

The Commission for Anglican - Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions

LLANDAFF STATEMENT -1980
The Communion of Saints and the Dead

- (1) All prayer is addressed to the Triune God. We pray to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Church on earth is united in a single movement of worship with the Church in heaven, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, 'with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven'.
- (2) Those who believe and are baptised form one body in Christ, and are members one of another, united by the Holy Spirit. Within the body each member suffers and rejoices with the others, and in each member the Holy Spirit intercedes for the whole. These relationships are changed but not broken by death: 'There is no frontier between two worlds in the Church' (Gwenallt). 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (Mt. 22:32), for all live in and to him. This is the meaning of the Communion of Saints.
- (3) God is 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Exod. 3:6), 'the Lord of hosts' (Is. 6:3), 'God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 15:6). Our God is not an abstract idea, but the God of persons, revealing himself in and to particular men and women. Union with God therefore involves us in a personal relationship with all who belong to him through the grace of the Holy Spirit who both unites and diversifies: and this personal relationship, which is not broken by death, is precisely the Communion of Saints.
- (4) Our experience of the Communion of Saints finds its fullest expression in the Eucharist, in which the whole Body of Christ realises its unity in the Holy Spirit. We see this in ancient eucharistic prayers of East and West, which commemorate the saints and intercede for the departed as well as for the living.
- (5) 'Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death . . .' . By virtue of Christ's Cross and Resurrection, death is no longer an impassable barrier. It is this sense of our continuing union in the risen Christ that forms for all Orthodox the basis of prayer for the dead and invocation of the saints. It must be emphasized that, as a result of the abuses of the Medieval West, and the consequent Reformation in the sixteenth century, not all Anglicans practise such prayer and invocation. All, however, agree in affirming our union in the risen Christ.
- (6) God's love is present everywhere. Even those in hell are not deprived of the love of God, but by their own free choice they experience as torment what the saints experience as joy. The light of God's glory is also the fire of judgement. God's wrath is not other than his love; how we experience that love, in this life and after death, depends on our attitude. The Orthodox Church, in the prayers of Pentecost, prays even for those in hell.
- (7) '. . . from glory to glory' (2 Cor. 3:18): for the righteous there is, in the view of the Orthodox and also of many Anglicans, endless progress and growth in the love of God. In its initial stages after death, this progress is to be thought of in terms of purification rather than satisfaction, healing rather than retribution. As Anglicans and Orthodox we are agreed in rejecting any doctrine of purgatory which suggests that the departed through their sufferings are making 'satisfaction' or 'expiation' for their sins. After death and before the general resurrection the souls of those who have fallen asleep in the faith are assisted by the prayers of the Church, through the crucified and risen Christ—through him alone and nothing else.

- (8) Prayers for the departed are to be seen, not in juridical terms, but as an expression of mutual love and solidarity in Christ: 'we pray for them because we still hold them in our love' (Catechism of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America).
- (9) The prayers of the saints on our behalf are likewise to be understood as an expression of mutual love and shared life in the Holy Spirit. Such a term as the 'treasury of merits' is foreign to both our traditions. 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5); the intercession of the saints for us is always in and through this unique mediation of Christ. The saints reign with Christ (cf. Luke 22:29-30); Christ is the King, and the saints share in his kingly rule.
- (10) The Blessed Virgin Mary possesses a unique place in the economy of salvation by virtue of the fact that she was chosen to be Mother of Christ our God. Her intercession is not autonomous, but presupposes Christ's intercession and is based upon the saving work of the Incarnate Word.
- (11) The Orthodox practice of commemorating the saints of the Old Testament powerfully affirms the way in which the whole history of salvation is made present in the liturgy of the Church.
- (12) Anglicans are accustomed to make a threefold distinction between prayers addressed to God to hear the saints on our behalf, simple requests to the saints to pray for us, and extended prayers addressed to the saints. Only the first kind of prayer has been included in the official prayer book of some Anglican Churches.
- (13) The principle *lex orandi lex credendi* has a particularly clear application in this whole question. The language in which we speak of the saints and the departed is derived from the life of prayer and piety. Many of the Church's affirmations concerning the Communion of Saints are expressed in hymnography and iconography. At the same time there is an appropriate doctrinal reserve which reflects the mystery of our relationship with the departed. It is in God alone that we have communion with them.

[MEYER, HARDING and LUKAS VISHNER. Ed. *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*. Faith and Order Paper, 108.. (NY/Geneva: Paulist Press/ World Council of Churches, 1984) 57-59.]