

# More on Anglicans & Roman Catholics

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Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning, everyone. Let's pray. Father, we know that the Church is right at the centre of your plan for this world.

We know that the hope of glory is set before the Church, and we know that it is a glorious privilege to be part of the Church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, inserted, as we all are, into Christ and his risen life, in fellowship with each other because we are in fellowship with him, and charged with all other Christians to keep that glorious hope ever before us and make it our business in life to move forward towards it.

So, Father, as units in the body of Christ, as part of the glorious Church, we pray for the help of your Holy Spirit to give us good judgment in all the matters that we shall be thinking about now, so that your purpose for the Church may be discerned and our service of you in the Church may be advanced.

Grant it further, we pray, for the sake of the head of the Church, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. Now, friends, last time that I spoke to you on the subject of Anglicans and Roman Catholics together, at least facing each other and exploring the possibilities of relationship, I omitted to show you a couple of books that I meant to show you and are beginning this morning by showing them before we go any further.

I'm pretty sure that I never showed you my copy of the documents of Vatican II, the Council which took place in the 1960s and which produced a little over 100,000 words of teaching from the assembled bishops and the material now fills with 700 pages of this fairly small print paperback.

[ 3 : 0 0 ]     And again, I failed to do what I meant to do, introduce you, that is, to the best book, Mapping the Differences Between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, Agreements and Differences, by Norman Geisler and Ralph McKenzie.

They're the authors. The book's about 10 years old, but I hope it's kept in print because it is far and away the best book, both for doctrinal precision and for calm charity of presentation, that you will find on the differences, the official differences at any rate, between Roman Catholicism, as an ism, you see, self-defined, and, well, Evangelical Protestantism and its various forms, which is the angle from which Geisler and McKenzie are writing.

I too, of course, dare I say of course, think of myself as some sort of an evangelical and, I hope and thought, worthy to bear that description, but I also think of myself as an Anglican and not all evangelicals, of course, can follow me at that point.

But today... Yes, joke over. Today, I think that just about everything that I shall say should ring the bell with evangelicals as such, even though it is as an Anglican that I set myself to speak and it's from the standpoint of a serious Anglican, which I try to be, that I present to you all the things that I am going to present.

And first, let me fill in, as I never did two weeks ago, in an explicit way, although I suppose this was implicit in all that I was saying, but let me fill in an explicit way the Anglican angle on Roman Catholicism, as it has been ever since the 16th century, the century of the Reformation, when the Church of England defined itself and the foundations of the Anglicanism, of which we're part today, were laid.

[ 5 : 52 ] When Luther began his ministry of corrective protest against the papal system, as he described it, he was in the habit of saying that the Roman Catholic communion is quite simply the false Church.

He made much of the contrast between the true, that is, the real Church, the Church that God acknowledges and blesses, and the false Church, that is, the system or organisation that claims to be the Church, as the Roman communion, of course, did and does.

But, said Luther, it's a false Church, that is, it's phony. It isn't the real thing. Well, there are still in the world folk, some of whom call themselves evangelicals, who adopt that position and who would say about the Roman Catholic communion that it isn't a Church at all.

And perhaps you've met some of them and perhaps you've learned to be cautious in conversation with them. They are likely to regard you as a bit of a compromiser if you don't echo that blanket condemnation, if you don't join them in saying, well, it claims to be a Church but it isn't one and that's the end of the matter.

But, ever since the latter half of the 16th century, Anglicans have been articulate in saying, no, it isn't quite like that.

[ 7 : 57 ] I don't know whether you know the name of Richard Hooker who was, and indeed remains, a classic Anglican exponent, exponent I mean of Anglicanism, in the second half of the 16th century.

Richard Hooker produced the way of looking at Roman Catholicism which Anglicans have embraced from that date of this.

It is, I think, something which one can describe as a characteristic Anglican viewpoint. The globe, said Hooker, is covered with water and there are land masses in the water.

The water is the ocean and the geography created by the land masses is a series of seas, S-E-A-S.

In England it's the Irish Sea on the west side of the country and the North Sea on the east side and so on.

[ 9 : 15 ] Well, though, said Hooker, the Church of God is like that. There is one Church, it's the fellowship of all those who are in Christ.

In Christ by faith, in Christ through the Holy Spirit who links us to Christ, but the seas, that is, the different churches, church communions within the total reality of the church, they vary one from another in purity.

Some are polluted. It's a very modern image, actually. Some seas are polluted in a way that others aren't.

And Hooker continues, the Roman Catholic Church is a very large sea, but it is somewhat polluted and it does need reforming.

However, you shouldn't deny for one moment that it is a part of the church, any more than you should deny that a particular sea is part of the worldwide ocean.

[ 10 : 37 ] I think it's a very good image, I mean a very true and helpful image to have in your mind.

And if you have it in your mind, well, what you will say about Roman Catholicism is the Anglican thing. Namely, this is a church that retains some disorders and needs, therefore, some reform at points where the Anglican fellowship has already discerned the need for reform and taken the appropriate steps.

And that is my perspective, friends, as I talk about Anglicans and Roman Catholics, the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church. And you will remember perhaps that two weeks ago I filled in what seemed to me to be the basic specifics of faith that is out of shape and needs to be reformed on the Roman Catholic side of the fence.

I mapped scheduling to start with the Roman Catholic view of the nature of the church. It is a ministerial structure.

That's the Catholic view. It derives from Christ and his apostles and the structure is maintained through the apostolic succession.

[ 12 : 28 ] that is the transmitting from one who has it, a bishop, to other bishops and presbyters who receive it from the one who has it.

They receive it in ordination, consecration. the apostolic succession is the commission from Christ primarily to minister the sacraments because on the Roman view it's the sacraments that are the prime channels of saving grace, saving power of the Holy Spirit.

But with the ministry of the sacraments of course goes the ministry of the word, the Catholic way of thinking always puts it that way round.

It's the ministry of the sacraments and the word rather than, as we evangelicals would put it, the ministry of the word and sacraments. And our reason for that order is clear.

We think that the sacraments are visible words. That is, they are the promises of God presented to eye gate, presented that is, in the form of rituals whose meaning is the gospel meaning of new life in Christ.

[ 13 : 59 ] Baptism, yes, a cleansing from the guilt of sin and new birth in Christ and the Lord's Supper, continuance in the fellowship of Christ which is life, spiritual life, flowing to us via the cross from beginning to end.

church. But now, back to the Roman position, the apostolic succession structure is the structure to which layfolk, like us, are invited to come and link ourselves with it, receive the benefit of the sacraments and so become the, how shall I say it, the flesh on the bones of the church.

See what I mean? The bones are the ministerial structure, the flesh is folk like us. Well, Anglicans, as I said, don't believe in the church that way.

We're like all other evangelicals. We believe that the church is the body of Christ, the church is the company of believers, renewed by the Holy Spirit and now in fellowship with Christ and sharing the risen life of Christ.

And you can see the difference and the fact that there is something that needs to change at that point before the two points of view can get together.

[ 15 : 45 ] And then we notice that infallibility as a gift of Christ to the church has been added on the Roman Catholic side of the fence to the idea of what the church is.

And the organs of infallibility, remember, are councils of bishops on one hand and utterances by the Pope in his character as the doctrinal teacher of Christendom on the other hand.

The Holy Spirit guarantees that infallible utterances in the church really do have the quality of not needing to, not needing to be corrected and not being open to correction.

They can be supplemented but they can't be retracted. the doctrine actually of the Pope's position as the doctrinal teacher of Christendom is one of the infallible things that has been infallibly proclaimed.

And it's comic in a way because it was proclaimed by the Pope himself in 1870 at the First Vatican Council.

[ 17 : 11 ] And it is, you can't help smiling at it. The Pope said, this is the faith of the Church, this is the teaching of God, I am infallible.

He didn't add the words so there, but you can see you can see that in the situation, those are the words which naturally spring to mind.

Well, anyway, the Church is infallible so it's not subject to correction in these basic respects in which it deviates from the evangelical understanding.

Well, we talked about that, then we talked about the substance of the Gospel and I said that though in recent years, that means in the second half of the 20th century, through heroic endeavours on both sides, consensus statements on justification by faith have actually been produced.

I told you I think that the group with which I'm associated, evangelicals and Catholics together, produced one of those statements. and an official one was produced between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Lutheran Federation and theologians have produced their individual statements and so far these statements get it right.

[ 18 : 47 ] That is to say they make the point which Anglican Article 11 was making back in the 16th century that we are justified, that is forgiven and accepted by God for Jesus Christ's sake on the ground of his sin bearing on the cross and the merit of his lifelong obedience right up to death to his father.

we are made righteous for his sake. His righteousness that is to say is imputed to us in the sense that we get the benefit of what he's done.

Although we have no merit of our own only demerit. And Luther had a phrase for it. The Christian he says is, he said it in Latin, simul at the same time, justus, that's just, justified by God, et peccator, and a sinner.

That's spiritual realism, isn't it? We are sinners, none of us dares claim perfection or merit, but we are confident of our acceptance with God and the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus' sake.

God. Well, as I said, consensus statements on that have been produced and I think, I can honestly say, they are pretty impressive.

[ 20 : 29 ] The problem is that in the Roman Catholic teaching, justification to start with has been differently defined by councils, particularly the Council of Trent in the 1540s, the Council of Trent said justification is a word that covers both what Protestants call justification, that is, the gift of a new status, and what Protestants call sanctification, that is, the transformation into a new moral and spiritual state.

transformation that is, into the image of Christ. Transformation into, increasingly into, a life which is all love, all righteousness, all praise, and all service.

Transformation, in other words, moving towards perfection of character in the image of the Saviour. We never get there, not in the full distance, in this world, but we are constantly moving towards it.

Now, all of that, said the Council of Trent, is embraced in the doctrine of justification. And, now here come the problems, in connection with this transformation process, that begins with the forgiveness of our sins and goes on to the sanctifying of our nature.

There are two specific realities of which one should take account. One is that the process is finished off in purgatory.

[ 22 : 30 ] Now, the 39 articles explicitly reject the doctrine of purgatory because there is no scriptural basis for it. You know, I expect what the idea is.

After death, before we come into the direct holy presence of God, we are put through a process of discipline.

Now, it's been differently defined by different Roman theologians, actually. Some say the essence of the discipline is that we are working off the temporal punishment still due to us for our sins, of which the eternal punishment has already been forgiven.

And others say, no, the essence of purgatory is that we are being put through a disciplinary process of repentance and inner cleansing, whereby the transforming of our nature into the image of Christ is completed.

In other words, they say, as the other Roman Catholic theologians didn't, purgatory is not about the completing of justification, but it's about the completing of sanctification.

[ 23 : 52 ] Well, whatever they say, and both options are there in the Roman Catholic theological tradition, but whatever they say, you can see that what is being affirmed in substance is that, after all, at the end of the day, we have to go through something, endure something, supply something, which isn't supplied directly by the cross of Christ.

In other words, the idea of merit seems to be creeping back in through the doctrine of purgatory. And then again, Rome, from the Middle Ages onwards, has maintained the doctrine of indulgences.

If you know the history of the 16th century Reformation, you'll know that really what sent Luther going was the fact that a particularly outrageous indulgence was being peddled by a particularly outrageous peddler, a man named Tetzel, who was offering for money a document actually, a role, a statement, which you bought, and which declared you free of the obligation to spend time in purgatory after death.

You buy, in other words, your remission from the purgatorial discipline. And you could buy this same remission for your relatives, your ancestors, purgatory now, thought was that you see that people spend thousands of years in purgatory before they get to heaven.

Well, said Tetzel, you can buy this indulgence for your relatives and friends who are in purgatory now, and behold, the moment you buy the indulgence in their name, they are set free from purgatory.

[ 26 : 10 ] whatever purgatory was supposed to do for them is done on the instant. And whoo, they go straight to heaven. And wouldn't that be a lovely thing to contemplate if you love your aunts and uncles and grandparents and so on and so on.

Well, you can imagine how it went. The indulgences were being sold, I may say, by Tetzel to raise money for the building of St.

Peter's Cathedral in Rome. St. Peter's Cathedral is still there, and a thought that at least should flicker through the minds of Protestant visitors is this cathedral was built on indulgence money, because in fact it was.

But anyway, you ask where the magic power of indulgences comes from, and the Catholic answer was, and remains, because the indulgences are still going quite strong in, what shall I say, in the backwoods of the Roman Catholic communion, in Ireland, in Spain.

People buy indulgences, regular trade, and the same is true in Latin America. again, I ask, where does the magic come from?

[ 27 : 41 ] Answer, it comes from the treasury of the merits of the saints. The thought is that the saints did so, the saints, you know, are the specially holy people who get the abbreviation ST full stop in front of their names after their death.

And the thought was that the saints do so well in the way of obedience and service of God that they gain extra merit that they don't themselves, that they didn't themselves need for their own acceptance with God.

that extra merit goes into the treasury, it's their word, so I use it, into the treasury where it's stored, and then passed out through these certificates of indulgence to sinners who need it.

And, sorry, and in this case, other sinners known to the sinners who needed it, on whose behalf the sinners who needed it by further indulgences.

Well, with purgatory and indulgences still going strong amongst Roman Catholics, the question as to whether the church has yet thoroughly committed itself to the principle of justification by faith remains in doubt, you can see that, because the intrusion of the idea of merit in the doctrine of purgatory and the doctrine of indulgences raises that question.

[ 29 : 26 ] Can you see that? And then, so, on the substance of the gospel, it's not quite clear that Rome is there yet, if you see what I mean.

We looked at the doctrine of the sacraments, if I remember rightly. the Roman church is committed to the idea that the Holy Communion, the Mass, is essentially a sacrifice, a sacrifice to God, rather than a right of thanksgiving for the one sacrifice for sins forever, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Christ. And the further thought in historic Roman teaching, which has been defined, and of course when things are defined, they can't be corrected, they're infallible, they stand, the part of the idea is that what is sacrificed in the Mass by the priest is the body and blood of Christ, and the bread and the wine, which are used in the service, are transubstantiated, you will know that word, I'm sure, change that is in their inner nature, transubstantiated to become the body and blood of Christ.

They don't look any different, but they are different. Under the surface, so to speak, the bread and the wine are precisely Christ's body and blood.

Well, that, so evangelicals believe, is not the Lord's Supper according to Scripture. And then when it comes to baptism, the Roman idea is that in the rite of baptism, when properly administered, there's a phrase for proper administration, do you know the phrase *ex operi operato*, it means in consequence of the work done, or the work worked.

[ 31 : 47 ] And its reference is to the priest conducting the service correctly, according to the liturgy and according to the church's doctrine.

baptism, and the Catholic idea is that *ex operi operato*, the Holy Spirit in saving grace renews the heart of the candidate for baptism, so that he or she is now, by virtue of the rite itself, the new creature in Christ, to go, now called to go on from this regenerative beginning, will me?

And that, again, is not the evangelical doctrine of baptism. Well, there are problems there. Nothing has changed in relation to them since the 16th century, and so you can guarantee that if you inveigle a Roman Catholic into discussing the sacraments, you will have a vigorous argument, and at the end of the argument, you won't agree.

Some things are fixed, as I said. Then, I don't think I had a chance two weeks ago to talk about one other doctrine, which *prima facie* is a point of division between Catholics and evangelicals, including here Anglicans, and that's the doctrine of Mary.

You may know, the doctrine of Mary was focused by two infallible papal states. In 1853, I think it was the then Pope defined as part of the Catholic faith belief in Mary's immaculate conception, that is, that she was born without original sin.

[ 34 : 04 ] And in 1950, the then Pope himself uttered an enactment affirming the assumption of Mary, that is to say, the doctrine that she didn't go through death like the rest of us do, but was taken straight to heaven, passing by purgatory because she didn't have any guilt to be worked off in purgatory.

And there you have the doctrine of who and what Mary is, infallibly defined, and what, as evangelicals, Anglicans do we make of that?

Well, actually, the Anglican way here has been, in my judgment, extremely well planned.

Mary, that is highlighted in the prayer book as the mother of the Lord Jesus and the model of devotional response to the Lord Jesus.

Mother and model are two words which just about catch and embrace what the Bible, the New Testament, actually says about Mary.

[ 35 : 36 ] She did, wonderfully, as a teenager, embrace a very invidious vocation, that is, to be pregnant out of wedlock with the Saviour who was to come.

And she is found in Acts chapter 1 among the disciples, the disciples of the Lord who is her own son. in the middle of the 20th century there was an upsurge among Roman Catholic theologians begging the then Pope to define Mary's position now as not simply a saint in glory, but actually a mediatrix, that is a lady mediator between us sinners and our priests on one hand and the Lord Jesus on the other, just as the Lord Jesus in his turn is the mediator between his father and ourselves.

Well, all of that came to nothing, there was a great deal of passionate debate because a lot of Roman Catholic theologians thought it would be disastrous to define Mary as mediatrix, and surely they were right.

But anyway, it was tried and the attempt failed, so that's a thing of the past and it's an idea which I don't think is ever likely to be revived, because in effect, Rome has spoken by the official refusal to define this doctrine, despite heavy pressure to do so.

Well, that's the area of doctrinal division, and having reviewed that, I now want to go on and say something which puts the whole discussion, I think, into a frame of reference which may be new to us, and which certainly marks a shift from the way that the discussion was set up in the 16th century, and proceeded into the 20th century.

[ 38 : 07 ] This, in other words, is a fairly recent development. I have two headings here, under which I arrange my material.

the first deals with what was, and the second deals with what is. The headings are the fixity illusion, that's what was, and the second heading is the kingdom perspective, that's what is.

the the theological perspectives articulate amongst professional theologians, implicit in things that are said, I can say, further down the ladder, by people who aren't professional theologians, but who echo what they have heard professional theologians say.

In every field where there's a basis of ideas, it's the professionals who define the ideas, and it's the rank and file who come along and embrace them, and think and live and work in terms of them.

It's the same in the church at that point, as it is in every other realm of ideas that this world has ever seen. Now, the fixity illusion is the supposition that things will never change, and that all we need to think about as we reflect on the church's calling, the church's relation to other churches, the church's duty in the world, and so on.

[ 40 : 07 ] All we need to think about is the present, I mean, the way things are now. And the reason why we limit our thinking to the present is simply because the present will go on indefinitely.

Things will stay as they are. See? let me divert.

There was a point in the diversion. I was talking earlier this morning to a couple of folk who'd been on a cruise and loved it. But I was once with a family on a liner crossing the Atlantic, and I disliked it very much.

the liner was the France, then the biggest liner in the world. But I felt cooped up the whole time.

The activities that were open to me were limited, so what did I do? I spent the time getting from one meal to the next, watching movies.

[ 41 : 24 ] There was nothing else on the ship, really, that I wanted to do. And I can remember that was the time that I first saw Julie Christie in Far From the Madding Crowd.

Have you ever seen that? That's a good movie. And I remember seeing a tearjerker also. A dog was left in Scotland, hundreds of miles from where its previous owners were now going to do.

That's it, Lassie, that's it. I remember that. That was back in 1965, before some of you were born. I cried too. Yes, that's right.

Well, it is a tearjerker. Yes, I cried. Well, all right, but for all that I saw those movies, I found the experience on the boat pretty wearing.

However, the boat was remarkably stable. I mean, we had a peaceful crossing of the Atlantic, and with its stabilizers, the liner was, as far as I was concerned, just as steady as dry land.

[ 42 : 37 ] Mind, my dear wife has an inner ear which is sensitive to these things. She was picking up vibrations. On a liner, you can't avoid vibrations.

the motive power, the engines, are pretty big, and if you're capable of picking up vibrations, they make the boat vibrate.

I didn't pick up the vibrations. It all seemed to me to be very smooth and steady, but she, poor lady, did. And so, believe it or not, she spent the whole time from leaving England to getting to New York, in lying on her bed in our cabin being, to put it brutally, seasick.

Well, we'll draw a veil over that. I'm simply saying that though the experience of travelling on the fronts was for me one of stability, and I was able to forget that I was on the sea because the ship was so steady, yet I have problems with it.

Now, this, I told you this because it seems to me to illustrate well the shift that's been necessary from the fixity illusion to something else.

[ 44 : 10 ] fixity The fixity idea goes right the way back into the early Christian centuries. You can focus it by using the image that the Roman church has always used.

The church is the ark. You've heard of Noah's ark and all of that. Well, the church is the ark of salvation. There it is, and if you want salvation, in you must come.

All right. The church, so its exponents went on, is as stable as anything in this world can be. It is founded on a rock, rock, and whatever may change around it, it doesn't change.

So, that's how God, in his mercy, has set things up. There was an unchanging church, and actually, when the Catholics go on, the reformation of evil was an attempt to change the church, which should never have been made, and the way of wisdom is to ignore the reformation alternative and come back to the church.

There are still Roman Catholics who will present the claims of the church in that way. Nothing changes here. The ark is steady.

[ 45 : 47 ] On the surface of the water, we're, oh, other things do change, and there's a bit of movement, but not in the church.

Church is the ark. Well, now, that way of looking at the matter determined the Roman attitude to the world of the reformed churches, that's Europe and America and the countries colonised from Europe.

And the Catholic attitude was, well, cultures vary from one place to another. The church must try to be hospitable to local cultures, but the church doesn't change.

It's an international society, and it's fixed. well, there came a momentous transition point in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council, which met from 1962 to 65, which was summoned by John XXIII, who'd been described as a caretaker pope.



There was a sort of joke about the fact that Roman Catholic theologians, when he announced that there was to be a council, a council of the whole church, a thousand bishops meeting together to set things in order, Roman Catholic theologians, as it was said, looked at each other and shook their heads and said, caretaker, pope, I like that, how much more care can you take?

[ 47 : 43 ] And the council, in fact, was momentous, because it set itself to upgrade the church pastorally, thereby acknowledging that the church needed to be upgraded pastorally.

There was an Italian word that John XXIII made great play with the word *agionamento*, which expresses the thought of bringing something up to date for contemporary usefulness.

And that was the purpose of the council, according to John XXIII. At the time when he called it, there was a movement going on in the French Roman Catholic Church, which also had a word tagged to it to indicate what it was all about.

This time, of course, it was a French word because this was going on in France. The word was *ressourcement*, which meant, at least in idea, meant drawing from the past to enrich the present and the future.

well, put together the purpose of *agionamento* and the method of *ressourcement* and what you've got is a formula for real renewal in the sense in which evangelicals have been talking about renewal ever since the charismatic movement broke on the world in the 1960s.

[ 49 : 37 ] The thought of renewal involves focusing on the pastoral needs of the present and drawing from the past in order to enrich the church for ministry in the present and in the future.

So, instead of the fixity illusion continuing beyond the middle of the 20th century, what you have now amongst Roman Catholic thinkers is a sense, very strong sense, which matches, I may say, the equally strong sense among Protestant evangelicals that the church is not fixed like a medieval castle in a defensive posture everywhere in the world.

The church is on mission, the church is going somewhere, the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is moving along and the church must have its eyes on the future as well as having its memory tuned to the past.

past. Well, for Roman Catholicism that was an enormous shift in mindset and the Catholic church is still digesting it as a matter of fact and there's a whole spectrum of different ways of digesting this new perspective that you find amongst Roman Catholic theologians and pastoral leaders.

We can't go into that in detail. The point I want to make is simply that the fixity illusion, that is, that the church of Rome is a reality in which nothing changes, that's gone for good.

[ 51 : 35 ] and, well, there's a field of constant, open discussion about where in the mission of God the church, that's the Roman Catholic church, is going to end up and how it should be positioning itself now for the fulfilment of that future calling.

this mindset, I hasten to say, has also established itself, pretty much, amongst evangelical theologians, although it has to be said that it hasn't trickled down to all evangelical congregations and communities.

Once Rome makes up its mind about something, it trickles down to grassroots level pretty quickly, because Rome, after all, is a worldwide centralised institution in which everything is done from the top down.

And, if directions are given from the top, well, they get down to the grassroots fairly quickly. It doesn't happen that way amongst evangelicals.

So, if you take soundings here, you'll find that in the evangelical spectrum, there are theologians at one end of the spectrum who are very much aware of the new perspective that we ought to embrace and that they have embraced, the other perspective, you find lots of people for whom all of this is new stuff, and evangelicals are suspicious of new stuff in just the way that for centuries Roman Catholics were.

[ 53 : 34 ] So, we are not by any means a community of people who are agreed on this change, but we are agreed both sides of the Reformation divide, on the centrality of the Holy Spirit moving the Church on to whatever the Church is called to be, in a way that was not the case until the second half of the 20th century.

Let me read you something. a prayer was written for the bishops in the Second Vatican Council, and they used it regularly at the beginning of each session.

And I would like to read it to you, and put to you the thought that this is a prayer for evangelical Protestants, surely, as much as it was for the Second Vatican Council.

And you will see it's a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Listen. We are here before you, O Holy Spirit, conscious of our countless sins, but united in a special way in your holy name.

Come and abide with us. Deign to penetrate our hearts. Be the guide of our actions. Indicate the path we should take and show us what we must do, so that with your help, our work may, in all things, be pleasing to you.

[ 55 : 20 ] May you be our only inspiration and the overseer of our intentions, for you alone possess a glorious name, together with the Father and the Son.

May you, this is the Holy Spirit still, may you who are infinite justice never permit that we be disturbers of justice. Let not our ignorance induce us to evil, nor flattery sway us, nor moral and material interest corrupt us, but unite our hearts to you alone and do it strongly, so that with the gift of your grace, we may be one in you and may in nothing depart from the truth.

Thus, united in your name, may we in every action follow the dictates of your mercy and justice, so that today and always our judgments may not be alien to you and in eternity we may obtain the unending reward of our actions.

Amen. A Roman Catholic prayer guiding the wavelengths to start with of the Second Vatican Council and well, jumping ahead, a lot of very good stuff was produced by the fathers of the Second Vatican Council and the 700 pages of Vatican Council documents are well worth reading.

But now, I hope you felt as I read that prayer that with the English smoothed a little bit, it would be a perfect prayer for an evangelical church, an evangelical community, facing anything and everything on which decisions have to be made and plans formed and directions fixed and movement controlled.

[ 57 : 40 ] And this is the kingdom perspective, which I'm setting in contrast with the fixity illusion. The kingdom perspective is that God's kingdom, which itself is a dynamic reality, it's the reality of God controlling people's lives, it's a redemptive reality, it's God in Christ transforming people, bringing them to himself, so that they will be controlled by the divine will in their lives for the future.

mission, and it's a mission perspective, the kingdom is meant to be worldwide, and the Lord's people are always on mission, charged to reach out, and as far as they can, embrace the globe in their purpose of winning folk to share their own faith.

We're all on mission, we are all pilgrims on mission, because things do change around us, pilgrims, in the nature of the case, have to travel light.

So the church must travel light, and the cast of mind, which is always saying, oh, there's this, this, this, and this in our past, we can't let it go, we can't change, we've got to hold on to it, they are missing the kingdom perspective.

The kingdom perspective is first things first, God moves you on, and you should be thinking of moving on and moving out.

[ 59 : 26 ] Everything proceeds, nothing is in the medieval sense fixed. Well, I haven't a lot of time to articulate this, and indeed it demands a presentation on its own account, which perhaps I should give someday, but let me give you some authors.

The kingdom perspective was very vigorously spelled out by the late Robert Webber. Has anybody here ever heard of Robert Webber?

and his series of books with the word ancient-future in the title. None of you know anything about them. Well, I recommend him because what he's doing is picking up and running with this kingdom perspective in which you look back in order to draw resources from the past to help you run forward.

in mission, in outreach, in ongoing efforts to win the world. We're all on mission.

The best exponent for evangelicals of this thought, a man who's doing it over and over again, a whole series of good books, is a man named Chris Wright, Christopher Wright.

[ 60 : 56 ] Anybody ever heard of Christopher Wright? Well, if you read Christopher Wright, you will find him spelling out this perspective very fully.

And as we move on, so it is proper that Roman Catholics and evangelicals, Anglican and other evangelicals, should be seeking to converge if they can.

And sometimes it's possible to converge when you're moving forward, in a way that it would never have been possible to converge if you'd been static, fixed, not moving forward, but simply glaring at each other across a chasm of division.

And that's actually what this project that I'm involved in, evangelicals and Catholics together, is trying to do. Keeping, we're keeping, we're keeping, reviewing the situation to see what we can see in terms of convergence, points at which we do not need to regard ourselves as at loggerheads with each other.

pastoral exercise, just as Vatican II is a pastoral exercise, and just as being an evangelical Anglican church is a pastoral exercise.

[ 62 : 21 ] exercise. It's tricky, but it's worth doing, because the emphasis on the kingdom of God, which so much marks very modern theology in all schools of thought, that emphasis is a needed emphasis actually in every age, just because it's dynamic, it's bringing into focus the thought that God himself is concerned to move us on, and we are to recognize and respond to that fact.

Which is a very open-ended way to end my presentation, but I wanted to do it that way, to provoke you to thought. This emphasis may startle you.

You may not like it. That's all right. Think about it, and re-read the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.

And I think you will see that this open-ended emphasis on the spread of the kingdom, God spreading his kingdom under and through his king, Jesus our Saviour, through the agency of those who are the king's subject in the kingdom at present.

That really is the central thrust of the New Testament. And once you see that, when you've gone over a watershed, I warn you, you have gone over a watershed, you won't be able to get back into the fixity way of thinking.

[ 64 : 09 ] You will have to rethink everything in the Christian mission in terms of this kingdom point of view.

And there, I do stop. I run over time, sorry about that. We can do a little bit of discussing of this, but I've hardly opened the subject at all, and there's much more to be said, and I hope that when we discuss, next quarter of an hour or so, we shall be attempting together to see what's involved when this new focus and perspective opens for us, rather than critiquing it and saying, oh, this is just a fad.

This is something that we can do without. This is, therefore, not something to bother with. No, I do believe that it's something very much to bother with.

It's the kingdom of God perspective, which we're all of us called to embrace. So I think. Forgive me, as I say, I've gone over time.

Let us discuss. Over to you. How are you reacting to all of this? Yeah, that's the band.

[ 65 : 42 ] Could we, in good conscience, say the Hail Mary? Well, I couldn't. I don't know really how anyone can, because that appears to be celebrating Mary as a person.

person in a different, what can I say, in a different class from other saved sinners. And it seems to me that if one is going to develop a Protestant Maryology, the first thing to say is that Mary, it seems, stands at the head of the line of saved sinners.

And that's what the Magnificat says. my soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour. I think Mary spoke better than she knew when she wrote, wrote, sang, thought those words.

But it's a perspective that one must never lose sight of when one's talking about Mary. So, yes, if this was the time to discuss it, I'm not sure it is, I would have to say that I think that most of Roman Catholic Maryology, the Hail Mary, the Rosary, and all of that, is misguided.

Although, Roman theology concerning Mary, of which there's quite a bit actually in Vatican II, starts where we start.

[ 67 : 24 ] She was the mother of our Lord. She is head of the line of saved sinners. She is a model of devotion. She had the extraordinarily difficult task of reclassifying her son as her Saviour.

And clearly, she managed it. and she is to be celebrated for that. Not deified, not treated as a mediator, nothing of that sort, but celebrated as a triumph of the grace of God in a human life.

Pause. Do you like what you're hearing? Okay, well, let's leave that. Yes, another point. Could some of this language of progress, the vocabulary of it, is it easily appropriated for abandoning historic Christianity?

The idea of the doctrine being fixed, is that not some of the issue confronting the church now, that the idea that we are now going forward in a different phase of mission and using that vocabulary to justify abandoning historic principles?

Thank you for that question, because it raises a very central issue, which I left open, and now you've pinpointed it.

[ 68 : 55 ] Christian doctrine, so I believe, the doctrine of the creeds, and in our case, as Anglicans, the doctrine of 39 articles, and of any number of evangelical confessions produced by various groups over the last 200 years, those doctrines, those definitions of doctrine, must be held on to, because they have biblical warrant at each point, and we must think of them as true so far as they go.

And the progress perspective is simply a matter of recognizing that these doctrines, true as far as they go, may in fact still be incomplete statements needing to be supplemented from Scripture, and we must never rule that out.

And if we allow the language of progress, or movement, to blind us to that fact, well it will be out of the frying pan into the fire.

And yes, in this rather disorderly church, world church of which we are part, there are liberal theologians lying like lions in thickets, who want to jump out and persuade us to make precisely that mistake, to treat the recognition that we must go on from where we are, as involving the idea that a lot of the stuff that we've, a lot of the beliefs that we've come along with so far, are mere baggage, which we must now learn to leave behind.

and if I may speak in an unparliamentary way, this diocese is full of clergy and leaders who will trumpet away in those terms over and over again.

[ 71 : 15 ] Leave behind the baggage. Why won't you evangelicals say goodbye to your baggage? Da, da, da, da, da. No, when you say that our doctrinal heritage is true as far as it goes, that's a way of reaffirming that it's precious and it's to be held on to.

Just, well, just in a parallel way to that in which the Catholics are saying, look, our authoritatively defined doctrines must be held on to.

We don't talk about authoritative definition, we talk about clear proofs from Holy Scripture. But when we've got clear proofs from Holy Scripture, they give us convictions that we must hold on to just as tenaciously as Catholics hold on to the infallibility of the Church, whatever.

Does that satisfy you, sir, or does it continue to leave you worried? You have to think it over. Wow. I personally would say that the faith was once delivered to the saints, and its completeness circumscribes our doctrinal investigation.

Certainly, but then, if you will allow me to say so, we dare not yet affirm that we've plumbed the length and breadth and height and depth of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

[ 72 : 48 ] that's what I'm trying to say. We have a precious doctrinal heritage, and we have good reason to believe that it's true as far as it goes. And we can't specify any point at which, at the moment, we can see that it needs to be amplified or extended.

But God's in charge, not we, and we have to allow for that possibility. That's all I'm trying to say. Another matter, perhaps. Yeah. When I was reading the Manhattan Declaration a couple of weeks ago, I was looking down the list of metropolitans and cardinals and what have you, and I was wondering what implications this declaration would have on the mission of the church in North America, and I got to name my list, and I thought, well, here's somebody who would have a better idea than me, so I'm asking.

Well, I think, to answer you briefly, that the effect of the Manhattan Declaration should be, and is intended to be, and I hope will be, to generate a greater openness to discussion about debated questions and about whether we can really converge in our doctrinal testimony further than we have converged so far.

The openness blessed by the Holy Spirit will allow for that to happen.

Again, I have to say, I am not God, and I don't know what the future holds, and whether there, whether, well, whatever there is still to come to light in Scripture, I don't know it, and I shan't know it until it actually happens.

[ 74 : 55 ] But I think that the Manhattan Declaration, so to speak, opens the windows for, opens the windows wider for that kind of, well, what is it, it's critical, loving discussion.

And what more than that comes out of the Declaration remains to be seen. I was, I thought, privileged to be asked to sign it, and I did sign it, and I don't regret that I signed it.

Bill wants to bring us to a close, right? Well, thank you for listening to me, and may God guide us all into wisdom and truth.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.