

# Catechizing, and the Prayer Book Catechism

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well now, Happy New Year to everybody, and let us pray. Our Father, we always need the help of your Holy Spirit whenever we come to think and study and learn the things concerning yourself that are set forth in your Word.

And that is our business right now. So, we ask you to send the Spirit. Grant us thereby the sense of being in your presence.

Grant us thereby the sense that Christ is with us to lead us on in discipleship to himself. And grant us wisdom as we think and reflect together, so that we may be wiser Christians at the end of our session than we are now.

We ask all these things further in the name of our Saviour, Jesus. Amen. Amen. And as Bill has already intimated, the title to which I'm speaking is Catechizing and the Prayer Book Catechism. And probably that doesn't give you much idea of what I'm going to talk about, because this is an area of Christian nurture that Christians, evangelical Christians, rarely visit these days.

[ 1 : 53 ] And that's the burden, really, of what I'm going to say to you. But now, let's begin at the beginning. If you look at the English 1662 prayer book, which was lightly revised, of course, to make our Canadian 1962 prayer book, you find seven pages headed rather portentously.

A catechism, that is to say, an instruction to be learned of every person before he be brought to be confirmed by the bishop.

When you get to the end of that seven-page catechism, you find a series of rubrics, you know, rules for management of the matter just presented.

The third of the rubrics refers to the seven pages as this short catechism. short, notice.

And gives instructions as to how the catechism is to be used in the church's life. I should tell you all of this. I'm reading from the 1662 English version, but all of this actually dates, unchanged, from Cranmer's first prayer book in 1549.

[ 3 : 32 ] Cranmer, 1552, and then England, 1662, changed various details of the 1549 prayer book, but not the catechism nor the instructions for using the catechism.

Let me read you now some of the instructions. The curate of every parish, that means in fact the rector or vicar as he'd be called in England, the curate of every parish shall diligently upon Sundays and holy days, after the second lesson at evening prayer, openly in the church instruct and examine as many children of the parish as are sent unto him, as he shall think convenient in some part of this catechism.

The second rule is this. You can tell the date of it from the wording. And all fathers, mothers, masters, and dames shall cause their children, servants and apprentices, that's apprentices learning anything in the home, which have not learned their catechism, to come to the church at the time appointed and obediently to hear and be ordered, set in shape, that means of course, by the curate, until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn.

Use of this catechism for instructing the young was prescribed right from the beginning of the English Reformation.

In 1962, the Canadian revision expanded the seven pages of the English prayer book to twelve by elaborating some of the material in the original catechism and adding to it a supplementary instruction, that's the heading that's used in the text, supplementary instruction issuing in a rule of life.

[ 6 : 12 ] And it may be that you have never read these pages of the prayer book. If you wish to do that after I've finished, well, you find the supplementary instruction straight after the basic catechism on page 552.

What the supplementary instruction does is to take you through the doctrine of the church, the doctrine of the ministry, and the doctrine of the Bible.

And then it ends up with the rule of life. 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, I'll give you the whole thing now I've started, the regularity of his attendance at public worship, especially 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, 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.

Many of us, as you know, think that our prayer book is undervalued. Every time I read through this rule of life, that thought breaks surface in my mind again.

[ 7 : 57 ] Yeah, if we all of us had our noses close to this particular grindstone, well, the Anglican Church of Canada wouldn't be in the state that it's been in for the last 50 years, and a lot of the things that have happened in the Anglican Church of Canada quite recently would never have happened.

This is, in other words, godly, evangelical, basic, central, Christian stuff. And actually, as we're going to see, the whole of the Catechism is like that.

But I'm running ahead of myself. Having said what I've said, I ask you, has the Catechism ever taken a central place in your discipleship for any purpose at all?

Have you ever even read it? And let me test the meeting. How many of you in youth were made to memorize it?

Well, frankly, I didn't expect to see the five hands that I have seen. But now I can proceed with scarcely a beat missed by saying, most of you then have never memorized the Catechism.

[ 9 : 29 ] And many of you, I expect, I won't test the meeting about this, but many of you, I expect, have never been taken through the Catechism in a serious way at all.

You may have zoomed through it, feeling that, oh, well, I ought to have... It's my duty as an Anglican to have read through the prayer book at least once. And you zoom through it the way that you zoom through the visitation of the sick and the burial of the dead.

But you zoom through. You don't treat the Catechism as a basic discipling doctrine here to shape your life.

Because that's what it is. As we saw when I introduced the Catechism, since 1549 it has been required, at least on paper, that children master what's in the Catechism as preparation for confirmation.

I am willing to guarantee, without testing the meeting, that if we checked how many of us were taken through the Catechism in preparation to confirmation, we should arrive with a very slim number, which probably I could count on the fingers of one hand.

[ 11 : 07 ] The Catechism is out of use today. That's the point that I'm making. I, as I said, as I showed, was made to memorize it when I was a kid.

That was a long time ago, of course. And I was in England and being educated at a church school. I didn't have the Catechism explained to me, but I was made to memorize it and publicly repeat it whenever asked.

And I'm not going to complain about that. Having these forms of words in my mind, stuck in my mind, has actually been very helpful, beneficial, something that I'm truly grateful for.

But, it's interesting, when I was prepared for confirmation, the Catechism was set aside and the person preparing me for confirmation did it by general discourse about this and that.

And I have to say, the general discourse went in one ear and out the other. Nothing special there. All right.

[ 12 : 32 ] Now, this document, to be prescribed to be used in the way that we've seen, is called a Catechism and that word itself may be unfamiliar to you, or at least relatively unfamiliar.

You have the general idea in your mind that Catechism has to do with being cross-questioned about things. But, actually, the word is part of a Christian vocabulary which has been out of use, as I said, for quite some time, but which I'd like you to hear me review before we go any further.

The word catechesis, that's a noun which signifies the whole process of catechizing and includes reference to the basic document from which your catechizing will be done.

Catechesis, a catch-all word for this form of ministry, dates from the second century, a hundred years after Christ. And, with it goes the word catechism, the form of words which is used as the basis for the instruction that's given in catechesis.

There's the verb catechize, which refers to the process of teaching in this particular manner. catechist is a noun that signifies the person who does it, the teacher who catechizes others.

[14:30] Catechumen is a word which scholars use, hardly nobody else uses it, I don't think. It's an old word meaning the learner, that is, the person who is being catechized, drilled in Christian basics.

The word catechumenate is another old word rarely used today, signifies the set-up, the school type set-up for giving catechism instruction.

There's an adjective catechetical, which means, well, it's an adjective describing any sort of instruction that has catechetical quality, that is, that takes you thoroughly over the basics.

And then there's the word catechetics, which refers to the study of the art and science of catechesis, just as homiletics refers to the study of preaching, and liturgics, refers to the study of worship.

Well, the fact that there are so many words in this, what shall I call it, this verbal family is a pointer in itself to the fact that once upon a time, catechesis, catechizing catechumens, maintaining catechetical schools, was a big thing in the church.

[16:14] Though, as I said, it's far from being a big thing today. And I'm suggesting to you at this point that there may well be something for us to learn here, something which it will enrich us to think about.

And I hope you're feeling that. I am now going to draw the curtains and talk to you about three things. One, the story of catechesis or catechizing in the past.

Second, the content of the catechism in the prayer book. And thirdly, something that frankly is close to my heart, the need, I'm going to present it to you as a need, the need for catechetical renewal in the present.

And I move directly to my first heading, the story of catechizing in the past. The basic idea here is that we must take seriously Jesus great commission phrased thus, go and make disciples of the nations.

Or if you'd like to reduce that to a verb, go and disciple the nations. Or if you'd like to exegete the word disciples, go and make learners among the nations, go and teach the faith.

[18:01] Because Christianity isn't something that comes to anyone naturally. It has to be taught, and it has to be taught thoroughly.

Satan and cultural forces that he manipulates are always on the go, trying to distort and pervert Christian truth.

Wherever teaching of the faith is going to take place, therefore, you can expect Satan to be in attendance, messing it up if he can.

And so it is very important that the church take catechizing or disciple making seriously, and do it thoroughly, and be constantly on the watch for the perversions and the distortions, or simply the neglect of catechizing that Satan will try to bring in.

And what about children in this? Well, the original notion, of course, go and make disciples of all the nations, applies first and foremost to adults, or actually, more accurately, I should be saying, applies to everybody, not just children.

[19:34] When the church is established, and you can assume that the adults in each congregation already know their faith well, then is the time to focus on the children.

But at the beginning, it was catechizing for everybody, and just anticipating, that's what I'm going to suggest that we need to recover at this present time.

But I haven't got there yet. what I'm saying is that the church, from the start, had a serious mandate from the Lord to go and make disciples.

And the church understood that this meant teaching and clarifying the faith, and that you could expect doctrine to be perverted and distorted again and again and again so that you must constantly be at work, keeping the outline of the faith clear and accurate.

The apostles were teaching doctrine that God had revealed to them, and that doctrine was the standard. They wrote it in their letters and in the Gospels and the book of Revelation also.

[ 21 : 02 ] these documents are all of them catechetical in a way, that is, they are all of them teaching in one form or another basic Christian truth and teaching it truly.

And the church rapidly learned that, yes, the apostles' doctrine must be taken as the standard, must be properly understood, and must be faithfully passed on.

You may remember how Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 1, Be my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that you've heard from me, Paul, among many witnesses, you now must commit to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

In other words, you must guard that doctrine, you must transmit that doctrine, and you must equip the next generation, the folk to whom you're transmitting the doctrine, to become teachers of it in their day.

And so, faithfulness to God's truth must be maintained in the church. church. I remember how good I felt when I was a theological student, and different persons used to come in and lecture us in pastoral subjects.

[ 22 : 39 ] Well, we'd had quite a number of pastoral lectures that I thought were near to nonsense, and then in came a chap who affirmed, I remember this, that in pastoral ministry, there are three priorities.

Priority number one is teach, and priority number two is teach, and priority number three is teach. And I remember I wanted to stand up and cheer, because although I was only a theological student, that point had already registered with me, and that was what I was preparing to do in my own personal ministry.

Well, with the help of the Lord, I've been trying to teach from that day to this, and still am. Teaching is priority number one in the church.

If faithful teaching doesn't go on, well, after a generation, what you have is a clueless laity, and when you've got a clueless laity, you're in for trouble.

Now, in the second century, catechizing developed into a big thing. This was actually the beginning of the first of two cycles in the story of catechism, catechizing in the past.

[ 24 : 11 ] In every church of any size, any church that was worth its salt, there was a set syllabus for catechizing inquirers.

There was a teacher or group of teachers called catechists, and there was a catechetical course which the inquirers would take.

course lasted two or three years. Wow, you say, what was going on? Well, there's no doubt what was going on.

The faith was being made clear at every point in relation to the very different beliefs of the Greco-Roman world around, and in relation, too, to the distortions of the doctrine that Satan and his minions had already brought in.

You can see this actually in the New Testament, where doctrinal troubles are sort of the everyday business of apostles.

[ 25 : 21 ] Well, so it was all over the Christian world. So, there was usually a three year course for inquirers, and if at the end of the three years, they were clear that they wanted to become full scale, fully fashioned Christians, full scale believers, and commit their lives totally to Christ, they were put through a routine, which culminated in their baptism on Easter Eve, the night before resurrection morning.

they would all be baptized as adults. This was a big ritual, actually. It involved ceremonially stripping off their old clothes, going into the water, and yes, by then it was baptism by immersion under ordinary circumstances.

Then they'd come out of the water, and they would be re clothed in white. They would spend the night, because remember this is Easter Eve, they would spend the night with others from the church, praising, praying, singing, and preparing for communion, meeting at the Lord's table, on Easter morning, Resurrection Day.

Big deal. And that was standard practice, as I said, all through the second century and the third.

The subject, or the substance, I better say, of the course, the three-year course that they were taken through, in positive terms, was essentially the doctrine of our Apostles' Creed, which in those days was referred to as the rule of faith, plus the commandments, plus the Lord's Prayer as a

pattern for praying, plus teaching on the significance of the baptismal covenant, the baptismal commitment to be Christ's forever, and Christ's totally.

But, alas, catechesis of this kind dropped from the pattern of Christian discipling. the drop started at the end of the fourth and in the fifth centuries.

[ 27 : 54 ] What had happened? Well, two things, really. Christianity had become the most favoured religion in the Roman Empire, and the clergy, I regret to say, had become lazy.

So, that hard work making disciples out of inquiries was no longer exerted in the way that hard work had been put into discipling in earlier times.

And it was taken for granted that, well, everybody would come to church because Christianity is our faith. faith. And so, you got, in fact, formalism without knowledge, people going through the motions of public worship every Sunday, not really understanding what was going on, and nobody was bothering.

That was the sad story. The church, as part of Western culture, went into what are called the dark ages, when all forms of education were at a discount.

and the pattern of the Western church became a pattern of ignorant formalism, and that's how it was at grassroots level until the Reformation.

[ 29 : 19 ] Oh, yes, the bright spots were the monasteries, the universities, but that was all. Ordinary grassroots Christians rolled up to church on Sunday, something went on in Latin, in the choir, what we call the choir, the chancel of the church.

Ordinary people didn't know what was going on and bother. The important thing, they were told, was that they should be there. So that's how it was. So that is the first cycle of catechizing being first developed and then dropped.

catechizing, of course, I'm referring to both adult Christian education and the nurture of children in the faith.

Yes, bishops used to lay hands on children and confirm them as adult communicant members, but it was just a formality. nothing significant in the way of instruction went with it.

Standards were low in those days. But now came the second cycle of catechizing history.

Catechizing was renewed for Christian education in the 16th and 17th centuries through the Reformation.

[ 30 : 51 ] It was one of the very big concerns of all the reformers everywhere. to set up, as far as possible, family evangelism by catechetical instruction for both the adults and the children in the church, the churches.

Luther here was the, as in most things, actually, that the 16th century Reformation brought forth.

Luther was the pioneer. Luther wrote two catechisms, the small catechism for children and the large catechism for adults.

Luther himself was a catechist and in the castle church at Wittenberg, which was the church in which he was pastor, he catechized regularly.

In Calvin's Geneva, there were catechisms going. it's interesting now, Luther picked up the pattern which was becoming standard in schools in the 16th century, the pattern of question and answer.

People are expected, children in particular, expected to memorize an answer to questions and be willing to give it when the question is asked, and then to be asked, now do you understand that?

[ 32 : 16 ] That was the pattern of catechizing children that Luther followed, and clearly in England, Cranmer wanted it to be just the same. So if you read the Prevo catechism, you find that it's set out in question and answer form, and the catechist is really prodding the child being catechized half the time, prodding them by asking in different ways, now do you understand that?

And so it was expected to be, that was what the minister would be doing with the children in catechism class after the second lesson at evening prayer, making sure not simply that they could repeat set forms of words, but also that they understood what it all meant.

And this was being done in the presence of the adult congregation. The adult congregation were there partly to note and follow the minister's doing of his job, and partly because it was the children of the number of the people in the congregation who were being catechized.

so it was very much a family business, very much a congregational business, very thoroughly integrated into congregational life.

and in the 17th century, well, this was developed. Indeed, before the end of the 16th century, it was like a flower opening, blossom is sprouting.

[ 34 : 10 ] In England, alongside the short catechism, remember that's what the prayer book itself calls its catechism, alongside the short catechism.

There was a catechism, just called that, written by the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, Alexander Noel, in print, that comes to nearly 500 pages of question and answer, but it's an adult catechism. It's a full resource for ministers educating lay folk in their congregation. It's to be compared with the catechism of the Catholic Church, which was produced, I don't know, 10, 15 years ago.

That, too, is a resource for ministers, giving them all the material that's expected that they will need in order to make good, competent Christians out of their congregations.

And in the catechism of the Catholic Church, if I remember rightly, there are about 600 pages. Well, Noel wrote all his catechism in terms of question and answer, which makes everything very clear.

[ 35 : 30 ] But, of course, when you're catechizing adults, the value of mechanical repetition is minimal, and what you really want to do, as soon as you can, is to make sure that you've engaged the minds of the people you're talking to.

And you can only do that by question and answer of the discussion type. Well, I'm just telling you that because Noel, as I said, did write in question and answer terms, though the expectation was that the use of his catechism wouldn't be limited to mechanical repetition.

And in the 17th century, middle of the 17th century, the Westminster Assembly produced a shorter catechism, basic stuff for children, and a larger catechism, a distinct document, which is there for the catechizing of adults.

And do you know the name of Richard Baxter? Richard Baxter, great Puritan pastor, for whom I carry the torch, rather. I've made Baxter a particular study of mine all through the years.

Richard Baxter, who did a wonderful job virtually converting the town of Kidderminster in the centre of England, Richard Baxter developed the catechizing of families as a regular pastoral routine.

[ 37 : 08 ] Now, he was able to do this because all the families were at home every day of the week. Kidderminster was a weaving town, but the weaving took the form of cottage industry.

You would have a loom in the back room of your house, and all the members of the family would take turns working the loom, you see. They would all weave material, and then the material would, in due course, be sold to the middleman, the traders, who would sell it around and about, as they had resources for that.

But it meant that Baxter was able to give families appointment times to meet with him all through the day, from eight in the morning till eight in the evening.

And he did. And he would deal with family after family, one hour at a time. He wrote a book in which he describes in detail how he did it.

The family would come as a family. He would start by catechizing the children for a few minutes. Then he would send the children out of the room and start in on the parents and grandparents, the adult members of the family.

[ 38 : 38 ] And for the last ten minutes or so of his pastoral hour, he would exhort the adults of the family to take to heart, to live by, and to raise the children in the bit of the faith of Christ that they'd be dealing with.

And he celebrates this practice. He says that it made a tremendous difference to his ministry. It meant that families, as families, were becoming believing families, knowledgeable families, competent Christian families.

And a sentence of his pops into my mind even as I say this. I find that we never took the rightest method to pull down the kingdom of Satan until now.

And the rightest method is the method of family catechizing. Well, of course, you couldn't do it quite that way today because people are not at home all day.

But grasp the principle, friends. Baxter was silenced for the last 30 years of his life. He wasn't able to pastor a church regularly.

[ 40 : 01 ] But that didn't stop him writing. And he wrote two catechetical texts for use when it was possible to use them.

The Catechizing of Families is the name of one. And that's a text written to guide dad, the head of the home, in catechizing everybody in the family.

And then he wrote the mother's catechism, which is a guide to mothers who would have the major part in discipling the children when they were under five or six years old.

Well, catechizing as an activity, you see, was in the ascendant in the 16th and 17th centuries, but then it too went downhill.

Catechizing, having been renewed for Christian educational purposes, was removed from Christian education, at least at the theoretical level, about 1900, three factors operated together for its removal.

[ 41 : 21 ] 1900, the liberal version of Christianity was beginning to feel its oats and throw its weight around. That was true in all the countries of the Protestant world, Europe, Britain, North America.

And here are the three factors that came together as part of the liberal program or perspective, whatever you want to call it. The concept of the child as a bud that blossoms into a flower through discovery.

and the learning process at school for children at all ages of education, the learning process, not as a matter of memorizing and repeating and ingesting the wisdom of one's forebears and ancestors, and the learning process is a matter of exploring things for yourself, working things out for yourself, finding your own way.

learning. And then the third factor that operated was liberal theology itself, which supported this understanding of children and learning, and which distorted the gospel, as we all of us know, in grievous ways.

Liberal revisionism, call it that, queried all the basics of the faith, and challenged the historic understanding of Christian truth, on which all previous prescriptions for catechism and catechizing had been based.

[ 43 : 26 ] So, it was a question now whether catechizing could have any future, and we live at the beginning of the 21st century, and we are able to testify that for the last half century or more, in our Anglican Church and in other Protestant churches, come to that, catechism has not had any future.

Catechism has been marginalized, systematic teaching of the faith simply hasn't happened, and so, I used that brutal phrase earlier, a clueless laity.

Clueless laity, I feel, is what unhappily we've got in too many places. And if you try in the modern Protestant world to teach the faith systematically, people look askance at you and think that you are very rigid, and very much blinkered, and, or, do you say blinkered or do you say blindered?

Anyway, your vision is very limited, and people who are exposed to what you're trying to teach them will end up very narrow, and as human beings they will be very second class.

I kid you not, you know perfectly well that this is the atmosphere that we breathe today in the world of the Protestant churches.

[ 45 : 11 ] Well, time is beating me as it so often does. I'm arguing that there's need to bring catechism back. very quickly now let me remind you of the contents of the catechism and the prebuk.

In Canada 1962, the five divisions of the catechism are neatly labeled, so that you know exactly what is being focused on in each.

The baptismal covenant is the first division, where the point is made that the children being baptized, still the children's covenant you see at this point, children being baptized have already been committed to become Christians and live through Christ, for Christ, to the glory of God.

They were committed to that when they were baptized. Infant baptism, well it's been disputed as you know in Christendom for many centuries, but the Anglican idea has always been that God gathers his church by families, the family is a unit, a spiritual unit with solidarity, and the appropriate thing for the children of the Christian parents is that they be baptized into the faith of their fathers in the confidence that as the parents labor with the help of others from the church to nurture the children in Christian faith, they will in fact grow into it and by confirmation time embrace it personally so that it will be theirs for the rest of the life.

you can argue about that, but that's the Anglican view and has been ever since the Reformation, and the baptismal covenant at the beginning of the catechism parades that.

[ 47 : 25 ] You know, godfathers and godmothers made promises in the child's name, which the child is now, to take on him or herself. that leads to a survey of the Christian faith through the learning of the Apostles' Creed, coming to understand it.

That's followed by a survey of Christian obedience taught through the Ten Commandments, which are there to be memorized and then applied.

praying, too, is basic to Christian practice, so the fourth division of the catechism has to do with praying, and you are taught the Lord's Prayer and what it is committing you to every time you use it. And then finally, there's a section on the sacraments, a section that is to say, on the significance of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the economy of God's grace.

I would like to go over these five sections in detail, but I can't do it because time has gone. Maybe I'll do it another time, another day.

[ 48 : 48 ] And then in the Canadian Prayer Book, as I said, there's a supplementary instruction which expounds the sense in which the Church, as the Creed says, is one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic.

And then there's a section on ministers which explains what, after the apostles were distinct, bishops, priests, and deacons are in the Church to do.

And then there's a section on the Bible and why it should be read. And then there's the section on lay vocation and the rule of life, which I read to you right at the beginning.

What this supplementary instruction does is to expand the catechism so that it becomes a good tool for drilling adults in Christianity as well as for drilling children in Christianity.

And that, it seems to me, is a step in the right direction. What isn't in it, and here I speak as the evangelical that I am, what isn't in it is any focus on the Church's mission religion and the witness which Christians are called to bear.

[ 50 : 24 ] Granted, in the rule of life, the believer is told to make a resolution about the witness that he or she is going to bear as an individual, but I wish that there was something in the catechism about the Church as the mission community, you know, all of us sent by Christ together for the great corporate enterprise of evangelizing the world and founding churches everywhere.

But it isn't there. All right. I just thought I would mention it. And now, time has come for me to close, and I'm able to close, on my third point, about which I can be brief, the need for catechetical renewal in the present.

This, I hope, has become clear to you as I've spoken, so I don't need to go over it again in detail.

When lay folk are clueless, they need to be clued up.

When folk are out of shape, as those who don't know their Christian truth as they should, are bound to be out of shape, more or less, they need to be brought into shape.

Yes, that's a no-brainer. And the idea which is, interestingly, spread amongst English-speaking Anglicans all over the world, the idea, namely, that after confirmation, Anglicans, unlike free church men, don't need to learn anything.

[ 52 : 11 ] you don't have classes that Anglicans are expected to attend after confirmation is over. There'll always be people in the congregation who have an interest in theology and so forth.

They can pursue that interest as individuals, but for the church to continue as a learning church, oh no, we Anglicans don't do that, because by the time we're confirmed we know everything we need to know for a life of discipleship.

Well, of course, that's poppycock, but that's a mindset which, again, I kid you not, and you know perfectly well, many Anglicans embrace, and they take it rather as offensive if you suggest to them that they need to learn anything.

Okay, that's where we have to start. It seems to me that what we're up against here is something like the junk food problem in the world of diet and health.

You know what junk food is. It comes easy, it makes you feel full before you've had very much of it, but as nourishment, it's substandard, and what happens is that you end up out of shape, you can end up obese if you have too much junk food, and you simply don't have the physical bounce and zing and virility, which a good diet, a proper diet, would help to give you.

[ 54 : 00 ] food. Well, I have the feeling that in our congregations there's been too much junk food. In most churches, something has been happening during the week.

I mean, there have been some sort of group activities, but they haven't all of them been group activities that have built people up in their holy faith. things. And without going into details or declaring a program or announcing a manifesto or anything, I want to put it to you that this is a point at which there is slack to be taken up, and the whole church needs that something be done.

There are actually experiments in recovery going on. As far as I can make out, nobody engaged in these experiments, appreciates that what they're doing is beginning, just beginning, to revive the catechumenate.

But John Stott, the great John Stott of All Souls, Langham Place, London, as soon as he became rector of the church, instituted a quarterly program, that is a program which ran, was constantly running, and it ran four times a year, grounding inquirers in the very basic Christian basics.

And out of that program, by various stages, came the program that we are more familiar with in St. John's called Exploring Christianity, which they still run regularly at All Souls, Langham Place, and which is managed, insofar as anybody manages it centrally, from All Souls.

[ 55 : 59 ] and then others have caught the idea, there was an introductory course produced at St. Helen's Bishopsgate in London by the great, what's his name, Lucas, Dick Lucas.

I say great, he did a magnificent job, Dick Lucas. their program was called, rather smart, rather shrewdly, Read, Mark, Learn.

And the Gospel of Mark was the central text. And what the lessons got out of the Gospel of Mark was the whole of the Gospel, which is there in the teaching that Mark's Gospel gives, the whole of the Gospel message, and the whole message, well, the key elements of the message about the Christian life.

And then the Alpha course, which has become an international success, as you know, based on Holy Trinity Church Brompton in London, England, the Alpha course also is a basic discipling course.

And if properly followed up, it too is the beginning of the renewal of the catechetical process, which the Church needs.

[ 57 : 28 ] But it seems to me important that I should say as I close, you can't stop, or you shouldn't stop, with an introductory course to Christian discipleship, discipleship, lasting, perhaps, for 10 or 12 weeks.

Christian education, the catechetical process, catechizing, whatever you want to call it, and you don't have to use these words if you'd rather not, but that process needs to be an all-age thing, just as it was in the second and third centuries.

You catechize the children, and you catechize their parents, too. You are educating the whole Church, and you never stop.

This is something distinct from, something that would operate alongside Bible study, in all the many forms that Bible study takes.

When you're studying the Bible, you're not learning and focusing doctrine in the way that you are in catechetical courses, just as in catechetical courses you're not focusing books of the Bible in the way that you do in Bible study.

[ 58 : 56 ] It needs to be a both and. Well, this is a torch that I'm carrying at the moment, friends. I'm engaged with another guy in composing a book which will say these things at length, and I've been grateful for the opportunity to try these thoughts out on you.

As usual, I'm about five minutes over time, so abruptly I stop and invite you to react to what I've said and comment any way you like.

I would like to know very seriously what you think of the things that I've been saying. So, over to you. Anyway, please, yes. In the traditional delivery of the catechism, with the emphasis on the rule of life and tantrum, and other things to do with Christian behavior, was there the implication of the doctrine of works righteousness, in other words, the idea that I am a Christian because of what I do. Is that really why it hasn't worked very well? I don't think so, Phil, because the second cycle of catechesis in the church, the Reformation, 16th, 17th century cycle, was very clear on the fact that that isn't the role of works, that we work for the glory of God, because through faith, by his grace, we are Christians, in Christ, and this is living out the new life.

It's perfectly true that in any context where the faith isn't taught that way, the knowledge of the free grace of God saving us sinners is going to be lost, and then Satan will see to it that works righteousness does come in.

[ 61 : 01 ] Works righteousness, after all, is the natural religion of the fallen human race. We do something and thereby commend ourselves to God. And the way to keep it at bay, in any circle where catechesis is attempted, is to make sure that the, how can I say, the theme of the free grace of God in Jesus Christ is constantly highlighted and kept centered.

I think that's the answer. If you're thinking, as you may well be, that surely from the middle of this century onwards, I've been meeting Anglicans who are practicing works righteousness.

Well, I'm sure that they're there, but they're practicing works righteousness for want of being taught the gospel. That's been the problem. Okay, Bill.

G.K. Chesterton made the complaint that he was being given answers to questions he wasn't asking. And I think that that dynamic is so important in the process of regeneration that the mind and the heart of anyone in the process of Christian education who is not regenerated needs to be nurtured.

Not to be given all the answers, to be given mysteries maybe, given the questions, and for their minds to be asking the questions that the Holy Spirit can begin to answer for this through Scripture.

[ 62 : 53 ] So is there a weakness in the catechism that way, where we're giving answers to questions that we're not asking? the text of the prayer book catechism in both its 1549 and its Canadian 1962 version is, I think, that everything is expressed in formula terms for memorizing and then repeating, and this personal dimension whereby you recognize what is being taught as the answer to questions you are asking, that isn't touched at all, so that lots of people who have taught the catechism after fashion, I'm quite sure, have never really labored to see that the people that they're instructing do understand that without

Christ they're lost sinners and in Christ they're new creatures and Christianity is a totally new life involving at every point a break with and a reversal of the life you were living before.

The catechist, I mean the person who's doing the teaching, is the person who must try and bring that home and well there are teachers and there are teachers.

Not everyone who has evangelical convictions is able to get people to ask the questions to which the gospel is the answer. That is a sad fact part of the ideal of catechism is that the catechist is going to get people asking those questions.

I can't say more than that. If the suspicion is that catechizing isn't a game worth the candle just because the people being catechized don't always appreciate that these are the answers to the questions they ought to be asking, well I think that would be a mistake.

[ 65 : 26 ] The thing to do is to try and find a way of ensuring that they all appreciate the depth of their need. That has to do I think with the way that the ministry is maintained and the Bible is taught in the congregation as a congregation.

If you think of St. John's, well a good deal is said and regularly said as you know in St.

John's sermons about our lostness without Christ. We are sinners and without him we have no hope. Alright, that's the way we teach at St.

John's. In some Anglican churches that emphasis is not made in the same way. And then if you talk to Anglicans in terms of the questions that we all of us need to be asking about what must I do to be saved, well the very attempt meets with sales resistance.

What do you mean? Saved? I'm saved already, aren't I? I'm an insider. I go to church regularly. Da-da-da-da-da-da. I won't take it further but that's how I see the pastoral problem there.

[ 66 : 54 ] I would assume you gave us an example of something that is missing on the campus, namely the corporate evangelism of the church.

I perceive that the biggest problem is the length of the catechisms that I'm aware of, even the small catechisms, and the difficulty of achieving unanimity on such long statements of catechisms.

It seems to be a problem. Well, as I told you, I'm not announcing a manifesto, and I'm not affirming that the way to renew catechesis is to beat the drum with regard to the prayerful catechism.

I think we do need new forms of words, actually, and I don't think that simple question and answer is the most appropriate way to commend the basics of catechizing activity.

I think the sort of directions that need to be given to the catechist, they would have to be formulated in a way that the prayer book doesn't begin to do.

[ 68 : 22 ] And such forms of words as are given in the catechetical forms that are offered, they would have to be forms of words which center on the gospel but are sparing in the language.

I mean, they don't say too much. What they say should stimulate people to ask questions. what they say should be a launch pad for the catechist to develop a thought.

In other words, the emphasis needs to be on the qualities of the catechist and the nature of the catechist's job rather than on the primacy of magic words.

If you see what I mean. In some of the younger Anglican churches in Africa, there are orders of catechists.

And in those churches where evangelical faith is the norm, I have reason to think that the catechists understand their business.

[ 69 : 41 ] They're actually educational evangelists. And there it seems to me you have a clue, *mutatis mutandis*, you know, with local adaptation, all that, a clue to the kind of thing that we need to be developing in faithful congregations in North America and back in Britain.

But that's taking me and taking us all actually into a field where a lot of, what shall I call it, a lot of fundamental discussion is needed before one can discern how best to do the job.

A brief answer isn't sufficient. Two hands went up together, Betty in front and then the lady behind. I went to, I used to go to church Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoons we went to catechism class.

You did? Yes. I mean, it was a nice way for parents to rest in the afternoon. But what I was wondering, is there an age limit or a starting age when they start the catechism classes?

Because I think back, and I think I wasn't allowed to be confirmed until I was 12. So I must have been taking catechism classes prior to that.

[ 71 : 11 ] Well, nothing authoritative has ever been said on this. I would think myself that you can start a catechetical type of teaching at age six or seven, something like that.

I am not an advocate of confirming them young. I think it's much more fruitful, these days anyway, to withhold confirmation, really, until people are in their late teens and they know what they're doing. and what I would like to see every time that candidates are sent by a church to a bishop for confirmation is that after their confirmation they come back to their own congregation and there's a party of welcome for them and at the party each of them gives a brief testimony to the reality of their faith.

the minister should only offer for confirmation the people who he knows are real believers and can give such a testimony.

But that's a fancy of mine which I've never seen played out in any particular church and of course I'm not a rector so all I can do is make grunting noises from the wings.

[ 72 : 50 ] But yes, that's my thought for what it's worth. Right behind Betty, yes. I was just, I'm like Betty, I do not have an anglican background but I found your explanation of the Book of Common Prayer has been very helpful to me even in terms of communion and the Anglican service and that it makes it a much richer experience as I understand more and more of it.

but I was also thinking or would like to comment, commend the Jerusalem Declaration that was written after Gathcon that as you know you and David Short and other people wrote that in a lot of ways after all the confusion and turmoil I found that document very helpful.

Here we stand, this is where we stand. It's kind of a, again, it's almost like a 19th read, it's an affirmation again of what we believe and here we stand. You know, so if anybody hasn't read that or hasn't, I need to go back and reread it many times but it's on the St. John's website called the Jerusalem Declaration that came out after, it was written last year after Gathcon.

I would commend that to people. I think it's a great document. Those are good words and I think on which to finish. Shall we finish now? Oh, sorry.

You've written a very good book on the Cree and the 10th Amendment and that sort of thing. Oh. Well, this, what could one say?

[ 74 : 25 ] Thought is free and one may think of the works. Thank you, anyway. 20 minutes after, we might throw the curtains for another week and it's lit up.

So, thank you. Thank you.