

Our Anglican Heritage

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 November 2011

Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

[0 : 00] Well good morning everybody and thank you Bill for your introduction and away let us go. These two talks that I'm giving are headed, both of them, our Anglican heritage.

Thank you.

What I was about to say was that in this title I want to stress the word our. We are inheritors.

And the question that hangs over everything that I'm trying to say in these talks is the question what are we to do with our inheritance.

And you don't need me to tell you that Anglicans divide among themselves quite sharply over that question.

[1 : 28] Some thinking and saying that it would be better for us all to leave the inheritance behind. And others saying we should cleave to the inheritance just as it stands.

Do nothing with it except assimilate it and get the benefit that it brings.

Well, there's the question hanging in the air. And the things that I say now may help us to think about it. I hope they will.

Now, where do I begin? Do you, I wonder, know a movie titled The Dirty Dozen?

Some of you do. So you know that it tells how a rambunctious army officer who had got across some of his superiors was given 12 criminals to turn into a task force, a special platoon for a special, actually a specially dangerous mission.

[2 : 54] And the movie tells you how he managed to do it. But he found it difficult because his 12 criminals, all of whom had suffered court-martial for bucking the army system, they were people who didn't take the system seriously.

As you must know, if you join the army, well, you are...

Well, I can only talk, of course, of the way that I know that it's done in England. I don't know whether it's the same over here. But in England, anyway, if you join the army, you have six weeks at boot camp in which they teach you how to walk and how to march and how to salute and how to use your voice in military conversation and how to obey orders, which for most moderns is quite a difficult routine to learn.

And I want to tell you that the first part of the movie, The Dirty Dozen, in which this officer tries to instill obedience into his 12 criminals, grabs me, fascinates me.

Why so? Well, because I know very well that if in 1944, when under English conscription, I had to report for a medical examination prior to being drafted into the armed forces, if they hadn't said at the medical exam that I was unfit for military service because I had a hole in my head...

[4 : 56] Yes, I do. Some of you know that. Some of you don't. Or didn't. But all of you do now. When you hear me use the words, I need that like I need a hole in my head, you'll understand that it's a very weighty utterance when it comes from my lips because I've got a hole in my head.

It's the legacy of running under a truck at the age of seven. Well, now, I was in fact rejected from military service and I think that was very good because I don't know, frankly, how I could have survived boot camp.

See, I've got something of a sense of humor. You may be aware of that. And my first reaction to military discipline is that it's comic.

And when you think that something is comic, it's very difficult to identify with it. And I can imagine myself being confined to barracks over and over and over again for showing that in my heart I was laughing at the system because I thought it was funny.

Shocked silence. Yes, well, that's right. The military heritage is supposed to be part of British culture and Canadian culture and I'm almost being treasonable in saying something like that.

[6 : 32] But it's true. I thought and still think that basic military discipline is funny. And when you think something is funny, well, you find it very hard to do it well.

So I imagine I would have done it badly and had any amount of trouble. Well, in this movie, the members of the platoon start thinking that military discipline is comic and they wreck a parade in which they are supposed to show what good soldiers they're finally becoming. They mess it up and so forth. And, well, as I said, that speaks to my heart and I enjoy watching it. And I have this built-in difficulty about being trained as a soldier that is an efficient fighting machine on two legs, which is what a soldier is supposed to be.

My real trouble is that my mind doesn't take kindly to letting a system shape me, which is what you really have to do, you see, when you go into the forces.

[7 : 57] Let the system shape you. Why am I saying all this? Well, because in Anglicanism, it's not too difficult.

If we're to get the full benefit of our Anglican heritage, we have to be willing to let the system shape us.

There are centuries of wisdom behind the pattern of life, Christian life, that we Anglicans inherit from the past.

And what I'm going to suggest this morning is that we have to appreciate that and learn how to get the benefit from it, even if our instinct, like my instinct, is against any established system and the desire to stand on the outside of it and be critical of it and then come up with something of my own invention.

Are you still with me, by the way? Okay, you've met other people like me and perhaps you are a person like me. How can I tell? I don't, of course, need to know.

[9 : 14] But I had difficulty telling you, I'm telling you, right at the beginning of my Christian life, just because I didn't want to be shaped by the Anglican system, I did want to be what I thought of as inwardly free, free form in my worship, my devotion, my discipleship and it took me a couple of years to grasp the fact that there was wisdom and there was benefit to be gained in allowing the system to do its work shaping me as a believer, a disciple and a worshipper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, I began to speak to you last time I took this title. I began to speak to you out of that personal background. I don't think I shared it then, but I'm sharing it today so that you'll know where I'm coming from.

And most of my time, if I remember rightly, when I spoke before on our Anglican heritage, went in elaborating under the heading Anglicanism Directed the six goals that the Anglican Church worldwide, the Anglican Communion, as it's grown out of the Anglican settlement in Reformation England in the 16th century, the six goals at which Anglicanism has always been aiming.

I say Anglicanism. I'm sure that Anglicanism historically, probably everywhere in the world, has had its awkward squad of members of the mindset, you see, which I was confessing that I'm, that I have, everywhere that Anglicanism goes, it's a system which asks to shape you.

Now, of course, just to run back to my analogy with the army. If you allow the system to shape you, you end up an efficient soldier or an efficient marine if you're doing it in the States, doing it in the top class in the States, and you are far more use, in fact, having allowed the system to shape you than you were before.

[12 : 13] Well, now, what were and are the six goals that Anglicanism seeks to fulfill?

Goal one, to be fully biblical, that's to start with. Goal two, to be fully orthodox, what that means is in line with all that Christian understanding which has achieved Christian consensus to itself down the centuries.

Biblicism and orthodoxy are the first two and the basic two Anglican goals. Catholicity is a third.

I am sure that I said, but I'll say again, that word Catholic, the adjective, means universal, universal in its Christian sense, both in geographical terms and in, what shall I say, doctrinal terms.

The Catholic faith is the understanding of Christianity which is fully comprehensive of Christian truth, takes into itself everything that the Church in all its forms has maintained as mainstream down the centuries and Catholic, as I said, also has a geographical meaning and signifies that Anglicanism seeks to be in line with worldwide Christianity, Christianity that transcends cultural differences and racial differences and all the other differences that mark off some human beings from other human beings.

[14 : 24] The Catholic faith is the faith of all faithful Christians, whoever they are, wherever they are, and whatever their cultural style.

Then, fourth, I maintained and still maintain that it is an authentic Anglican goal to be evangelical. What I mean by that is, first of all, that concern number one in Anglican Church life is to maintain and proclaim and teach and apply the gospel, the central New Testament message of sin and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as God's solution of the sin problem.

And out of that sense of priority as a surely we all of us know just because we're part of St. John's, which is an Anglican congregation, sorry, which is an evangelical congregation, there is the recognition of the task of evangelism, spreading the gospel every way we can, as widely as we can, expressing and explaining it and applying it as personally as we can wherever we have opportunity to do this.

[16 : 10] Gossiping the gospel was a phrase of my youth which I liked very much that refers to the informal evangelistic style which you find in the Acts of the Apostles.

and the whole church as such needs to be reaching out with the gospel to draw folk into the circle of faith.

Again, the model is in the Acts of the Apostles and it's a model that the church should never have lost sight of. Certainly sections of the church have lost sight of it, no question about that.

They have become concerned with maintenance rather than with outreach. No names, no pack drill, but that's how it has been and you know that very well.

Anglicanism, however, has always sought not to fall into that trap but to be reaching out evangelistically the whole time. and there's a great deal in the prayer book that quietly points to that.

[17 : 30] If we have eyes to see, next time we read through the prayer book and reflect on the services, we shall see it. So, that is the fourth Anglican goal.

and the fifth is the transformational purpose or goal of Anglicanism that you find again in the set services very prominent.

We, the Lord's people, believers in Jesus Christ, saved by grace, sinners though we are, we as believers are now called to holiness.

And prayer after prayer indicates that that is so and asks God to enable us to achieve holiness in daily life.

As forgiven sinners who are grateful to the God who has saved them, the Christ who has loved them and died for them and want to show their gratitude by living the life that pleases the Father and the Son.

[18 : 49] So, there is goal number five and goal number six, rounding off this statement of Anglican purpose. Goal number six is to be a doxological community.

That is a community that excels in worship, giving God glory over and over and over again in public worship, yes, and in personal worship also.

The Anglican way of personal devotion lays great emphasis on praise and thanksgiving in a way that I don't think is always the case in other Christian circles.

But it has always been the way with Anglican devotional teachers and it's the way that is natural as a personal application of the viewpoint expressed in the services of morning and evening prayer and the Holy Communion.

Well, that's quite an agenda, isn't it? And I seem to remember that last time I spoke on this subject I hammered away at some of these things and gave them more time than I should have done so that I couldn't do a good job under my next heading.

[20 : 31] What I've said so far comes under the heading Anglicanism Directed, the six goals. The next heading, following on from that, is Anglicanism Dissected, where I propose to talk about, first of all, the elements of Anglican Churchly Identity, secondly, the elements of Anglican Personal Life, I've already hinted at what I have to say there, and thirdly, where I'm going to allow myself to wander in the realm of guesswork, the elements of Anglicanism's future love.

And I don't mean the life of heaven, I mean the continuance of Anglican Church life and testimony in this world. That's the ground that I'm hoping to spend the rest of this morning's talk covering.

Here now we go into the first subheading there, Elements of Anglican Churchly Identity.

Elements, that is, which have been in Anglicanism from the time of the Reformation and elements without which you would have to declare that the Anglicanism on show is substandard Anglicanism, poor quality Anglicanism, not up to snuff as it should be.

All right. from that standpoint now, which are the key elements of Anglican Churchly Identity? As, for instance, we seek to achieve it here in St.

[22 : 30] John's. Well, we start where we started before. Obligation number one, be biblical.

biblical. And enthrone the Bible as the rule of faith and life. And don't justify any feature of church practice save as the Bible supports it.

That's element number one and it's basic. element number two, hold onto the creeds for the creeds represent the declaration of the faith in face of heresy, misunderstanding, mistakes, all forms of distortion, creation.

The creeds remind us what is basic and set it upright and in order and establish it there before our eyes.

Whenever you're giving an account of Christianity, the Christianity that you're rooting for, remember the creeds and just check that what you are saying covers the ground that the creeds cover and that the way you're saying it matches the way that the creeds say it.

[24 : 19] There's the Apostles Creed and there's the Nicene Creed, which we use in our communion service, and there is the Athanasian Creed, so-called, the third creed, mentioned in number eight of the 39 articles as one of the creeds that's to be believed because all of it may be proved by Holy Scripture.

It's an elaborate statement about the Trinity and the Incarnation and one of the, I have to say, missteps of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Historically, there haven't been very many, but this, I think, is a misstep. they have moved the Athanasian Creed out of the regular routine of worship year by year so that the years go by and congregations never meet it.

And when they, or if they do meet it, it's there at the back of the prayer book, they find that it has been abbreviated. I don't think that that's a happy move at all, but that's just my opinion.

Let me simply say, because I don't want to be, I don't want to distract you by making a big deal of this, let me just say that there is an agreed, sound, scriptural way of confessing both the Trinity and the Incarnation and it's there in the Athanasian Creed and this is something with which we need to be acquainted because in these days and increasingly this will be the story tomorrow, I can promise you that I think, increasingly in these days the culture and great sections of the church with the culture are drifting away from sound teaching about the Trinity and sound teaching about the Incarnation.

[26 : 40] So, stick to the creeds. Think of the creeds as the second element in Anglican churchly identity.

And with the Bible and the creeds now comes the third factor, the liturgy. Ever since the Reformation and indeed before, the church has used set forms, set forms of words, for public worship.

And never until the 17th century when some incautious Puritans, as it seems to me, took the wrong line.

Never until the 17th century did anybody question the wisdom of doing that. Surely when you stand back and look at it, you realize, well, of course there is wisdom in doing that, doing that, doing this, having a liturgy.

What is a liturgy? Well, it's a pattern of prayer and praise which has been worked out from scripture and tried and tested in experience and it's given to us as basic material for worship.

[28 : 10] It is a system, I used the word system right at the beginning of this talk, back it comes now. It is a system that shapes you as being in the military shapes you.

Yes, and if you accept the shaping, you end up in a good shape with a quality of skill, maturity, resourcefulness, which otherwise you wouldn't have.

And I hope that experience here at St. John's, friends, if not experience elsewhere, has taught you the great shaping value of our liturgy.

one can find plenty of evangelical Christians who will shake their heads at the prospect of always worshipping with set forms.

Those folk are dreaming of freedom in a way that I dreamt of freedom in worship between the years 1944 and 1946 when I was beginning my Christian life.

[29 : 41] I'll tell you, I'd just been converted. I felt so angry at Anglicanism for not having taught me the gospel, which the Anglicanism in which I was brought up had not done, that I couldn't bring

myself to worship in one of any of Oxford's evangelical Anglican churches.

I went and worshipped with the brethren. Some of you people have had the experience of worshipping with the brethren. You know that they practice free form and you will know that there's a great deal of reverence and warmth in the way that they worship God.

But even so, after a couple of years, I began to see that to allow myself to be shaped by the Anglican liturgical system might not, after all, be a mistake.

And that's where I've been for the last 60-odd years. So, you may, of course, wish at this very moment to make an assessment of whether it looks as if it was worthwhile for him or not.

But I would tell you I find it worthwhile and I'm very thankful for the way in which the prayer book, prayer book material, liturgy, has shaped my life of worship.

[31 : 19] I have been privileged more than once to minister at a retreat center down in Texas where, amongst the other things they do, is to bring in a musician for each retreat.

And I've had experience of two sorts of musicians at these retreats. One fellow I think of is a brilliant pianist and hope to make his life, sorry, make his living as a professional pianist.

But what he liked to do was simply to sit down at the piano and improvise what he called a medley.

And I'm sitting alongside him in thought.

Another musician whom I've also, who has also been at retreats where I've been present. He, in fact, is a guy who for many years was dean of the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

And what he did year by year for the retreats was to borrow a Stradivarius from the museum of the Juilliard Society, maybe a college, or a school of music.

[32 : 51] Anyway, they've got one or two Stradivariuses in their museum, and he borrows one. As dean, of course, he's entitled to do that. And he plays all sorts of music, but the supreme achievement, which I've heard him do twice, is to play the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto on his Strad.

And, oh boy, it's magnificent. Well, all right, I don't wish the medleys any harm, but give me the Mendelssohn every time. And that's a parallel, I think, to what I'm talking about when I speak of the excellence of our Anglican liturgy, and the way in which it draws appreciation out of you.

There are other factors too, which make Anglicanism what it is. There is the pastoral care, which the clergy are required to maintain just as they are required to lead the parish in evangelistic reach-out.

all of that is expressed in the exhortation to those being ordained presbyter, which you'll find in the ordinal.

It's a magnificent statement. There's the pastoral leadership, leadership of groups of churches, which diocesan bishops are there to give.

[34 : 34] alas, so many bishops nowadays have become maintenance men who give no leadership at all, but the Anglican vision of the bishop is of something better than that.

And one of the joys of my life as an Anglican presbyter have been on two or three occasions to see bishops doing what only bishops can do in their role as leaders of groups of churches, directors of colleges, and so forth.

And you don't have to argue with me to get me to agree with you, if indeed this is what you believe and affirm, that the episcopal system is an enrichment and a blessing to congregations here on earth when it's worked properly and the bishops give the lead that bishops should.

And then there's a quality which I call community concern, wherever Anglican congregations have been planted, one of the concerns that has been given them is to Christianize the neighborhood if they can.

And in England, where Anglicanism is the national church, well, it was to Christianize English culture, the English way of life, over and above, attempting to achieve a converted nation through spiritual ministry.

[36 : 38] Well, this is part of the Anglican ethos, and I believe that it fulfills one of the priorities of the Christian calling, namely, to seek to bring in the kingdom of God wherever you can.

At the moment, in the West, that means in Britain, in Canada, in the States, and in Australasia, there is a very strong anti-Christian or anti-Christendom current running in the culture, and the situation simply doesn't permit of anything more than rear-guard actions in trying to save Christian values in society and not let them be lost in the secularizing process.

Well, it hasn't always been like that, and one hopes that it won't always be like that in the future. But nonetheless, it's an area of Anglican concern, and I believe it's an area of biblical New Testament concern for the Church.

There are sections of the Church, I know, which highlight the thought that we, the Church, are called out of the secular community and have no responsibility for it.

We are distinct from it and should try to stay distinct and separate as far as we can. Do I believe that? No.

[38 : 25] The Lord Jesus came into a community and gave teaching which, had it been taken to heart, would have changed many features of Israel's community life for the better.

That, I think, is part of the discipleship pattern. So, I offer you that as one of the elements of authentic Anglicanism.

And then, two further features of the Anglican, shall I say, the Anglican area of concern, the Anglican culture, the Anglican style.

Openness to learn. Anglicanism has always understood that Christianity has to be learned. It isn't instinctive to anybody.

You're not going to get it right unless you give yourself to learning it. It should be taught to children. And when it's been taught to children as thoroughly as possible, the learning process still needs to go on throughout adult life.

[39 : 37] That's part of the Anglican priority. community. And with that openness to learning, indeed, that making of learning the faith, learning how to sustain the faith in face of all the weirdnesses of the world, there's to be openness to reason also.

Now, I don't mean the sort of reason that liberals practice. Their pattern of skeptical reasoning is, I think, an unhappy perversion of the West that dates from no late, no earlier, I should say, than the beginning of the 18th century.

No, I'm talking about the reasonableness of a style, a fellowship style, a pastoral style, in which we are willing, happy, ready to discuss with anybody who has a problem, what the problem is, and to seek to resolve the problem from scripture.

as distinct from using the big stick and saying, well, if that's what you believe, you don't belong among us, goodbye. There have been sections of the Christian community that have taken that strong line, as I'm sure you know, with people.

But that isn't the Anglican way. The Anglican way is patiently to reason with people who have problems, and to seek to resolve their problems.

[41 : 29] Anglicans know, if others don't, that biblical Christianity is supremely reasonable in itself, and that by contrast, every other point of view is unreasonable to a degree, and Anglicans, believing this and seeing this, at least authentic Anglicans, people, and they are open to reason with people about problems, whenever and wherever there is need to do so.

It's a cultural style which sets Anglicanism apart from some of the smaller evangelical bodies in this world.

world. Well, that's the Anglican church profile, as I see it, and my contention is that if any of these factors is absent, our Anglicanism is substandard to a degree.

Now, move on from that please, to elements of Anglican personal life. What I've been talking about, remember, is churchly identity, but I'm moving on from that.

Elements of Anglican personal life where I can't go into as much detail as I would like to, but I do ask you, just as I say the things that I'm going to say, to check, where do I fit in here?

[43 : 12] How does this match me? Three headings here, in each of which my love of alliteration has controlled me.

Maybe that will make my points memorable, maybe it won't. One, elements of Anglican personal life number one.

Perception, praise, and prayer. perception of truth, God's revealed truth, truth as it is in Jesus, praise for it, and prayer in terms of it.

That's basic to Anglican personal life and must ever be. And second, this is cheating a little bit because there are two items here, although there are three uses of the letter B.

The Bible and best behavior. the individual Christian, so Anglicanism, historic Anglicanism believes, is to nourish his or her soul on the truth of Scripture.

[44 : 49] The way of wisdom, Anglicans decided long ago, is to reckon to read the Bible once a year.

Or if you can't do that, lay it all out and read the Bible every two years. But have a plan, there are a number of schemes going for this purpose, have a plan which will take you through the Bible from beginning to end.

Don't limit yourself, as some do, to reading favorite passages over and over again and leaving other passages unread altogether.

No, reckon to read the whole Bible and to be led and guided by what you find there. In the marriage service, there is a prayer that he and she will be guided together by whatever they shall learn in God's holy word.

It's said explicitly. And that is part of the Anglican pattern for married life, just as it's part of the Anglican pattern for individual life.

[46 : 07] So, the Bible is very fundamental to Anglican personal life and with it must go best behavior. here again is an area where, alas, I cannot say all that I'd like to.

Let me put it this way. The pitfall for Anglican believers, as in fact for all believing Christians, is that when it comes to behavior, we lapse back into Parasatism.

That is, we reduce life to a long series of do's and don'ts. When we have got through the series, then we feel we are free to do what we like.

The rest of the time is free. But, first of all, we have to satisfy God by doing all and avoiding all the many things that we specify as belonging to the law of God.

And that's Pharisaism. life as do's and don'ts. Well, you say, what's the alternative? The alternative, brothers and sisters, is to see the Ten Commandments and the moral teaching of Jesus, and for instance, the Sermon on the Mount, and the moral teaching of the Apostles at the end of their pastoral letters, see all of this as the statement of a life ideal, covering everything, leaving us without any time that isn't God's, any time that we have to ourselves in that secular sense of not having to bother about God and just having fun.

[48 : 16] believers do have fun, but they don't get to their fun by forgetting God. No, what we have to do is to live in light of the moral teaching of Scripture, on holiness, godliness, live in light of it by constantly asking ourselves, what is the best that I can do?

And you may have heard me say, I bore the pants off some people by saying over and over again, never let the good be the enemy of the best.

But I say it, and say it, and say it again, because this is basic Christian ethics. in light, I say it again, of the commandments and the moral teaching of Jesus and the apostles, what is the best that I can do for the Lord in each situation?

And often we have to do a little thinking before we can judge confidently between the alternatives that are open to us.

But the name of the game is the quest for the best always. And behaviorally, that's the way that we're all of us called to go.

[49 : 48] It's the way of freedom. It's the way of love. It's the way of honoring and glorifying God. It's the way of being a Christian who makes a difference.

difference in the life situations, life circles, in which he or she finds themselves. So, there is the second strand in what I'm concerned to say about the elements of Anglican personal life.

Soak your soul in the Bible and always be on the quest for the best, so that our action at home, outside the home, wherever we are, whatever we're doing, is, so we believe, the best of the options that are before us.

Well, that's a breathtaking task when you see it in those terms. And I think one of the weaknesses of today's Christianity is that we aren't drilled sufficiently to see the matter of the business of living in these terms.

But I urge that this is central in Anglican personal life, just as it's central in biblical Christian life.

[51 : 28] And we mustn't allow ourselves to pass it by. And then the third group of three, which I have here under the heading Elements of Anglican personal life, are realities which are there in the prayer book, there in the Bible, there as the key and the focus to godly living, holiness, helpfulness, or, as we're more familiar with saying, service, service to others.

Helpfulness is a word which covers that, expresses that. All forms of service are helpful in their own way.

Holiness then, helpfulness, and harmony. Paul writes in Colossians chapter 3 verse 14, put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Yes, it's love that I'm talking about now. love which gives itself for the benefit of others, as supremely our Lord did on the cross.

Anglican personal life is marked by these qualities, and our purpose, as would-be Anglicans of quality, is to live our life, our personal life this way.

[53 : 19] And then, once again, I'm afraid that I've allowed the clock to run away with me, and I can't say much of what I plan to say about the elements of the Anglican future.

Let me simply say this. We live at a time of Anglican realignment, moment, and I don't need to go into details about that.

I am simply telling you that it is a worldwide process, and what I hope and pray that God is bringing out of it is an end to liberal leadership anywhere in the Anglican communion.

at the moment, of course, the Old West. What do I mean by Old West? Do I mean Britain and North America and Australasia?

The Anglican Old West is led by liberals. My hope and prayer is that God is squeezing through this realignment process, is squeezing liberalism out of leadership, bringing evangelicalism back into leadership, so that all Anglicans in the future will be back on the evangelical path.

[54 : 52] I hope that as of now, all of you would say, if challenged, I am an Anglican evangelical, rather than saying, I am an evangelical Anglican.

If you say you are an evangelical Anglican, you are implying that there is a lot of Anglicanism that isn't evangelical, but never mind, I am an Anglican in terms of all of that, and I am an evangelical too.

If you say you are an Anglican evangelical, well, evangelical is the noun. evangelical means I am seeking to be a biblical Christian, I am seeking to be a Christ-centered Christian, according to the scriptures, I am seeking to be an outreaching Christian, according to the gospel and the mandate that Christ has given us.

I am an evangelical, and if I'm forced to withdraw from Anglican fellowship, well, I should go on being an evangelical, and I shall look for fellowship where I can find it.

Evangelical first, Anglican second, that I believe is the way that it should be for all of us. in this era of realignment, well, church planting everywhere, around the world, will need to be a big thing, and we should realize that, and put our energy, our prayers, and our concern behind that priority.

[56 : 44] in this era in which God has set us, priorities need to be as they've always been.

Yes, evangelism and mission are the priorities. They always are, and they are still. Faithfulness to the heritage, the biblical heritage, remains a priority, and something from which we must never be shifted.

Fullness of faith and discipleship remains a priority. It always has been.

It is so still. And whatever happens around us to affect the outward shape of the Anglican future, these things must stay steady at the center.

I was going to elaborate on that, but I can't. The time is gone. So I thank you for your patience listening to me. If I have provoked you to thought, well, let's discuss.

[58 : 00] If I have offended you, I'm sorry, but I was trying to tell the truth as I see it. God's church, and as I thank God for St.

John's, a church that I've seen transformed ever since I began to worship at St. John's in 1979, so I take my stand with St.

John's, which I believe is a church already committed implicitly, if not explicitly, to all these things that I've mentioned, and which I trust will continue committed to them as long as the world lasts, until our Savior comes back, as one day we know he will, this is Advent Sunday and we've been thinking about that, and praise God for that hope which we all of us share.

Well, sorry if you feel I've overrun, but do, let's talk. Yeah? I'm talking about the creed of Athanasius, sorry, if you talked about the creed of Athanasius, where is in our services does that fit in, if it's traditionally done?

Oh, the traditional way of using it. Now it's pretty much related to the fact of where it's traditionally done. Traditionally it was the creed that the church was directed to use on Trinity Sunday and one or two other Sundays as well.

[59 : 44] In our 1962 Canada prayer book that has gone. The filleted version of the creed is on page 695 in the prayer book for practical purposes.

Even at St. John's, I fear we don't use it as I wish we did. It wasn't composed by St. Athanasius, champion of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity and the incarnation in the fourth century. But it's introduced with a rubric that makes the use permissive. I'll read it to you. Upon any day of the year may be sung or said at morning prayer, instead of the Apostles' Creed, this confession of our Christian faith, said by the minister and people standing. So, it's optional to use it and one can imagine a situation in which the teaching that the service leader is going to do will be helped forward and the way to it laid open by using the Athanasian Creed in that way.

I have never so used it, but don't jump to conclusions. I may yet. You never know. Phil.

[61 : 36] I'm sure all of us are deeply grateful for the way in which over many years you have striven to clarify Christian doctrine.

And in the course of this, immerse yourself in the best teachings of the Puritans and the reformers who have played such a role in the Anglican heritage.

Now, in doing that, you have, I'm sure, critically evaluated those teachings and that influence and that heritage. And have you found, great as those teachings are, have you found that there are parts of it that still needed correction and recline?

substantially, no. I may be naive, but the substance of that historic reformed and evangelical teaching that you specified still seems to me bang on target as it was when first formulated in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Did you have something particular in mind? Well, it's really a question on the authority of that teaching. Was it essentially apostolic in your view?

[63 : 03] Yes, I believe that it was, and I believe that all of it can be confirmed from Scripture, from the New Testament in particular. Its authority, like the authority of everything in the Church, must be secondary to the authority of Scripture, must be validated by the authority of Scripture.

There have, of course, been debates down the centuries as to whether every bit of this heritage is biblically on track, and some have said, well, this bit, this bit, this bit, is not biblically right.

The Baptist churches, for instance, have gone their own way. But I think, as I said, that in fact, all the specific points in the teaching are right.

Come back at me, if you like. on behalf of Baptists, and I'm a former one, I have to say that that is where I was converted, and I have not heard anything except references to bishops since I became an Anglican, that would change that teaching.

But my question for you is, I stayed in the Anglican pew after I got here because of the liturgy, and I'm wondering, at the time that people like Baptists and Phimus Brethren and Puritans and so on were splitting off from the Anglican church, what would have been their objection to liturgy, apart from the fact that they believed in extemporaneous prayer?

[65 : 01] Well, my understanding is that they objected to the liturgy principally because in the first half of the 17th century the people at the top of the Church of England insisted on it being used just as it stands in the prayer book with no adjustments and no flexibility at all.

And this usage, insisted on as it was by Anglican bishops, this was thought of as spirit quenching, not because the use of a prayer book in any shape or form was thought to be forbidden by Scripture, but because God the Holy Spirit, so they believed, gives a gift of spontaneous prayer, a gift given for leading others in approach to the throne, and that gift ought to have space for its exercise alongside the use of the prayer book.

That was the standard Puritan position. the only person in my tradition whom I know as having rejected the prayer book out of hand, and here I judge that he was, when all was said and done, over-arguing, is John Bunyan.

Bunyan wrote a discourse on prayer in which he only acknowledges extempory prayer for leading in worship, and he's simply negative about the use of said forms.

Well, all right, that is his view. Will you think me terribly toffee-nosed if I say? Bunyan was pretty much a self-educated Bible student.

[67 : 33] He never shared in any academic discipline for the study of any aspect of Christianity.

He picked it all up as he went along and picked it up brilliantly. But at that point, I think he was narrower than the Bible would encourage any of us to be.

For, after all, the principle of liturgy was taught by the Lord Jesus. Twice he gave his disciples the Lord's prayer.

And the formula differs from the two occasions. And if you put the two formulae together, it seems to me it's very suggestive.

In Luke, the formula is, when you pray, say. And then it's the Lord's prayer.

[68 : 46] Say, Father, hallowed be thy name, and so on. When he teaches the Lord's prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, the formula is, in the King James, after this manner, or after this fashion, pray.

And in modern translations, that becomes pray in this way. God's love, but it's a much, much looser formula than the one in Luke.

And it seems to me that putting the two together, the proper conclusion to draw is, well, there's a place for saying the Lord's prayer, and there's a place for remembering that the Lord's prayer is a scheme of prayer, in which the thought of the hallowing of God's name is right at the center, and the person praying is encouraged to amplify the petitions, and in that sense, be free in the Lord's presence to express thoughts and desires which make for the Lord's glory.

Also, it is a fact, I mean, a theological fact, that these days, I often hear expressed, the Psalter was Jesus' hymn book and prayer book.

Well, yes, and that's a clue to how we should interpret, or one of the clues, to how we should interpret and apply the Psalms.

[70 : 38] Well, Bunyan leaves all that out, so I think he is rather narrow. His objection then probably is that the liturgy was too narrow, that it did not allow for the Holy Spirit motivating people to pray, in which case I think St.

John's does both things, and therefore melds the tradition of extemporaneous prayer and liturgy.

We do all of those things in this church.

Fair comment. Amen. I agree. Thank you, Sheena. Any more from any more? Struck dumb.

Bill rises to get us out of our doneness. What have we got to say, Bill? Nothing to say. I think that's the Thank you.