The **Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion** are the historically defining statements of doctrines of the [Church of England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England) with respect to the controversies of the [English Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Reformation). First established in 1563, the articles served to define the doctrine of the Church of England as it related to [Calvinist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvinism) doctrine and [Roman Catholic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) practice.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty-Nine_Articles#cite_note-ODCC1611-1) The full name for the articles is commonly abbreviated as the "Thirty-Nine Articles" or the "XXXIX Articles".

At the time, the Church of England was searching its doctrinal position in relation to the Roman Catholic Church and the continental [Protestant movements](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestanism). A series of defining documents were written and replaced over a period of 30 years as the doctrinal and political situation changed from the [excommunication](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Excommunication) of [Henry VIII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VIII_of_England) in 1533, to the [excommunication of Elizabeth I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Excommunication_of_Elizabeth_I) in 1570.

Prior to King Henry's death in 1547, several statements of position were issued. The first attempt was the Ten Articles in 1536, which showed some slightly Protestant leanings—the result of an English desire for a political alliance with the German [Lutheran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran) princes.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty-Nine_Articles#cite_note-short-2) The next revision was the Six Articles in 1539 which swung away from all reformed positions,[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty-Nine_Articles#cite_note-short-2) and the *King's Book* in 1543 which re-established almost in full the earlier Catholic doctrines. Then, during the reign of [Edward VI](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VI_of_England) in 1552, the Forty-Two Articles were written under the direction of [Archbishop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop) [Thomas Cranmer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cranmer). It was in this document that Calvinist thought reached the zenith of its influence in the English Church. These articles were never put into action, due to the king's death and the reunion of the English Church with Rome under [Queen Mary I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_I_of_England).

Finally, upon the coronation of Elizabeth and the re-establishment of the separate Church of England the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were established by a [Convocation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convocation_of_the_English_Clergy) of the Church in 1563, under the direction of [Matthew Parker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_Parker), the then [Archbishop of Canterbury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop_of_Canterbury), which pulled back from some of the more extreme Calvinist thinking and created the peculiar English reformed doctrine.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty-Nine_Articles#cite_note-ODCC1611-1)

The articles, finalised in 1571, were to have a lasting effect on [religion in the United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_United_Kingdom) and elsewhere through their incorporation into and propagation through the [Book of Common Prayer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Common_Prayer).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty-Nine_Articles#cite_note-bcp-3)