

CHURCH EXCEPTIONS TO THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES

12. The Spirit is always at work in His people, and we should expect visible spiritual growth as a normal part of the Christian life. Lack of such growth is certainly a matter for exhortation and pastoral care, and perhaps a matter for church discipline. That said, no one is promised the ability to infallibly see the Spirit's work in another (or even in himself), and thus no one is empowered to say "You're not saved because I don't see enough fruit."

23. As a recent church plant convened in defiance of the civil magistrate—and remembering John Bunyan's fruitful ministry—we have reservations about what "lawfully called" might mean in an Anglican document. While we agree that under ordinary circumstances no one should self-appoint to any church office, we also acknowledge the long and glorious history of preaching without a license among Our People, from Elijah the "troubler of Israel" and Amos the fig-tender to John the Baptist and Jesus Himself, and beyond them to Peter and John the unlettered fishermen to the fruitful ministries of figures like John Bunyan and Benjamin Lay.

As to depriving God's people of the sacraments for lack of an ordained man to administer them, there's literally no Scripture requiring that—you have to get it by analogy from the Old Covenant, and the analogy doesn't hold. Under the New Covenant, all God's baptized people are priests. Baptism ought to be practiced upon conversion, by those providentially present, in the nearest available water. But someone will say, "What if the conversion happens as a result of a late-night conversation in someone's private home?! Surely we ought to wait for a more public venue?" This actually happened in Philippi, and Paul showed us what to do: baptize them immediately, then and there. Fill up the bathtub, and get to it! Likewise, the Supper ought to be practiced regularly in the meetings of the church. It is not lawful to use the time and place of the observance to deliberately exclude a portion of the body (1 Cor. 11), but at any open meeting of the Body, the Table is lawful. Even on a Thursday night, in a private home? Well, yes—Jesus did!

34. **"hurteth the authority of the magistrate."** As Elijah's public ministry hurt Ahab's authority, maybe. But as to the intent of the article, only if the magistrate is poking his nose where it doesn't belong. A godly civil magistrate certainly does have duties vis-a-vis the Church, but establishing "the traditions and ceremonies" of the Church is not among them.

36. The particular expression is time-bound, but the spirit of the article is to affirm that duly ordained clergy in the church are the real thing. We agree, although we understand "bishop/overseer" to be a synonym for "elder" rather than a separate office.

37. **"The power of the civil magistrate extendeth to all men, as well Clergy as Laity, in all things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual."** While we agree with the article as stated, we doubt that we agree with the original framers about the extent to which ecclesiastical estates are committed to the charge of princes. See our Memorial on Civil Government.