

Called to Catechize

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: 29 March 2009

Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

[0 : 00] Well, thank you, Bill, for that introduction. I'm clear now what I should do. Start. And I start by asking you to pray with me.

Gracious Lord, whenever we come to study holy things, we need the help of your Holy Spirit. We acknowledge this right at the outset.

And our prayer is, for Jesus' sake, send the Holy Spirit to enlighten and instruct us, and so make us wiser, more far-seeing, more fruitful disciples in the service of our Lord.

We ask it in his holy name. Amen. Amen. Well, my title this morning, friends, is called to catechize. Who am I saying or implying is called to catechize? Yes. The broad answer is all those who are called to leadership in the church at any level.

[1 : 25] And you know, that means all of us. Everybody is a leader to somebody. That's the way it is in the body of Christ.

Everybody is given gifts for ministry to others. And ministry to others is the pattern.

The pattern of mutual dependence through which the church grows. That actually is part of the church. That actually is part of the implication, as you can see, of the New Testament image of the church as the body of Christ.

That's how a human body works. One part supporting another. And the body not working well until all the parts are doing their bit.

And so it is in the Christian church. And we, who inherit a hierarchical vision.

[2 : 31] Yes, we do. Let's be frank about it. A hierarchical vision of the church as having a leadership class at the top.

A hierarchical vision of the church, a hierarchical vision of the church, a hierarchical vision of the church.

And then a supportive class into which all the rest of us fall. That tends to be all, tends to be the shape of our thinking about the church.

You see what I mean when I say it's hierarchical. And it does make for passivity. Much more passivity than can be justified or that can honour the Lord.

At, what shall I say, pew-sitting level. Well, in the mercy of God, that will go on changing as it's been changing here at St. John's for a quarter of a century.

[3 : 47] I have been around to observe the change and I praise God for it. But now, we are going to think of the church as a serving community.

In which everyone actively helps others. That, then, is going to make everyone a leader to others in some respect.

And, now, what does that word catechizing mean? Well, it means teaching the basics, the truths that Christians live by.

And, with that, teaching Christians how to live by those truths. Catechizing is a teaching process that is anchored in practicality.

It isn't quite the same as Bible study and mastering the focus and the thrust of a particular book of Scripture.

[4 : 56] It's complementary to that. We need both the one and the other. And, the thought, I think, is going to break surface again and again in what I say to you.

The thought which we need to get clear on and take to heart and never stop thinking. The thought that, just as in a good church, Bible study takes its place at the centre.

And, I have seen this happening at St. John's over the last 25 years and rejoiced in it. So, alongside Bible study, what may be called doctrine study, don't let that word doctrine frighten you.

Truth study, we could call it. Truth study, or even faith study, ought to be lined up so that there are two ongoing disciplines in the church, right at the centre and not just one.

And, the second discipline, so I'm going to church, is learning and relearning and clarifying in our minds and equipping ourselves to defend the truths that Christians live by and the discipline which we all of us need to practice of living by them.

[6 : 34] Catechism, in other words. Well, now, the church is a learning community and the obligation here is permanent.

In every generation of the church, catechizing should go on and when we discern whose leader we as individuals are called to be, and I said everyone is a leader to somebody, it may be that you are mother or father of children and that makes you their leader in spiritual things.

It may be that there are tasks in the church that you take on as well and that makes you a leader of people in the congregation. This whole thought, this notion that we are all leaders to somebody is a notion that we need to live by because, as I said, it's biblically true and it ought to be shaping the life of the congregation of which we are part.

So, I'm confident that what I'm speaking about this morning is directly relevant to all of us. As members of the church community, we are called to catechize.

But wait a minute, you say, catechize is not a word that's familiar to me. Catechizing is not an activity that I'd be taught to practice.

[8 : 20] I know there is in the pre-book a little, I would say a little, an eight-page form of words, question and answer, called a catechism.

but I have never majored on the catechism. Now, I'm going to put words into your mouth and into your heart.

You may be saying, I know that in past days children were taught to memorize the catechism before they were confirmed.

But I was never required to do that. In the 20th century, memorizing was out. And frankly, I'm rather glad because I find memorizing to be a difficult technique to master.

So, in honesty, your heart may be continuing. I've never even read the catechism right through.

[9 : 25] I certainly have never studied it. And if you're going to talk to us about catechizing, my first reaction is to be wary and perhaps even a little frightened because it sounds as if you're going to take me into strange country.

these are words which I'm putting into your mouth. These are thoughts which I suspect are in some of our hearts. All right, I'll play fair.

I'll tell you right at the outset, by the way, that I stand before you as one of a member of what I think was the last generation that was required to memorize the catechism.

I went to a church school and memorizing the catechism was a big deal. I was prepared for confirmation and actually less was said in confirmation class about the catechism than had been said to me in school.

But that's a story from an era that has passed away. I wonder, yes, let me test the meeting, how many of you folk, as a matter of fact, were ever made to memorize the prayer book catechism.

[10 : 43] Raise your hands. Okay, five or six out of whatever we are, 40 or 50 I suppose, gathered in this room.

Well, that tells us the story, doesn't it? So, you may well be thinking, I don't really know anything about the catechism, I don't really know anything about catechizing, this is strange territory, and your heart may now be saying, I don't know how consciously it's saying, but you can tell me afterwards, your heart may now be saying, treat me gently, I'm a beginner in all of this.

all right friends, I will try to observe that request, I will treat you gently, I will speak to you as beginners in the matter of catechism, and to enable us all to get off the ground together, I will for the moment cease to use the word catechize, which is a verb, and the noun catechism that goes with it, and simply talk about teaching, because that's what we're really concerned with here.

I remember when I was at seminary, English Theological College, which in those days was, I have to say it, a very poor quality, theologically and spiritually, we used to have instructors in pastoral themes brought in weekly to address us.

Most of the instructors wore the pants off me, to be perfectly honest. They were too much like what I was getting in the seminary. But there was one who, in the middle of his discourse, said, remember this, there are three priorities in pastoral ministry.

[13:09] The first is teach, and the second is teach, and the third is teach. And I wanted to stand up and cheer, because even in those days, I had, on my own account, come to that conclusion.

And I knew that I was called by God to be a teacher and to fulfil my ministry teaching, and indeed, I can be more specific, teaching adults, teaching adults, the basics of Christianity.

Which is a way of saying, if I may recall the word that I dropped a moment ago, that I was being called to fulfil my ministry as a priest in the Church of God, in the role of a catechist.

I didn't think in terms of that word in those days, but that's what was going on inside me. And when this guy said, the center of your ministry must always and ever be teaching, well, I knew he was right, and I knew that that was the call for me, which is why I felt so good as I heard him say it.

Well, the early Church, I mean, the Church up to about the 5th century, was well aware of this, and you should know it very early, by the end of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd, developed in all the churches of any size, with any resources, it developed an institution called the Catechumenate.

[15:07] And the Catechumenate was a pattern of instructional classes in which people interested in Christianity came and were shown what Christian belief is, and what Christian life amounts to.

And if, having been instructed in these facts, they then said, I believe this is true, I want to become a Christian, I want to join the congregation.

Well, then there was another set of classes for those entering into a Christian commitment. The first set of classes, you see, had been essentially informational.

Now, it's a class for those who are entering into a Christian commitment, and the class would work up to baptism, the night before Easter, followed by a vigil through the night, followed by the joy of Easter morning, and first communion with the congregation for the newly baptized.

Baptism had become, at least for adults, a very significant ceremony.

[16:44] The men and the women were baptized separately. They used to strip naked, and then be immersed in a tank of water, and then clothed upon, when they came out, with white garments, and they'd have the white garments on through the night as they prayed, and next morning they'd still be wearing them at the church's communion service.

When I read about that, my heart always says, I wish we made more of adult baptism, or, well, no, let me withdraw the word of war and say, and, and, of confirmation for those who've been baptized as infants.

It seems to me that everything would be enriched, both for the candidates and for the church, if those baptized or confirmed as adults, well, say adults, I'm thinking of the whole category of folk from the age of about 15.

And I said, I was going to say, I think that our church life would be enriched, everybody's life would be enriched, including that of the candidates, if after baptism or confirmation, these 15 plus folk were welcomed by the church at some sort of party at which they would give a testimony to the faith in Christ to which they come, and in which they have now been baptized.

baptized. And again, I rejoice in things that have been happening at St. John's over the last quarter century. We don't do this as a church routine, but we do it from time to time for particular candidates, for baptism or confirmation, and it seems to be very good that we should, and I'd like to see it happening every time.

[18:55] Well, you see how things were structured in those early centuries, and every congregation that had a catechumenate working, the way I describe, would have a member of what we call the staff, one of the leaders, the leadership group, who would be called the catechist, and whose business it was, to teach these classes.

Information classes for those who wanted to know what the faith was, and commitment classes for those who wish to be baptized in the faith. And you may know this also is a practice that quietly has been developed here at St.

Jung's. We have an evangelist who might well be called a catechist on our leadership team, and there are classes and a course which this person is employed to maintain.

And so, do you know this? I hope you do. There is a regular trickle of new converts coming into the St. John's Fellowship. Well, I say, thank God, this is the way it should be.

And this is the way in which in the early centuries it was in all churches of any size, churches I mean, that could employ a catechist distinct from at least one teaching and ruling presbyter.

[20 : 40] So, all I'm saying this morning, as you can now see, could be expressed by saying, hey, in those early Christian centuries they had a good idea.

We've got away from that good idea. We need to get back to that good idea. We need to have the equivalent, whether we call them catechism classes, or whether we call the instructor a catechist or not, that's of secondary importance.

Give the institution and the operative whatever name you like, but this is the reality of what needs to be going on. All the year round the church should be making provision for instructing people systematically in the Christian faith and preparing them for baptism if they've not been baptized or confirmation if they have.

I'm talking about baptism and confirmation together. I hope that doesn't present perplexity to anybody's mind. If you were brought up a Baptist, well, think of confirmation as a dry baptism and think of the baptism of coven children as a wet dedication.

Think in those terms and you'll get the dynamics of the situation right. What we're talking about is the nurture of those who aren't yet adult members of the Christian community.

[22 : 30] we're talking about the processes that bring them to adult membership in the Christian community. And as I say, get beyond differences about the labels that we attach to the operatives and the operations and realize Christian nurture is the name of the game and it's Christian nurture that needs to be strengthened in most if not all our churches.

And it's Christian nurture that I'm celebrating as something that has advanced, very happily advanced, here at St. John's.

And it's Christian nurture that I'm urging needs to be advanced further as we come to face the fact that catechizing is a process which, to a degree, every single one of us needs to be practicing in relation to the people for whom, under the providence of God, we have become leaders.

That's the perspective. Right? Now on we go. The practice of maintaining regular catechism in the church fell out during what we call the dark ages and the middle ages, but it came back with a bang at the time of the reformation.

This was partly because in the providence of God the reformation, shall I say, rode into Western Europe, on the back of the Renaissance, which was a cultural movement, essentially secular in its thrust, but insisting that everybody needs to be educated, everybody needs to know the excellences of classical literature, schools need to be founded, teachers need to be trained and put into action, and educational standards all around Europe be raised hereby.

[25 : 01] and the reformers, reading their Bibles, the New Testament in particular, took note of the fact that in epistle after epistle, the instruction to teach is given, Timothy and Titus and the pastoral letters are constantly being exhorted to teach, teach the truth, and teach the error of what's false.

When you get pastoral letters to churches as a whole, the exhortation is constantly to learn the true faith and the true way of living by the true faith, which the writer of the letter, Paul or John or Peter, whoever it is, is expressing in the letter itself.

Churches should be learning communities so that their members may become teachers. That's a priority which runs all the way through the New Testament.

And if we look back into the Gospels, Christians, well, we realize Jesus spent three years, the years of his public ministry in Palestine, teaching.

He did other things as well. He healed and he disciplined twelve men, one of whom actually turned out to be a disaster area, but there was this inner circle of the twelve whom he disciplined specially.

[26 : 53] And I say disciplined, well, what it meant was that there was special teaching, extra teaching given to them. The Gospels tell us all about it. Jesus was a teacher.

And Christian discipleship, so he said in his, well, in the words to the apostles that mark the close of Matthew's Gospel, they weren't actually the last words that he said on earth, but they're the last words that Matthew chooses to cite from Jesus' lips as he closes his Gospel.

He tells us, Jesus said to his disciples, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, teaching them, teaching them to do all the things that I've commanded you.

And it's to be remembered, I think, that it's only after he'd said that, that he said, and lo, I'm with you always even to the end of the world. What needs to be said in expounding that precious promise is that it was given to the disciples for their support as they went about their mission, as they fulfilled their teaching ministry.

I'm not saying that the promise doesn't apply under other circumstances, but I am saying that its focus, when Jesus gave it, was as a support and encouragement to disciples who are going to make disciples of others, folk, in other words, who have learned and now are going to teach.

[28 : 53] So, this was, as I said, a very central and sort of drumbeat emphasis all through the New Testament.

And when the Reformation came along, writing, as I also said, on the coattails of the Renaissance, the Reformers picked up this emphasis and ran with it and said, and practiced, we need to make a big thing of catechism, catechizing.

And so, in all the main centers of Reformation, starting with Luther's Wittenberg, on just about everything, Luther was the pioneer, you know, in the Reformation, and catechizing is no exception. In all these centers of Reformation, the leader, or leaders, composed catechisms, both for children and for adults.

catechism, well, the adults hadn't been catechized in pre-Reformation days, so you can understand the strategy by dwelling on it.

[30 : 10] Everybody needs to learn the faith, learn the basics of the faith, and learn to live by the basics of the faith. So, catechism must take place.

catechetical documents, called catechisms, must be composed as a basis for making it take place. Some catechisms were composed right from the start in question and answer form. Luther's catechisms were. I say catechisms, yes, he produced a children's catechism and a larger catechism, as he called it, for catechizing adults.

And, well, you can understand the wisdom of the question and answer form. If people are confronted with answers to questions that they have to memorize, then the instructor has a clear path before him.

He can and should make sure that the people at the receiving end, adults or children, should memorize what's in the answer to the question and then working on the basis of that formulation, he can and should make quite certain that they understand each point that the answer makes.

[31 : 53] But whereas Luther went that way, Calvin at Geneva, who did at one stage actually produce a question and answer catechism, but he preferred to go the other way, that is, he formulated catechisms, catechisms, he formulated catechisms in short paragraphs, not question and answer, but paragraphs for exposition.

Well, it's not important how you lay on the table the basics that we are to live by and how to live by them.

what's important is that in some shape or form they be there and people actually be told. And when Reformation came in England, with Archbishop Cranmer quietly but effectively at the helm, well, the story was similar.

Cranmer produced a catechism for children. Begin at the beginning. And that's what the eight-page document in our prayer book called A Catechism is actually for.

Well, I'm sorry, of course, in the 1962 Canadian book, as distinct from England's 1662 book which I was brought up on, it's THE Catechism, that's the heading, subheading, an instruction to be learned by every person before we be brought to be confirmed by the bishop.

[33 : 42] And you have here a revised version, not seriously revised, I hasten to say, just with one or two bits and bobs adjusted for easier and more fruitful use.

It's, as I say, a very light revision of Cranmer's Catechism, which went unchanged into the 1662 English prayer book.

All right. And now, would you believe it, in small print, rubric style, following the heading, instruction to be learned by every person before we be brought to be confirmed by the bishop, you have the following admonition to the clergyman, the pastor of every parish, shall diligently, upon Sundays and holy days, or at such other times as he shall think convenient, instruct and examine the children of his parish in this Catechism.

And it is desirable that this should be done openly in the church from time to time, after the second lesson at morning or evening prayer. Sounds like a word from another world, doesn't it?

We've got completely away from this. But that's what the 1962 Canadian prayer book prescribed.

All right, the only point that I want to make by reading that rubric is that our Canadian prayer book does emphatically insist that this Catechism is to be mastered before children are confirmed.

[35 : 37] What's in it, you ask? And it's divided, we find, into five sections. The first is headed the baptismal covenant.

And it starts with the question, what is your name? And then the question, who gave you this name? this is rather cunning, it individualizes the young person right at the start.

And the answer to that question, who gave you this name, is my godfathers and godmothers in my baptism. And the baptismal covenant promise is then set out and the young person is expected to have this in their memory and under their belt.

But my godfathers and godmothers, speaking for you at your baptism, did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, and so on.

Second, that I should believe and confess the Christian faith, and third, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in the same all the days of my life. The baptismal covenant, in other words, is a commitment from the human side to be a Christian and live the Christian life.

[37 : 04] Then the question is asked, do you not think you're bound to believe and do as they promised for you? And the answer is, yes, I do, and by God's help, so I will.

And so on. And I pray that God will give me his grace that I may continue in this to my life's end. Well, that, I think, is a very fine bit of drafting.

That gets the child to the basics straight away. Some of the wording is quaint, after all. It was drafted in the middle of the 16th century, and English that dates from the middle of the 16th century does seem rather quaint when we read it today.

But in terms of content, this is where it all begins, at least for the child of Christian parents. And the assumption in the prayer book is that it's those children who will be baptized as infants.

infants, and they'll be baptized as infants by virtue of their parents' faith, and they wouldn't be baptized as infants otherwise. Then comes a second heading, leading straight on from the first.

[38 : 30] We reviewed the baptismal covenant. Second heading is the Christian faith. faith. And what the child has to do here is learn the Apostles' Creed, the articles of your belief, as the Catechists calls it.

Did you know that until the middle of the 19th century, Anglicans always referred to the Creed as the belief? Well, that's what it is.

So, their use of that word was bang on target. So, the child learns and recites the Apostles' Creed, and then comes the Catechists' question, what do you chiefly learn in these articles of your belief? Answer, I learn to have faith in the one true God, in God the Father who made me and all the world, in God the Son who redeemed me and all mankind, and in God the Holy Spirit who sanctifies me and all the people of God.

And the Gloria follows there. Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. That's praise from the Catechist and the person, the persons being catechized.

[40 : 01] There's a word for them, by the way, catechumens, is what they are classically called. Catechumens are people being catechized, and the person who's putting the young people through this discipline of memory and instruction is called the catechist.

Christ. Well, this is praise to God for the grace set forth in the Creed, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, a third heading, the commandments.

And here, the candidate is required to memorize and repeat all the Ten Commandments, the same which God spake in the 20th chapter of Exodus, saying, I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Well, there are, you know, these days in our churches, people who couldn't recite the Ten Commandments if asked. And that may not surprise you, because you might have difficulty, I don't know.

but whereas memorizing the Ten Commandments was absolutely basic in the days when I was being drug up in the middle of the 20th century, it's gone right out of fashion nowadays.

[41 : 37] I'm not going to embarrass anyone by testing the meeting as to whether you think you could recite the Ten Commandments as set forth in Exodus chapter 20. But frankly, I would be surprised if all of us could recite them.

Very surprised indeed. However, in the prayer book catechism, children are asked to memorize and recite them, and then they are quizzed about them in the following way.

Catechist. How does the Christian church receive and teach these commandments? Answer. According to their spirit and purposes our Lord teaches us in the Gospel.

Catechist. What do you chiefly learn from these commandments? The child answers. I learn two things, my duty towards God and my duty towards my neighbour.

Question. What is your duty towards God? Now the language here is a bit quaint, but let me read the answer and you'll appreciate this goes right to the heart of the matter.

[42 : 51] Answer. My duty towards God is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength.

love him, to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my hope, trust in him, to pray to him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

And then, what is your duty towards your neighbour? And once more, it sounds quaint, but it hits the nail on the head. My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all as I would they should do unto me, to love, honour, and help my father and mother, to honour and obey the Queen and all who are in authority under her, to show respect to teachers and pastors, and to be courteous to all, to hurt nobody by word or deed, to be true and just in all my demon, to bear no malice or hatred in my heart, to keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil speaking, lying and slandering, to keep my body in temperance, soberness and chastity, not to covet or desire other men's goods, but to learn and labour truly to get my own living, and to do my duty in the vocation to which it shall please

God to call me. And the catechist comes back, what new commandment did our Lord give to his disciples? Answer, a new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

this perhaps is the moment at which to say, in this catechism, what is being unfolded are the pillars, let's call it that, the pillars of Christian discipleship, in which the children are being drilled and, you don't anchor people in pillars, what do you do, on which their lives are being based, funded, that perhaps is the way to say it.

[45 : 26] We've looked at the creed before that, sorry, and after that we looked at the commandments, and now we are going to look at prayer.

There's another heading in the book. Catechist, you need God's help for this, let me hear then if you can say the Lord's Prayer.

And the child is supposed to have memorized the prayer and to come straight out with it. The catechist puts questions to the child about it, as he puts questions to the child on the creed and on the commandments, to make sure that the child knows what he's talking about.

Catechist, what do you desire of God in this prayer? Answer, I desire my Lord God, our Heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace upon me and to all people, that we may worship him and serve him and obey him as we ought to do.

And I pray to God that he will send us all things that are needful, both for our souls and bodies, that he'll be merciful to us and forgive us our sins and help us to forgive others, and that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers of soul and body, and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness and from everlasting death.

[46 : 59] And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And therefore I say Amen. So be it. This leads to the final section in the Children's Catechism of the Prayer Book, Preliminary Instruction in the Sacraments, that is in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

What do you mean by this word sacrament? Asks the Catechist. Answer. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given to us by Christ himself as a means whereby we receive this grace and a pledge to assure us thereof.

And then this is worked out in relation to baptism and the Lord's Supper. And it's actually, it's a very thorough bit of teaching.

my guess is that when the prayer book was revised here in Canada in 1959, there were on the revision committee people who in the high church style thought of the sacraments as being of enormous importance.

Now, careful, I know that we as evangelicals behave as though we don't think the sacraments are of enormous importance, just that they have their place.

[48 : 36] It's arguable that the high church folk in the high church tradition are sounder at this point than we are.

I suspect that it really is the will of the Lord Jesus that we should celebrate the Lord's Supper and take part in it every Lord's Day, and that we should treat it as the centre of our worship. I think that that's the implication of what he actually said when he was instituting the supper. Do this as oft as you shall drink it, that is, do this on a regular basis in remembrance of me. The Lord's Supper is for taking the mind and the heart to focus on the Lord Jesus and his grace and mercy.

And, of course, the Roman Church has never had any doubt about this and maintains the practice of the Christian Church, actually, from the very beginning, which is to celebrate the supper every Lord's Day.

[50 : 02] And we Protestants got into the way of doing something less than that. Well, I'm not saying that the catechism prescribes that we celebrate the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, because it doesn't, but I am saying that I don't think it's inappropriate to drill children coming up to confirmation in the importance of, the real importance, of regular sharing in the Lord's Supper Sunday by Sunday.

But then that's a little ahead of where most of us are, so I won't press the point too hard. Suffice it to say, this is the last section of our prayer book catechism.

It's based, just for the record, on what was put into Cranmer's catechism in 1604, 50 years after he drafted his children's catechism.

There were high church men, you see, in those days who thought that the children's catechism ought to contain a section explaining the centrality of the sacraments, and the section on the sacraments has been in all versions of the Anglican catechism from that day to this.

And our Canadian revisers in 1962 added a supplementary instruction, added questions and answers which may be studied with the church catechism in the preparation of catechism candidates for confirmation or at other times, and the supplementary instruction centers on the church, what it is, what it's for, and what the calling of the church is, quite a lot about that, it ends up like this, what is the vocation of a Christian in the world?

[52 : 23] Answer, to follow Christ and bear witness to him, to fight the good fight of faith and to lay hold on eternal life, that's what the church must be doing, and that's what the church must tell the world that everybody should be doing.

And then, attached to that supplementary instruction, is a supplementary supplementary instruction, every Christian man or woman should from time to time frame for himself a rule of life, in accordance with the precepts of the gospel and the faith and order of the church, wherein he may consider the following, the regularity of his attendance at public worship and especially at the Holy Communion, the practice of private prayer, Bible reading and self-discipline, bringing the teaching and example of Christ into his everyday life, the boldness of his spoken witness to his faith in Christ, boldness, yes, and his personal service to the church and the community and the offering of money according to his means for the support of the work of the church at home and overseas.

Very good admonitions, would you not say, for the adult Christian disciple. Truth is that all the basics of discipleship and the disciples' life are here in the prayer book catechism.

we ought to know that. As Anglicans, we ought to rejoice in the richness of our heritage at this point. And then, it's up to us, it seems to me, to ensure that these things are taken seriously in the church, of which we're part, of the congregation, and in other congregations associated with us.

And what does that mean? Well, here, I better speak frankly from my own heart. I've told you how at the beginning of my ministry, I found myself impressed by the truth that teach and teach and teach is the path which proper ministry must follow.

[55 : 00] Everything else in proper ministry must be attached to the threefold teach. that has meant that over the years, I've somewhat fallen in love with the vocabulary of catechism and catechizing and catechumens and the thought that I myself, as one called to be a presbyter, priest in the church, am called thereby to be a catechist.

And I've been saying this last couple of years in various contexts, that the campaign, which by speaking and writing, I think I'm mounting along these lines, will no doubt be Packer's last crusade, but it is in my heart something of a crusade just at the moment.

I want to see catechizing as an activity, in other words, the teaching perspective, coming back into the church, hot and strong, if I may put it that way, Jesus said, teach them to do all the things that I've commanded you, and lo, I'll be with you always as you do that.

And it does seem to me that, as I said again right at the beginning, alongside Bible study as a central activity within the church for nourishment purposes, there should go catechetical instruction in the truths that Christians live by and the way to live by them.

These two things ought to be together at the heart of the church's life. And we have seen, at least those of us who are regular at St.

[57 : 15] John's, we have seen how Bible study has made glorious headway in our fellowship.

There are not many Anglican congregations in which Bible study is as big a thing as it is here at St.

John's. I'm sure you know that. Well, it's simply true whether you knew it before or not. Now, even at St. John's, I long to see a catechetical study receiving equal emphasis, not displacing Bible study, gracious, no, but supplementing Bible study by going over the truths that are laid out landscape style in the Bible, going over those truths in the classified, formulated way in which, over its 2,000-year life, the Church has learned to focus them.

And the catechism, which we just looked at, gives you a sort of launch pad for doing this. For the catechism makes it clear that the Anglican purpose is that every adult disciple know their faith, know it, I mean, in terms of the truths that make it up, and live by those truths in the power of the Holy Spirit, as central in their discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ, and as a fundamental discipline for ongoing spiritual growth.

As I say, it's Bible and teaching of the faith, not Bible or teaching of the faith. It's both the one and the other. I believe that the renewing of what I may now call catechism, catechizing, or catechetical instruction in the church, renewal, which makes the church a community that's constantly learning and testifying to doctrine, just as the church becomes a community that's constantly learning and testifying to what is laid out landscape style in the Bible.

That is part of the will of Christ. I believe that it's a painless broadening of our life as a learning community, and it's a profitable broadening of our life, or deepening of our life actually, as a learning community.

[60 : 16] when, as sometimes happens, I meet folk who know their Bible pretty well, but who don't know their doctrine as well, I get bothered.

I'm pleading, as you can see, for both the one and the other, the two things together. It restores a balance, without which there is an imbalance, I think, in the church's learning life.

Some of you have seen the series, the small series, the series of small books that I edit and contribute to, called Anglican Agenda.

We started it three years ago. It's still going quite strong. You see the little books out for sale in the Trendle Lounge, between services, I hope, friends, that you get hold of them and labour to digest what's in them, because I can say of each single one, I'm the general editor of the series, I think I'm entitled to say this, I would say of each single one, this is catechetical material.

All of this has to do with knowing the basic truths by which Christians are to live and knowing how to live by them. And I hope to see the balance restored in the church.

[61 : 56] Well, I don't know how much longer my life will go on, that's in God's hands, I am up in my 80s, of course, the time must be limited, but I do hope that I shall see a new spurt, spurt ahead in learning of basic Christian truths and the life of conforming to them, in the way that in this church over the last quarter of a century I've already seen the upsurge of Bible study and the taking seriously of learning the scriptures.

So that's what I wanted to share with you, it comes out of my heart as well as out of my head. I'm glad to see that none of you have gone to sleep while I've been speaking, maybe I'm striking a chord.

Let's have some discussion and see what sort of an impression these thoughts of mine have made on you. Okay, from monologue to dialogue, over to you.

Am I right? Do you think that right there? Yes, Betty? Is it only a bishop that can confirm? Well, that's the historic tradition.

The thing to remember actually is that in the fourth century the role of the bishop changed in quite a radical way.

[63 : 28] Up to the fourth century the bishop had been the leading presbyter in a local church which might be divided into what we would call house churches but which came together regularly as a single congregation and the bishop, as I said, was top presbyter in that local church.

So he was a pastor in the way that David Short is a pastor here. He doesn't do all the pastoral work but he's head pastor.

In the fourth century however, Christianity I guess you know was established by Constantine and then confirmed by Theodosius as the most favored religion of the Roman Empire and Constantine divided the geographical outlay of the Roman Empire into religious provinces in the same way that the empire had already been divided into administrative provinces, bits of the empire, in other words, with people called praetors as the men in charge.

the bishop became now the person in charge of an ecclesiastical province which might have dozens of local churches in it. So he became in a broad sense the pastor of everybody but in a specific sense the pastor of nobody.

It was standard practice then and it's standard practice still that bishops and only bishops confirm but it's a procedure which is how can I say it a bit hollow, a bit unreal when the bishop in every single case in Anglicanism is not directly the pastor of the people who's confirming.

[65 : 41] And in historic Methodism and historic Presbyterianism the rule developed that confirmation be done by the chief pastor of each congregation confirming the young people who've been prepared for confirmation in that parish.

and actually I think that pastorally that makes better sense from every point of view and I wish that we did it this way but as I say the worldwide Anglican practice for well ever since the Reformation and in the English churches for centuries before was that the bishop confirmed and you know how it is you sometimes stand before an impressive building and you say well it is it's big and it's impressive but I do wish that it was placed in a different location in the garden well you can say that and wish it from your heart but the fact remains that you can't move a big building by any effort of your own and I don't think it's possible to change the pattern of confirmation

I do think that it's possible for congregations to supplement the fact that confirmation will be done by a strange bishop in the way supplement that in the way that I hinted that is have a party at which the newly confirmed are welcomed welcome to the communicant fellowship of the congregation and where they give their testimony thus assuring the congregation that they are properly being welcomed into the adult communicant fellowship because they're real believers we've taken a few cautious steps in that direction here at St.

John's I'd like us to take a few more steps and make it one of the high spots of the church's life every year welcoming the new believers into the adult fellowship straight after their confirmation why has it stopped at St.

John's the classes I think they'll know whether it lost through the world confirmed well when St. John's declared itself through its representatives at Synod to be out of communion with the bishop we do now yes we do now and the routine of confirming the children can be restored as before but the problem that the child is confirmed by a bishop whom he's never met before he or she has never met before that does seem to me to be pastorally less than the best so that's where we are on that issue but you know you choose your battlegrounds you choose to fight where you think you can make some progress I believe we can make some process in calling for some progress in calling for the restoration of catechesis where I don't think we would make any progress in calling for confirmation instruction by the leading presbyter in each local church yes the Lord

[69 : 33] Jesus Christ said that I will send the comforter the spirit of truth who will teach you all things and bring into remembrance all things that I have ever said and the apostle Paul said that we speak not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches and I was wondering are we spending too much time with human teaching and not concentrate on the Holy Spirit teaching well I would reply if we study Christian truth from scripture and with constant a constant focus on how this truth is to be lived out and obeyed in practice then we are in fact following the leading of the Holy Spirit as our teaching yes the

Bible is basic and yes the Holy Spirit has promised us to give us understanding of the Bible it's Bible truth though in which we are to be catechized and Bible truth thus grasped which we are to obey and if that's the pattern followed then well it is in fact the leading of the Spirit that we're following I think I would say as a rule in theology and devotion never separate the Spirit and his whole ministry from the Word which the Spirit uses in his ministry so I would say thank you for the point you're making it is an important point but it amplifies I think and confirms what I've been saying rather than in any way querying it or sidelining it but thank you you did make a point of very great significance yes so you've made a powerful case for catechesis and you have been a catechist all your life and

many of us have benefited from that and it's clear that we have lost a good idea and that we are the poorer for it but as I reflect on my own teaching in a secular context

I think of the fact that I'm entirely disinterested in yes or no answers that I have more interest in expanding than in dictating and that I learn from my students certainly at the graduate level more than I actually give to them so there's attention in my thinking but it's not in any sense meant to deny the case that you're making I'm 100% supportive of this agenda that you're proposing but I find it difficult to square with some of my own teaching experience I appreciate what you're saying Olaf and I can identify with it thinking of my own work as a professor and the way in which my students and I relate together however and I want yes and I do want to say before anything else that I hope you didn't infer from my bird's eye view of the catechism bird's eye survey of the catechism that I thought that the question and answer form is the ideal way for doing catechism and instruction today as a matter of fact I don't think that

Calvin's way of doing it which is to isolate a topic for study and discussion I think that that has just as much to be said for it if not more than the question and answer style I think frankly that the final decision will have to be made according to the people the young people that you're seeking to instruct and what your relationship to them is I mean there are still homes where children are encouraged to memorize the scriptures in which case memorizing biblical answers sorry yes biblical bible based answers to set questions won't seem too strange and if you've got in your mind the form of words which answers the question well it's very specific and specific instruction is something good to carry with you but yes for depth of appreciative learning ordinarily question and answer is not the

I think the most fruitful way to go so I'm taking your point over though as I say I think that the answer I mean the answer to the question how may I best do this catechizing job it will vary according to the situations in which we find ourselves yes right the back I was wondering where spiritual direction interfaced with this catechism does it or is it a completely other topic well it is a distinct topic I think I'm not sure whether I should be repeating the question for the tape perhaps I should I've been asked whether spiritual direction is part of the scenario that I'm setting up or whether it's a quite different topic as I say I said now

[76 : 12] I think that spiritual direction has to do with living by so living out the basic truth truth that Christians live by but the focus of spiritual direction is what God is doing with the person and that is in the life of the person who's receiving the direction and the skill of a spiritual director is his or her power to discern that of course the Bible comes in as the director asks the questions and makes suggestions as to how to open in your own life fresh doors and windows for God to get through so to speak so there's that connection but in relation to what I've been saying this morning

I think that spiritual direction important as it is is marginal it follows on that is to say in the life in which already you have set yourself to live by the basic truths that Christians do live by and that catechesis enables people to master again it's a both and both the one and the other according to the 16th century reformers who was more who was primarily responsible for catechizing the priest in church of each parish the ministers of the church or the parents of the children in other words were they more interested in reforming religious instruction in the parish or religious instruction in the family religious instruction in the parish was their immediate focus the long-term hope one of the long-term hopes was that religious instruction in the home would grow out of that but you have to start in any task from where you are and the reformers were at a point where in the home the parents didn't know how to instruct the children they all shared the same basic ignorance about the truths of the faith and the way to live by those truths so in

Cranmer's prayer book of course Cranmer couldn't budget for what would happen in subsequent revisions of his prayer book but in Cranmer's prayer book the instruction the guidance for catechizing was given to the priest someone whom it was hoped Cranmer's prayer book could and would influence directly it so that's how we should understand the emphasis on the clergyman in the prayer book directions about catechizing as a matter of fact I should have perhaps made this point when I was talking about the catechism it's only a children's catechism and one of the reformers goals as part of their strategy for

Christianizing England through the ministry of the Church of England was to have an adult catechism which the adults in the family would be taken through in the same way that the children were taken through the eight page effort in the prayer book and as a matter of fact in the 1570s such a catechism for adults was produced by the then Dean of St.

Paul's a man named Alexander Noll it's been reprinted in the last century though it isn't in print now but in its reprinted form it's all done by question and answer but hold onto the back of your seats friends there's about 500 pages of it so I presume the intention always was that it should be used in sections and bit by bit rather than that each member of each congregation should be asked to memorize all the answers that are given in the 500 pages I don't know it fell out of use after a couple of generations and has never been in use since that is since the restoration of 1660 nothing has been heard of no catechism for better or worse the doctrine of the catechism is first class articles type prayer book type bible type reformed evangelical doctrine very good but as [81 : 48] I say it's been set aside and nobody nobody these days even knows about it Bill is standing with a serious look on his face and I know what that means over to you Bill close the meeting and let us go thank you doctor applause please take a■■■■ Baltimore there good ■■■■ heart of this piece of the middle and Sarah