To Know as I Am Known:

The Communion of the Saints and the Ontology of Love

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Series in Philosophy of Religion

VERNON PRESS

www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street,
Suite 1200, Wilmington,
Delaware 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Series in Philosophy of Religion

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018942103

ISBN: 978-1-62273-388-0

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Chapter 15 originally appeared as: Mark S. McLeod-Harrison, "Christian Love, Humility, and Radical Discipleship: Steps Toward An Ontology of Saintly People," *Studies in Christian Ethics*, (Vol. 30, Is. 3, 278-292, 2017). Reprinted by permission of SAGE Publications.

Chapter 16 originally appeared as: Mark S. McLeod-Harrison, "On Being the Literal Image of God: Rethinking Human Essence as Uniqueness". *Journal of Analytic Theology* (Vol 2, 2014. pp. 140-159). Reprinted with permission of the journal.

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For the glory of God
and for love of the Church

and for my good friends Andy Oliver, Steve Fratt, and Adrian A. Amaya

Iron sharpens iron;
so a friend sharpens the countenance of his friend.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.
Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

—1 Corinthians 13: 12

If God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my death be for the
freedom of my people... A bishop will die, but the Church of God,
which is the people, will never perish.
If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people.

—Archbishop Oscar Romero[1]

Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

—1 John 4:8

Autograph

your translations
of me
I could never
have anticipated

sheaves of my history
torn off by your glance

I am the blue-veined iris
in your hand
your fingers
dipped in me

I am signed by you
your name stroked
upon my forehead

--Rishma Dunlop[2]

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[1] This quotation, or versions of it, are found in many places. Here is one: Eleazar S. Fernandez, *Burning Center, Porus Borders: The Church in a Globalized World*, Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011, pp. 339-340.

[2]Rishma Dunlop, *The Body of My Garden*, Toronto: The Mansfield Press, 2002.

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Preface

The life of Archbishop Oscar Romero reflected a deep belief in the communion of the saints. Just a few weeks before he was murdered while celebrating the Eucharist, he gave an interview during which he said: "If God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my death be for the freedom of my people.… A bishop will die, but the Church of God, which is the people, will never perish…. If they kill me, I shall arise in the Salvadoran people." Romero's death at the hands of his murderers was for the freedom of his people, the Church, but if Romero did arise in the Salvadoran people, the question is "how?"

It would be easy to treat Romero's words as mere decorative metaphors, as nice ways to report his commitment to his people. But if we take them more seriously, more deeply than decoration, how can we explain what he says? How can one individual arise in another group of people? How can an individual death be for the freedom of others? If the doctrine of the communion of the saints is true, these prophetic words of one of the twentieth century's Christian martyrs are not only decorative metaphors but literal truths. Romero's death was not simply his own but also the death of his people, his freedom not simply his own but the freedom of his people, and his resurrection not simply his own but the resurrection of his people. How? By the power of love.

I

What follows is a reflection on the ontology of love. More specifically, it is a reflection on what makes love ontologically possible. Even more specifically, it is a reflection on what makes *agape* or Christian love possible. At the core of the Christian gospel is the message of love, a love so grand, rich, and deep that each one of us is created and sustained in that love. Underneath every stone one turns, behind every tree one comes upon, over every hill, and in every valley in the vast land that is the communion of the saints, one's eye is moved to take in love. Indeed, at the very heart of the communion of the saints is God's love for humanity and, indeed, God's own nature as love. To talk about the communion of the saints is, in the end, to talk about love and its ever-sustaining roots in God.

The communion of the saints is central to the practice of both the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox traditions but is much less popular among most Protestant groups. Or at least the doctrine is quite differently understood by

Protestants than by Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. Indeed, Protestant groups often malign the doctrine as understood by the Catholic and Orthodox. Yet even admitting the probable abuses and misunderstandings of the doctrine during the late medieval period of the Western church, the doctrine itself is largely an extension of two notions: the Church and heaven (taken as one's presence with God directly).[1] In fact, for a good many Protestants and even the average person in the pew, the phrase from the Apostle's creed, "I believe in the communion of the saints" is merely a colorful way of affirming one's commitment to "the holy, Catholic Church." Yet the Roman and Orthodox Churches do not see the communion of the saints as simply identical to the Church, and the doctrine has deep pragmatic, liturgical, and spiritual implications. On the one hand, the doctrine of the communion of the saints is arguably fundamental to the theoretical understanding of the Church, God, salvation, creation, and the overall ontological structure of the world. The Church is the body of Christ, God is love, salvation renews or moves us to our intended position and relationship with God, creation shows our dependence on God and God's love for us, and in the end, whatever else the world is, it is sustained by the loving and creative thoughts of God. On the other hand, the practical influence of the doctrine should not be underestimated. Millions of faithful Christians pray each day not just to God but to myriad saints. Of course, properly understood, prayers to the saints are of a different order than prayers to God. Christians worship God but only venerate the saints. Christians ask the saints to intercede to God for us rather than ask the saints to play the role of God.

The doctrine of the communion of the saints is incredibly important; however, little is written on the doctrine from a philosophical point of view. My search for analytic philosophical scholarship on the subject produced nothing. More is written from a theological point of view, but much of it is what we

[1] When I refer to heaven in this essay, I do not mean to imply any particular thing about the afterlife except that to be in heaven is to be fully present with and in God. The language we use about heaven is notoriously concrete, physical, and spatial. While I do think that Scripture teaches that we will be embodied for eternity and hence that the concrete, physical and spatial language is accurate, I'm not sure how much of our language about heaven is metaphorically substantive, decorative or otherwise. Nor do I think we know much about the relationship between heaven and the biblical accounts of the recreation of heaven and earth with humans returning to a redeemed earth at some point in the future. It is not part of my purpose to enter those discussions. My main concern is to discuss what it means to say we are in the presence of God whose fundamental nature is love. So the language of "heaven" here is meant to be quite circumspect in the sense of humans being fully "with" or "in" God without answering any more detailed questions about spatial location, streets of gold, or any other of interesting questions and speculations about heaven that occupy our minds from time to time.

might think of as popular rather than professional theology. On the professional level, there is a recent, book-length work, released in 2017.[2] There is also the work of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and Karl Rahner from the last decades of the 20th century. Yet theology is not philosophy and my hope is that this book will stimulate analytic philosophical thought about the doctrine among not only Catholic and Orthodox philosophers, but among Protestants as well.

I happen to be Protestant (Anglican but influenced by many other Protestant traditions). However, I also happen to believe that the Roman and Orthodox views on the communion of the saints are closer to the truth than the Protestant views. Yet I won't argue in these pages for the truth of the doctrine *per se*. Instead, my general goal is to engage in some ontological work that could underpin the doctrine. Since claims to truth to be at all true must be coherent, the first step in showing a doctrine true on philosophical grounds is often just pointing out a way its components can hang together. So, while I won't provide a positive apologetic for the doctrine's truth, I will take on the task of providing an account of what might be the case for the doctrine to be intelligible. I have three subsidiary goals as well: 1) to describe the doctrine of the communion of the saints and point out two substantial challenges to it; 2) to explore various ways of thinking about those problems by comparing them to related problems in philosophy, and 3) to provide an understanding of the ontology required for agape. In taking on this last goal, my target is not a complete ontology. Rather, I focus on understanding how individual persons are related to a true community where everyone aims to serve (completely and utterly) the other members of the community. What does it mean to be an individual whose primary mode of being is complete love? What fundamental ontological structure must be in place for that to occur?

I am a philosopher rather than a theologian or a biblical scholar. Thus, there are significant limits to what I can do in these reflections. Yet I hope what I have to say is theologically and biblically coherent as well as philosophically so. Here I must confess that I have not spent years reading theological accounts of the communion of the saints. I wanted to come to the topic fresh from a layperson's point of view, but as a layperson with some philosophical training. I started with my experience (which I do not talk about directly in the book) and then read briefly in both Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology (the latter mostly by reading in the catechisms). I attempted simply to take the doctrine at face value and to discover what issues might arise from its

[2] Leonard J. Delorenzo, *Work of Love: A Theological Reconstructio*n of the *Communion of the Saint*s, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017.

"bare bones." I then thought about those issues as I considered moral motivation and the ontology of the individual person. This is in no way an exhaustive treatment of the communion of the saints or of moral motivation or of the ontology of individual persons. For example, a good deal of what has been written on the doctrine focuses on eschatology and death[3] and I do neither. Rather it takes up two specific issues arising from the doctrine—motivation and solidarity.

A few words further about the book's origin might be of help in understanding the connections between love and the individual's place in the community of heaven. Although this essay is not about Romero directly, it was in part inspired by his now famous words quoted earlier and by what I know of his life. A bookish man, Romero learned to love God by loving God's people. He learned to love God's people by actually living among them daily, by seeing their struggles, by interacting with everyone from the garbage-dump dwellers to El Salvador's elite. He loved so much that he took great risks so others could live. Those risks and a sharp-shooter took his life. He was a martyr for the communion of the saints.

The book also finds inspiration in *The Brothers Karamazov.* That book contrasts the themes of suffering and love with the quite individualistic "modern" notions sweeping Russia at the time Dostoevsky wrote (and with which we still live in much of the world). In the novel, Father Zosimov suggests that hell is the inability to love, a type of total egoism. Love, in contrast, requires the total lack of egoism. In novelistic form, Dostoevsky draws out the implications of the New Testament's emphasis on the communion of the saints, including the notion that suffering is redemptive and that when one suffers, all suffer. This work attempts to cover some of the same territory by explaining how all humanity stands in solidarity with one another and with God via the communion of the saints.

In an equally strong way, it is a book on the nature of the individual person in community. What, from a Christian point of view, does it mean to say that I am an individual person? Typically, we talk about individuality in terms of our self-interest, our psychological continuity, or our personal identity. These are large and difficult topics. I explore aspects of these topics arguing, in effect, that to be individual does not require us to remain entirely within what I call "local self-interest."

II

The book has five parts. Part I, the introduction, has three chapters. In it, I give a brief account of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox view of the com-

[3] Ibid.

munion, an even briefer biblical foundation for the doctrine, and finally present two challenges to the doctrine. The first challenge arises with the issue of motivation to be or become a lover. Given that humans are motivated to act well toward others because of self-interest, what motivates anyone to love another in the full sense suggested by the doctrine of the communion of the saints? The second challenge is how we should understand the nature of human solidarity as described in the doctrine. The communion of the doctrine of the saints has all of us fully owning, in the fullest measure, exactly the same goods and graces flowing from Christ. How can that be?

Part II—Metaphysical Reflections on Sinning and Sainthood—explores the relationship between sin and saintliness with a special focus on properties associated with being human. It argues, following Tom Morris's terminology, that sin is an immemorial property whereas saintliness an enduring property, but neither is essential to being human. It then places this view into an evolutionary and historical framework.

Part III—Love, Altruism, and Self-Interest—suggests that if we are to solve the motivation problem, we need to show how self-interest does not undermine love. It is important, thus, to explain what love is and why love ought not be confused either with ethics or altruism. I suggest that morality is a fallen version of love. In a similar way, what I'll call local self-interest is a fallen version of share-interest, the latter being essential for understanding the communion of the saints. Ethics comes in conflict with self-interest whereas altruism requires us to sacrifice ourselves. Love does neither but fulfills us as newly formed individuals-in-communion. Love, in other words, can't be separated from self-interest but is the completion of it. The ontology of love, hence, cannot be rooted in local self-interest but must find its ontological home elsewhere.

Part IV—Building Blocks—notes that if the problem of motivation can be solved by showing how one's self-interest is not, ultimately, separable from other-interest, then perhaps the problem of solidarity can be solved in a similar manner. It continues to pursue ways in which the self might be extended to cover the interests of others. The chapters sample two positions linking self-interest and love, particularly as they uncover themes relevant to the communion of the saints. My goal is not to exhaustively cover the literature on love, altruism, or self-interest, but rather I've selected work pointing toward issues that a philosophical account of the communion of the saints needs to address. Based on observations and insights from these sources, we have building blocks for a theory of the ontology of love that will respond to both the motivation and the solidarity challenges.

Part V is entitled "A Theory and Theology of the Ontology of Love." At this point, we have reached the field where lie nearly all the building blocks need-

ed for an ontology of love. This section begins with a discussion of transparency as a basis for grasping the new ontology of the sainted human and then draws together various themes and suggestions from the book to propose an ontology of love. After that, two chapters extend the work by exploring Christian humility and then providing an account of the image of God as it is rooted in local self-interest. This brings us to the fulfillment of the main goal of the work: to provide an account of the ontology of the sainted human that explains both the motivation and the solidarity problems.

Acknowledgements

In the academic year 2005-06, George Fox University granted me a sabbatical to work on this project. Unfortunately (for this work), another book of mine came back from the publisher with a request for extensive revisions. Those took much longer than I had hoped and my second son was born in the midst, so the communion of the saints had to wait. Once again, George Fox University provided support in the form of a course release during the Fall term 2009 to help toward the writing. Once again, fortune left me. For the first time in my life that term coincided with a nearly complete lull in my motivation or ability to write. I wrote anyway, but I'm afraid without much success, although parts of the material on Josiah Royce found their inaugural forms during that period. I returned to the task (with other projects having intervened) in 2013 (during another sabbatical) and then again in 2017. I completed the final draft during the spring and summer of the latter year. I was granted a further course release to complete the final editing in the spring of 2018. I thank George Fox for its support.

I'm grateful to my friend Charlie Kamilos—priest-at-heart—for putting me onto some excellent resources on the Orthodox understanding of the communion of the saints. Phil Smith read portions of the manuscript and put me onto Allen's book that I read with great interest.[1] In addition, Phil provided some good conversation about its subject and I thank him as always for helpful comments. I also presented some of the material found below to the "Intellectual Feast" sponsored by the department of religious studies at George Fox University. I thank everyone in attendance for the comments and questions. Our administrative assistant, Paula Hampton, brought her editorial expertise to the project and aided in final preparation and formatting. Finally, I also thank my long-suffering wife, Susan, for encouraging me to write, even in my low points. A writer herself, she understands the challenges and pleasures of writing. As always, she has been a source of healing and of hope. The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a sacrament in which one can grow toward becoming a saint. I thank Susan for teaching me how to love better, despite my deep blindness and consequent stubbornness and arrogance. For those many times I've been unwilling to take her advice, and times when I

[1] Diogenes Allen, *The Path of Perfect Love*, revised edition, Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1992.

misconstrued it, I apologize. I am fully responsible for those failures, of which there are many. I've not been quick to grow into my beliefs.

I began this project just after the turn of the 21st century. It has been a slow and a most perplexing journey. Although it has taken me nearly 17 years to finish this work, I wish it were better than it is. Still, I hope it has something valuable to say. But more importantly, I want it to draw people not only to reflect philosophically about the communion of the saints and love but to be further drawn into the mystery that the communion incarnates. As I've aged, I've become more and more conscious of the importance of not separating what I believe philosophically from the way I live. I've also realized how difficult it can be to integrate one's self. One is always wondering if philosophy makes a difference and what difference it makes. Of course, philosophy does make a difference and in some obvious ways. Politics, for example, would not be what it is (for better or worse) if not for ideas. Culture both shapes and is shaped by ideas. But it is easy to talk about the big view without connecting it to the little corner of the picture where one's own life is illustrated.

In that little corner where I live, if I've learned anything from writing the book, it is how far I am from being a fully loving member of the communion of the saints. When one is writing about love, one is writing about God, and when one is writing about God, there is no more real, important, or difficult subject. Toward the end of the book writing, I was struck over and over and over by how unloving I am. My arrogance is a mountain I've not yet descended. I wrote the book anyway, sometimes in morning prayer asking God to help me be a more loving person as a result of my work. I also prayed that the God I've tried to follow, often in mere fits and starts, would guide my thoughts. I wish I'd been more faithful in loving both God and those close to me. Perhaps I would have written a better, truer book. In the end, only God can judge whether either of those prayers has been even partially answered in the affirmative. Yet whether or not I've said much that is true, I still love the idea that I can someday join with others more faithful in the communion, a place where I will no longer worry about whether I'm writing good philosophy or, more importantly, whether other people will think it is good. By the end of the book, I hope the reader will see the irony in the previous sentence.

Finally, a brief word about my friends Andy Oliver, Steve Fratt, and Adrian A. Amaya. Andy and I were in diapers together at the First Baptist Church of Orillia (Ontario, Canada) in the 1950s. He has been a friend for my entire life. Although we rarely see each other now—circumstance and distance keep us apart—I know that simply picking up the phone will connect us again, and we will talk about spiritual things just as we always have. Steve is a more recent, but still old, friend. We met during graduate school—he in history and I in philosophy. We carpooled to campus and attended the same church. We have

become good friends and as with Andy, distance and circumstance keep us apart. Yet a phone call will reconnect us immediately and I learn something new every time. Finally, I thank an even more recent but still old friend, Adrian. Adrian and I met when he was an undergraduate at the University of Texas, San Antonio and I an assistant professor. He waltzed into my office one day (I'd never met him) to announce that he was looking forward to a class I was to teach the next term. He had a smile larger than life, and he and I soon became friends. He later invited me to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in San Antonio, an invitation with great influence in my life. That influence includes the beginnings of my thinking about the communion of the saints and my becoming Anglican. He and his wife Anna were good friends in San Antonio and my older son was the ring bearer in their wedding. Adrian went on to become Father Adrian.

Adrian was recently diagnosed with an aggressive type of cancer that will likely take his earthly life. That event, should it come about, will usher another true person of God more fully into the communion of the saints where Adrian will be welcomed into the arms of the saints and where his smile will light up his new friends. The distance between us will be great, with no phones or cellular signals to reach across. But as I experienced once at St. Andrew's, the veil between this life and the next is thin, and sometimes it is dropped so we immortals on this side of heaven can glimpse all of those on the other. I'll be calling on you, Adrian, to help me be a better follower of Jesus.

Thanks to you three old friends for your faithfulness, even at a distance.

Part I
Introduction

Chapter 1

The Doctrine

Tucked away in the Apostle's Creed, right after "the holy catholic Church," is the phrase, "the communion of saints." To most Protestants perhaps, this phrase is a sort of redundancy to "the holy catholic Church," a rhetorical flourish on that more familiar belief. In contrast, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and some Anglicans have a much richer sense of the importance of the communion of saints. The latter groups are quite at home taking the communion to include a living dialogue among all the saints, both the living and dead. Furthermore, Roman Catholic thought makes explicit claims about solidarity among the saints. Each saint has all the goods of Christ to the fullest. This is no mere "sharing" of the goods with everyone getting a piece of the proverbial pie but an apparently full "ownership" of all the goods *to the fullest extent*. In Orthodox thought, there is a clear emphasis on the concrete unity of all humanity—another type of solidarity wherein redemption occurs because of the unity of the finite human individual with Jesus, the divine-human.

One challenging aspect of this doctrine for Protestants became especially clear to me as I taught a course on Roman Catholicism to a largely Protestant group. When we discussed the communion of the saints and the role of St. Mary, I faced a sort of minor rebellion. No one liked this doctrine—no one but the lone Roman Catholic among the students. After listening as the Protestants raked the Roman Catholic Church over the (nearly hellish-sounding) coals, my Roman Catholic student politely and humbly asked if she could address the class. Her words were brief but powerful. "If you were sick or needed help with your spiritual life," she queried, "would you ask your Christian friends to pray for you?" When it was clear that all the Protestants provided an affirmative response, the speaker continued: "Well, when we Roman Catholics ask Mary or the other saints to pray for us, we are doing the same thing. They aren't really dead, you know." It was then that I knew I needed to write this book.

Of course, there is much more to this doctrine than simply asking the faithful who've gone before us to intercede on our behalf. Yet it is not a doctrine described in great detail even though it is of central importance within the practice of the Roman and Orthodox Churches, and to a lesser extent, the

Anglican Church as well.[1] For the purpose here, I let some fairly brief statements from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*[2] provide a starting point for the discussion, noting that some of the issues I consider arise not only for the Roman Catholic understanding but for the Orthodox and the Anglican as well. I do not spell out the connections among the various Christian traditions in detail, but I do supplement the description of the Roman Catholic view with a brief presentation of the view of the Orthodox Church.

While I return in the next chapter to reflect briefly on the biblical basis for the doctrine, my primary goal is not to defend the doctrine (biblically) but rather to explain a possible way of understanding how the various themes in the doctrine work together, philosophically. The doctrine itself, on the surface, is not difficult to grasp, as my Roman Catholic student's comments show. Yet once below the surface some powerful claims emerge, some of which appear quite curious and call for exploration. I hope both to shine some light on what challenges there might be within the doctrine, but also to point toward a way of handling those challenges.

In the interest of full disclosure, I have ulterior motives in writing on this topic as a Protestant, for I think the doctrine both true and powerful in the spiritual life of millions of Christians. I wish, thus, to encourage my sister and brother Protestants to take up a more "High-Church" view of the doctrine. However, that is a separate issue from proposing a plausible interpretation of the doctrine or attempting to resolve certain puzzles with it.

Before we begin, let me note that I think the communion of the saints reflects the nature of the Christian God. Although I believe God is omnipotent, omniscient, and so forth, I believe all of that is best summed up in the biblical phrase, "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." God is love and because the communion of the saints is rooted in God, it too is love. Throughout the essay, my language will move back and forth between talking about the communion and talking about love. By the term "love" I intend to pick out what the New Testament term *agape* picks out and to capture (in part) what is meant by that term. God's love for us—the love we are to strive

[1] The Anglo-Catholic or "high" church arm of the Anglican Communion is where one is most likely to find a more Roman or Orthodox understanding of the doctrine, although others hold to it as well. But the Anglican Church is typically ambivalent about explaining the doctrine. Consider, for example, C. S. Lewis: "…devotions to saints… There is clearly a theological defense for it; if you can ask for the prayers of the living, why should you not ask for the prayers of the dead? I am not thinking of adopting the practice myself; and who am I to judge the practices of others?" *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1964, pp. 15-16.

[2] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (English Edition), Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994.

toward and will eventually achieve—is agape. In large measure, what follows aims at an analysis of the ontological structures that support the person-in-community, that is, the structures that allow for agape-love. Insofar as we become like God (that is, like Christ, for in him the divine love is found incarnate), this is a reflection on how to be human as God intended us to be from before the foundation of the world. True humanity, I will assume, is capable of true love, and the essay explores what is ontologically necessary for that love to come to fruition.

The present chapter is mainly descriptive. Section I gives an account of the Roman Catholic doctrine. Section II presents the Orthodox doctrine. Section III explores Dostoevsky's lively account of how the communion of the saints works out in the life of one of his main characters.

I

The *Catechism* tells us that the phrase "the communion of the saints" is a further explanation of the Creed's statement on the holy catholic Church. In this way, its position overlaps with that of the Protestant churches. Yet there is much more going on for the Roman Catholic believer than just saying that the Church is a communion of believers. The *Catechism* states,

> Since all the faithful form one body, the good of each is communicated to the others . . . We must therefore believe that there exists a communion of goods in the Church. But the most important member is Christ, since he is the head.... Therefore, the riches of Christ are communicated to all the members, through the sacraments. [St. Thomas Aquinas, *Symb.,* 10] As this Church is governed by one and the same Spirit, all the goods she has received necessarily become a common fund. [*Roman Catechism I, 10, 24*][3]

The *Catechism* continues by explaining that "The term 'communion of the saints' therefore has two closely linked meanings: communion 'in holy things (*sancta)*' and communion 'among holy persons (*sancti).*'"[4]

Under the heading of "Communion in Spiritual Goods" (that is, in the section dealing with *sancta*) the catechism lists five aspects of holy things: the communion of the faith, the communion of the sacraments, the communion of charisms, "they had everything in common," and communion in charity. In the section entitled "The Communion of the Church of Heaven and Earth,"

[3] Ibid., 947. Because the *Catechism* is largely made up of quotations from other authoritative documents of the Church, I've indicated its sources by including its footnotes in square brackets.

[4] Ibid., 948.

(the section dealing with *sancti*) are listed the three states of the Church: the intercession of the saints, communion with the saints, and communion with the dead.

The "Communion of the faith" is simply described as "the faith of the Church, received from the Apostles."[5] The *Catcehism* continues with the section "Communion of the sacraments," saying:

> The fruit of all the sacraments belongs to all the faithful. All the sacraments are sacred links uniting the faithful with one another and binding them to Jesus Christ, and above all Baptism, the gate by which we enter into the Church. The communion of saints must be understood as the communion of the sacraments…. The name 'communion' can be applied to all of them, for they unite us to God…. But this name is better suited to the Eucharist than to any other because it is primarily the Eucharist that brings this communion about. [*Roman Catechism* I, 10, 24][6]

Of the "Communion of charisms," we are told:

> Within the communion of the Church, the Holy Spirit distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank for the building up of the Church. [*LG* 12 section 2] Now, to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. [*1 Cor* 12: 7][7]

Of "they had everything in common" the *Catechism* states:

> Everything the true Christian has is to be regarded as a good possessed in common with everyone else. All Christians should be ready and eager to come to the help of the needy … and of their neighbors in want.' [*Roman Catechism* I 10, 27] A Christian is the steward of the Lord's goods. [Cf. Luke 16: 1, 3][8]

Finally, in describing the "Communion in charity," (953), the *Catechism* says:

> In the sanctorum communio, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself." [Ro. 14:7] "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." [1 Co. 12: 26, 27] "Char-

[5] Ibid., 949.

[6] Ibid., 950.

[7] Ibid., 951

[8] Ibid., 952.

> ity does not insist on its own way." [1 Co. 13:5] In this solidarity with all men, living or dead, which is founded on the communion of saints, the least of our acts done in charity redounds to the profit of all. Every sin harms this communion.[9]

Who is in this communion, who are *sancti*? Under "The Three States of the Church" we are told:

> When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is" [*LG* 49; cf. *Mt* 25: 31; *I Cor* 15:26-27; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1305][10]

In short, those in the communion are all members of the Church, those still alive and on earth, and those who have passed through earthly death but are alive. This last group includes both those in purgatory and those in heaven.

How are these three groups of saints in the communion related? There are three basic ways described in the *Catechism*. The first is in "The intercession of the saints" where we are told:

> Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness…. They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they acquired on earth through the one mediator for men, Christ Jesus…. So by their fraternal concern is our weakness greatly helped. [*LG* 49; cf. *1 Tim* 2:5][11]

The second is found in the "Communion with the saints."

> It is not merely by the title of example that we cherish the memory of those in heaven; we seek, rather, that by this devotion to the exercise of fraternal charity the union of the whole Church in the Spirit may be strengthened. Exactly as Christian communion among our fellow pilgrims brings us closer to Christ, so our communion with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain and head issues all grace, and the life of the People of God itself. [*LG* 50; cf. *Eph* 4:16][12]

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[9] Ibid., 953.

[10] Ibid., 954.

[11] Ibid., 956.

[12] Ibid., 957.

The third relation is given account in "Communion with the dead" where the *Catechism* teaches:

> In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the very earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead; and 'because it is a holy and a wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins' she offers her suffrages for them.' [*LG* 51; cf. *Heb* 3:6] Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.[13]

In short, the three relations between the groups of saints within the communion are, first, that the saints in heaven intercede for those Christians still alive on earth; and second, those on earth can be devoted to those who are dead, thus bringing about a strengthening of the union of the whole Church. Just as Christians on earth can help one another in drawing closer to union with Christ, so can the communion of the living and the dead Christians help join each other to Christ. Finally, those on earth can honor those who have died by praying for them to be loosed from their sins (this must apply strictly to those in purgatory). In turn, this can help the intercession of the dead (in purgatory) be more effective in their prayers for those on earth. So, we see that Christians on earth can have an effect on those in purgatory, via prayer for them. Likewise, their prayers can be effectual for those on earth. Those in heaven can pray for those on earth, and these prayers are especially helpful since those in heaven can "proffer the merits" they have received from Christ, being fixed more "firmly in holiness." Those on earth can pray *to* those in heaven and pray *for* those in purgatory. Those in purgatory can pray *for* those on earth and presumably *to* those in heaven. Those in heaven can pray *for* those on earth and, presumably, for those in purgatory as well. However, it seems that there is no provision for the saints in heaven to communicate to those on earth nor to those in purgatory. Again, presumably, this is because those saints in heaven already are more closely in union with God than those "below"; that is, those on earth or in purgatory have no need of asking for the prayers of those with a lesser spiritual position.

II

The Orthodox Church's view of the communion of the saints is much less easily accessed. For one thing, the Orthodox Church simply doesn't produce catechisms in the way the Roman and Protestant Churches do. Another chal-

[13] Ibid., 958.

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