the Articles, the thoroughly Protestant spirit which runs throughout them, and the boldness of their language about Romish error.

What says the Nineteenth Article? “The Church of Rome hath erred, not only in living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith.”

What says the Twenty-second Article? “The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping and adoration, as well of images as of reliques, and also of invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

What says the Twenty-fourth Article? It forbids the Romish custom of having public prayers and ministering the Sacraments in Latin. What says the

Twenty-fifth Article? It declares that the five Romish sacraments of confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be accounted sacraments of the Gospel.

What says the Twenty-eighth Article? It declares that “transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.” It also declares that “the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.”

What says the Thirtieth Article? “The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay-people.”

What saith the Thirty-first Article? “The sacrifices of masses, in which it was commonly said the priest did offer Christ for the quick and dead, to have remission of pain and guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceit.”

What says the Thirty-second Article? “Bishops, priests, and deacons are not commanded by God’s laws to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage.”

What says the Thirty-seventh Article? “The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England.”

Now what shall we say to all this? Nine times over the Thirty-nine Articles condemn, in plain and unmistakable language, the leading doctrines of the Church of Rome, and declare in favour of what must be called Protestant views. And yet men dare to tell us that we Evangelical clergymen have no right to denounce Popery,—that it is very wrong and very uncharitable to be so hot in favour of Protestantism,—that Romanism is a pretty good sort of thing,—and that by making such a piece of work about Popery, and Protestantism, and Ritualism, and semi-Popery, we are only troubling the country and doing more harm than good. Well! I am content to point to the Thirty-nine Articles. There is my apology! There is my defence! I will take up no other ground at present. I will not say, as I might do, that Popery is an unscriptural system, which every free nation ought to dread, and every Bible-reading Christian of any nation ought to oppose. I simply point to the Thirty-nine Articles.

I ask any one to explain how any English clergyman can be acting consistently, if he does not oppose, denounce, expose, and resist Popery in every shape, either within the Church or without. Other Christians may do as they please, and countenance Popery if they like. But so long as the Articles stand unrepealed and unaltered, it is the bounden duty of every clergyman of the Church of England to oppose Popery.

(5) Let us mark, in the last place, as we read the Articles, the unvarying reverence with which they always speak of Holy Scripture. The inspiration of the Bible, no doubt, is never distinctly asserted. It is evidently taken for granted as a first principle, which need not be proved. But if constant references to Scripture, and constant appeals to the authority of Scripture, as God’s Word, are allowed to prove anything, in no document does the Bible receive more honour than in the Articles.

The Sixth Article declares that “Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, and 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 faith, or be thought requisite and necessary to salvation.”

The Eighth Article says that “the three Creeds ought thoroughly to be believed and received, for they may be proved by most certain warranty of Holy Scripture.”

The Twentieth Article says, “It is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.”

The Twenty-first Article says that “things ordained by General Councils as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it be declared that they be taken from Holy Scripture.”

The Twenty-second Article condemns certain Romish functions, “because they are grounded on no warranty of Scripture, but are rather repugnant to the Word of God.”

The Twenty-eighth Article condemns Transubstantiation, “because it cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture.”

The Thirty-fourth Article says that “traditions and ceremonies of the Church may be changed, so long as nothing is ordained against God’s Word.”

Now I see in all this abundant proof that the Bible is the rule of faith in the Church of England, and that no doctrine is “Church doctrine” which cannot be reconciled with God’s Word. I see a complete answer to those who tell us that we make an idol of the Bible, and that we ought to go to the voice of the Church and to the Prayer-book for direction. I see that any sense placed on any part of the Prayer-book which is not reconcilable with Scripture, must be a mistake, and ought not to be received. I see, above all, that all who pour contempt on the Bible, as an uninspired, imperfect, defective Book, which ought not to be believed, if it contradicts “modern thought,” are taking up ground which is at variance with the Church’s own Confession of faith. They may be clever, liberal, scientific, and confident; but they are contradicting the Articles, and they are not sound Churchmen.

Such are the leading features, in my judgment, of the Thirty-nine Articles. I commend them to the attention of my readers, and ask that they may be carefully weighed. No doubt men may say that the Articles admit of more than one interpretation, and that my interpretation is not the correct one. My reply to all this is short and simple. I ask in what sense the Reformers who drew up the Articles meant them to be interpreted? Let men answer that. It is an acknowledged axiom in interpreting all public documents, such as treaties, covenants, wills, articles of faith, and religious formularies, that in any case of doubt or dispute the true sense is the sense of those who drew them up and imposed them. Waterland and Sanderson have abundantly shown that. Upon this principle I take my stand. I only want the Thirty-nine Articles to be interpreted in the sense in which the Reformers first imposed them, and I believe it impossible to avoid the conclusion you arrive at. That conclusion is, that the Thirty-nine Articles are in general tone, temper, spirit, intention, and meaning, eminently Protestant and eminently Evangelical.

And now I draw my subject to a conclusion. I have shown the reader, to the best of my ability, what the Articles are,—what is the position and authority which they hold in the Church of England,—and what are the leading features of their contents. It only remains for me to point out a few practical conclusions, which I venture to think are peculiarly suited to the times.

(1) In the first place, I ask every Churchman who reads this paper *to read the Thirty-nine Articles regularly at least once every year*, and to make himself thoroughly familiar with their contents.

It is not a reading age, I fear. Newspapers, and periodicals, and novels absorb the greater part of the time given to reading. I am sorry for it. If I could only reach the ear of all thinking lay Churchmen, I should like to say, “Do read your Articles.” As for clergymen, if I had my own way I would require them to read the Articles publicly in church once every year.

Ignorance, I am compelled to say, is one of the grand dangers of members of the Church of England. The bulk of her people neither know, nor understand, nor seem to care about the inside of any of the great religious questions of the day. Presbyterians know their system. Baptists, Independents, and Methodists know theirs. Papists are all trained controversialists. Churchmen alone, as a body, are generally very ignorant of their own Church, and all its privileges, doctrines, and history. Not one in twenty could tell you why he is a Churchman.

Let us cast aside this reproach. Let all Churchmen awake and rub their eyes, and begin to read up their own Church and its doctrines. And if any man wants to know where to begin, I advise him to begin with the Thirty-nine Articles.

(2) In the second place, I ask all who read this paper to teach the Thirty-nine Articles to all young people who are yet of an age to be taught. It is a burning shame that the Articles are not made an essential part of the system of every school connected with the Church of England, whether for high or low, for rich or poor.

I do not say this without reason. It is a simple fact, that the beginning of any clear doctrinal views I have ever attained myself, was reading up the Articles at Eton, for the Newcastle Scholarship, and attending a lecture, at Christ Church, Oxford, on the Articles, by a college tutor. I shall always thank God for what I learned then. Before that time I really knew nothing systematically of Christianity. I knew not what came first or what last. I had a religion without order in my head. What I found good myself I commend to others. If you love young people’s souls, and would ground them, and stablish them, and arm them against error betimes, take care that you teach them not only the Catechism, but also the Articles.

(3) In the third place, I advise all who read this paper to test all Churchmanship by the test of the Articles. Be not carried away by those who talk of “nice Church views,” “Catholic ceremonies,” “holy, earnest, parish priests,” and the like. Try all that is preached and taught by one simple measure,—does it or does it not agree with the Articles? You have an undoubted right to do this, and no English clergyman has any right to object to your doing it. Say to him, if he does object, “You publicly read and subscribed to the Articles when you accepted your cure of souls. Do you or do you not abide by your subscription?”

This is the simple ground we take up in the various societies which, amidst much abuse, obloquy, and opposition, are labouring to maintain the Protestant character of the Church of England. They are not intolerant, whatever some may please to say. They do not want to narrow the limits of our Church. But we do say that any one who holds preferment in the Church of England ought to be bound by the laws of the Church of England, so long as those laws are

unrepealed. Repeal the Act of Parliament called the 13th of Elizabeth, and cast out the Thirty-nine Articles, and we will cease to oppose Ritualism, and will concede that a Churchman may be anything, or everything, in opinion. But so long as things are as they are, we say we have a right to demand that respect should be paid to the Articles.

(4) Finally, let me advise every Churchman who values his soul *never to be ashamed of the great leading doctrines which are so nobly set forth in the Articles.*

Never mind if people call you extreme, party-spirited, going too far, Puritanical, ultra-Methodist, and the like.—Ask them if they have ever read the first nineteen Articles of their own Church. Tell them, so long as you are a Churchman, you will never be ashamed of holding Church doctrine, and that you know what Church doctrine is, if they do not.

Remember, above all, that nothing but clear, distinct views of doctrine, such views as you will find in the Articles, will ever give you peace while you live, and comfort when you die.

“Earnestness” is a fine, vague, high-sounding term, and is very beautiful to look at and talk about, when we are well, and happy, and prosperous. But when the stern realities of life break in upon us, and we are in trouble,—when the valley of death looms in sight, and the cold river must be crossed,—in seasons like those, we want something better than mere “earnestness” to support our souls. Oh, no! it is cold comfort then, as our feet touch the chill waters, to be told, “Never mind! Be in earnest! Take comfort! Only be in earnest!”—It will never, never do! We want them to know if God is our God, if Christ is our Christ, if we have the Spirit within us, if our sins are pardoned, if our souls are justified, if our hearts are changed, if our faith is genuine and real. “Earnestness” will not be enough then. It will prove a mere fine-weather religion. Nothing, in short, will do in that solemn hour but clear, distinct doctrine, embraced by our inward man, and made our own. “Earnestness” then proves nothing but a dream. Doctrines such as those set forth in the Articles are the only doctrines which are life, and health, and strength, and peace. Let us never be ashamed of laying hold of them, maintaining them, and making them our own. Those doctrines are the religion of the Bible and of the Church of England!

FOOTNOTES

1 The famous historian Bingham, in his curious book on the French Protestant Church, quotes a remarkable testimony to the Articles from the French divine Le Moyne, a man of great note in his day:—"No Confession can be contrived more wisely than the English is, and the Articles of Faith were never collected with a more just and reasonable discretion."—*Bingham's Works*, Oxf. Edit., vol. x., p. 95.

2 Archbishop Parker's Correspondence, published in the Parker Society's series, supplies remarkable evidence of the importance attached to the Thirty-nine Articles by the Elizabethan Reformers. This evidence will be found in a letter addressed to the Queen, by the Archbishop and thirteen other Bishops, in which they pray her to facilitate the passing of a Bill through Parliament for the confirmation of the Articles. The reason why the Queen interposed any delay does not appear to have been any dislike to the Articles, but her characteristic Tudor jealousy of any thing being done in Church or State which did not originate from herself. In short, she affected to consider the initiation of a Bill affecting religion by the Commons, was an infringement of her ecclesiastical supremacy!

The reasons against delay which the Archbishop and Bishops pressed on the Queen's attention deserve special notice. They say:—"First, the matter itself tendeth to the glory of God, the advancement of true religion, and the salvation of Christian souls, and therefore ought principally, chiefly, and before all other things to be sought.

"Secondly, in the book which is now desired to be confirmed are contained the principal Articles of Christian religion most agreeable to God's Word, publicly, since the beginning of your Majesty's reign, professed, and by your Highness' authority set forth and maintained.

"Thirdly, divers and sundry errors, and namely, such as have been in the realm wickedly and obstinately by the adversaries of the Gospel defended, are by the same Articles condemned.

"Fourthly, the approbation of these Articles by your Majesty shall be a very good mean to establish and confirm all your Majesty's subjects in one consent and unity of true doctrine, to the great quiet and safety of your Majesty and this free realm; whereas now, for want of plain certainty of Articles of doctrine by law to be declared, great distraction and dissension of minds is at this present among your subjects."—*Parker Correspondence, Parker Society, p. 293.*

Notwithstanding this letter, the prayer of the Bishop appears not to have been granted until the year 1571. It is only one among many illustrations of the immense difficulties which the Elizabethan Reformers had to contend with, in consequence of the arbitrary and self-willed character of their Sovereign. I venture the opinion that few English Monarchs have been so much over-praised and misunderstood as Elizabeth. I suspect the English Reformation would have been a far more perfect and complete work if the Queen had allowed the Reformers to do all that they wanted to do.

3 If any reader supposes that there is anything peculiar or extravagant in the position I take up about the authority of the Articles, as compared to the Prayer-book, I ask him to remember that Lord Hatherley, in his judgment in the famous "Voysey" case, takes up precisely the same ground. These are his words, as reported in the *Guardian*: "We have not, in this our decision, referred to any of the formularies of the Church, other than the Articles of Religion. We have been mindful of the authorities which have held that pious expressions of devotion are not to be taken as binding declarations of doctrine."

In commenting on this judgment, the *Solicitor's Journal*, which certainly is not the organ of any theological party, uses the following remarkable language: "The Judicial Committee have adhered to the principles of previous decisions in their recent judgment. The Articles of Religion, and these alone, are to be considered as the code of doctrine of the Church of England.