THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

The Communion of Saints and Ancestor Veneration:
A Study of the Concept "Communion of Saints"
with special reference to the Southern African
Religious Experience

A Thesis Submitted
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement
for the Degree of
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Department of Religion

By
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THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS AND ANCESTOR VENERATION:
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PREFACE

I wish to express my gratitude for the assistance of the Partners-in-Mission and to my beloved bishop, the Rt. Rev. James Schuster of the Diocese of St. Johns, Transkei, Southern Africa, for the privilege of pursuing graduate studies in religion for two years in Winnipeg, Canada, at the University of Manitoba. I am also indebted to the Rt. Rev. Barry Valentine of the Diocese of Rupert's Land, and the people of his diocese for their support and love which enabled me to withstand the excruciating Canadian winters.

Several people have given me of their valuable time and wisdom for the purpose of this study and I would like to express special thanks at this point to them, viz., my thesis examining committee members: Head and Professor H. Gordon Harland and Professor Klaus K. Klostermaier, both of the Religion Department, University of Manitoba; Professor O.P. St. John, Department of Political Studies, University of Manitoba; and Professor John Badertscher, Department of Religious Studies, University of Winnipeg. I owe a very special thanks to my advisor, Professor Egil Grislis, Department of Religion, University of Manitoba; his endless patience, guidance and encouragement have been more than the conventional words of appreciation can express. I consider myself fortunate and privileged to have had the opportunity to work with him. It is my sincere hope that my graduate studies have in some ways helped to prepare me for my new duties as Tutor at St.

INTRODUCTION

It was about a decade ago when I first read the study by
G. C. Oosthuizen entitled, <u>Post-Christianity in Africa</u>. My first
impressions were that the author had failed to appreciate the
predicament of the Church in Africa. My impressions were soon
changed, however, when I came to his admission that the basic problem
of the Church in Africa is the Church herself, for "in so many ways
it is unrelated to Africa."[1] Today that out-cry is more true than
ever before.

Yet today many black African Christians have come to realize
the apparent foreignness of the Church in Africa and hence the need
for the Church to adapt herself to the African environment and to
speak to the Africans in the language they will best understand.
Among other things, this realization involves an acknowledgement of
the fact that there is a whole heritage in the non-Christian African
culture with which the Church and its leaders must consciously attempt
to come to terms.

It must be emphasized, however, that such adaptation ought
not to involve an attempt to preserve everything in the traditional
religion and culture of the people simply because it is theirs.
The Scriptures must remain the normative focal point and must be
presented in their full splendour. The Gospel must always be seen

as a message of salvation from God Himself, and therefore must give

direction for a way of life which the people can live while remaining

authentic citizens of their own nations.

This thesis is an attempt to find a way towards the positive

solution of the so-called "ancestor worship" and that in a manner

which will make Christianity immediately relevant to the African

environment. It is to be noted that since the coming of Christianity

to Southern Africa, the concern of the black African Christians

with their dead ancestors was given the name of "ancestor worship"

and treated as participation in idolatry. Accordingly, the African

Christians were forbidden to continue the practices which spring

from the ideas they hold about their deceased ancestors. At the

same time it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the concern

with the ancestors is still a vital part of the lives of most African

Christians.

Now, it is our considered contention in this thesis that the

idea of the "ancestor worship" is actually very similar to the Christian

concept of the communion of saints. Both concepts serve to describe

the relations between the living and the departed. Of course, this

requires a proper understanding of both the communion of saints and

the "ancestor worship".

In order to achieve this understanding in some depth, this

project is undertaken on a limited scale in regard to the Roman

Catholic and Anglican understanding of the communion of saints on

the one hand, and to the tradition of the Xhosa-speaking people of

South Africa[2] on the other. It may be noted that the author is an

Anglican priest who belongs to the Xhosa-speaking people. Occasional references are also made to some of the significant positions both in the Protestant and other African societies.

The first two chapters interpret the different meanings given to the phrase sanctorum communio. We have adopted a historical approach with special attention to relevant doctrinal matters.

The third chapter examines the modes of expression of the communion of saints and notes the inherent dangers of idolatry.

The fourth chapter delineates the Xhosa custom of the so-called "ancestor worship", assessing its significance in the life of the people, and showing why the Xhosa people have resisted the rejection of their concern with their dead ancestors.

The final chapter articulates the concept of the communion of saints in African religious experience, inquiring whether the fellowship of the communion of saints ought to be limited to the Christian dead, and noting that the idea of the "ancestor worship" can make an authentic contribution to the believers' relationship to Christ.

CHAPTER ONE

Sanctorum Communio in Historical Perspective

A. Preliminary Remarks.

The Apostles' Creed in its present form conventionally labelled T,[1] is an expanded version of the many variants of the old Roman baptismal confessions labelled R.[2] In the process of R's development into T, certain additions were inserted. Among them was the expression "sanctorum communio", translated in the English version as the "communion of saints". Theologians generally agree that this expression was the latest of the additions made to T.[3] As may be seen from the variations of this phrase, the precise meaning was not yet fully specified by the churchmen who inserted it into the creed. Consequently, so much uncertainty and speculation surrounds this addition that it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the dispute over the precise meaning of the words "sanctorum" and "communio" has hindered the development of the doctrine of the communion of saints.

The problem, of course, is intensified by the fact that both in the Greek and Latin versions, the substantively used adjective "saints", according to gender, could be either masculine or neuter—and hence permits two interpretations. When taken as a neuter, the word "saints" (sanctorum) could refer to "holy things", especially the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. As a masculine "sanctorum"

could refer to "holy persons", namely, "saints". In Christian language, however, the word "saints" has a two-fold meaning. It could mean the holy ones of special sanctity or Christians generally. These possibilities in the translation of "sanctorum" prevent any attempts to attach a fixed meaning to this clause.

However, those who take sanctorum as a masculine interpret the phrase as either "fellowship of holy persons" both living and departed,[4] or "fellowship of holy persons" with exclusive emphasis upon the living.[5] But, as will be seen in the course of this discussion, there is yet another interpretation which tends to confine "fellowship of holy persons" to the saints who have received special honours.[6] At the same time, those who take sanctorum as a neuter, interpret the clause as "participation in holy things".[7]

Of these two traditional schools of interpretation, both claim originality in regard to the meaning of the sanctorum communio. Here great caution is certainly in order, since a problem like this cannot be definitively solved, as there is very little evidence to go upon and the arguments are fairly evenly balanced. Without a doubt it is on account of some such considerations that yet another school of interpretation has emerged.[8] Here the double meaning of sanctorum is retained and its two genders are explained as belonging inalienably together. That is, the phrase is interpreted as a 'fellowship of holy persons through participation in holy things'. This interpretation does not altogether settle the exegetical problems which have been already mentioned. Nevertheless, it goes beyond linguistic dispute over the original meaning to the very foundations

of the communion of saints.

Now in such a difficult situation our purpose is not only to find out the basis on which each approach relies, but also to determine the central meaning that each view attaches to the clause. In order to accomplish this, we have focussed our attention on three basic questions, viz, (1) when and where was the addition made to the creed; (2) what was originally the precise meaning of the terms "sancti" and "communio" and; (3) what were the motives which led to the making of the addition. Obviously, these three questions are intimately connected with each other. The answer to the last two follows from the reply given to the first; ac the same time the last two cannot be answered except in conjunction with one another.

B. The Personal View

(1) Provenance.

The basic argument of the school of interpretation which attaches a personal meaning to the communion of saints rests on the observation that the clause cannot be found outside the creedal setting and outside Gaul but is encountered only in the literature current in the Gallic church of the fourth and fifth centuries.[9] In other words, before the end of the fourth century this clause did not appear in any creedal settings.[10] Most important, this addition could not be found in any of the Eastern creeds prior tc its appearance in the Gallican church confessions.[11] Accordingly, it was argued that the meaning of the communion of saints ought to be sought in the literature of Gaul.

The first witness to whom appeal is made is Faustus, Bishop
of Riez in the south of France between 449 and 462. In the work
attributed to him De Spirito Sancto, Faustus speaks of the words
"sanctorum communionem" as occurring immediately after "sanctam
ecclesiam".[12] Also, in another work attributed to him, Tractatus
De Symbolo, Faustus makes a similar point. Caesarius, Bishop of
Arles between 470 and 542, likewise mentions this phrase as part
of the creed.[13] Outside Gaul the addition is commented upon by
Nicetas of Remesiana.[14] But it is a matter of controversy from where
or from whom Nicetas derived the clause. Harnack contends that
Nicetas obtained the idea from St Cyril of Jerusalem.[15] This
theory, however, has not met with subsequent approval. Several
theologians[16] have argued that it is highly unlikely that St
Cyril could have successfully induced Nicetas and the West to adopt
the clause, without the same influence having a similar effect on
the creeds of Jerusalem or on the rest of the Eastern churches.
Furthermore, J.N.D. Kelly has argued that "there is nothing to
indicate that St Cyril of Jerusalem had any knowledge of Communion
of Saints," and that "the passages Harnack cited . . . in support
of his theory are altogether too vague."[17] Most likely then the
evidence would seem to favour the view that Nicetas actually borrowed
the phrase from a creed he found in the Gallic church. However,
according to yet another suggestion,[18] the words as they were
commented upon by Nicetas had first appeared in a creed attributed
to St Jerome who in turn was influenced by St Cyprian's idea of the
"malorum communio". From the creed attributed to St Jerome the

phrase eventually found its way to the West from where it was obtained by Nicetas. This theory, as may well be expected, has not received universal approval by the theologians who attribute the origins of this clause to Southern Gaul. Their argument is that, before the end of the fourth century, there is no baptismal confession from the East which would contain the phrase sanctorum communio, i.e., κοινωνία τῶν ἁγίων. Furthermore there is no proof that sanctorum communio is the translation of the Greek original, for the simple reason that the existence of the original has not been found.[19] In short, these considerations force us to abandon any reliance upon the analogies that could be drawn from the Greek usage of the terms "sanctorum" and "communio". Consequently the safest approach is to look for the meaning in the writings of the Latin, i.e., Western church. Without a doubt this is the most plausible general approach to the origins of sanctorum communio. One must note with some amazement that Theodor Zahn and F.J. Badcock, who contend that (1) sanctorum communio is the translation of the Greek concept κοινωνία τῶν ἁγίων and that (2) the concept came from the East to the West, simply do not consider the alternative, viz., that the movement could have been the other way round. Moreover, they rely too much upon the meaning of the terms "sanctorum" and "communio" prior to their creedal combination and use. Accordingly, they assume that what ought to have been the meaning of these terms supplies the key to what was actually meant in the creed. Therefore, the approach which deduces the meaning of this clause from the literature in the West, appears more appropriate.

(2) The Meaning and Purpose of the Clause.

Because the theologians in favour of the personal meaning
of "sanctorum communio" agree that the roots of the communion of
saints are to be sought in Southern Gaul rather than in the Greek-
speaking environment, they derive the meaning of the phrase from
the sources current in Gaul beginning with the fourth century.
With the exception of sermon 241 falsely ascribed to St Augustine,
all other known sources interpret the communion of saints in a
personal sense. And even sermon 241 may be understood as interpreting
the sanctorum communio in a personal sense.[20] The key passage from
this sermon is:

> Since, therefore, you believe in the holy, universal
> church, having the sanctorum communio, for where there
> is holy faith, there is also holy communion, it is
> necessary for you to believe also in the resurrection
> of the body and the forgiveness of sins.[21]

In this passage the actual meaning of the sanctorum communio is
ambiguous. For, in the first place, the author identifies "sanctorum
communio" with the "holy, universal church". But in the second part
the clause is identified with the "holy communion" and the "forgiveness
of sins"--a clear reference to the sacraments. Consequently, Zahn
has suggested that "sanctorum" as used in this passage is in the
neuter gender and therefore refers to the sacraments, especially
the Lord's Supper.[22] According to Zahn the preacher understood
sanctorum communio as the participation in the holy gifts offered
in the sacraments.[23] Such is not, however, the case according to
Kelly:

> What he [i.e. the preacher] is saying is that because
> we believe in the holy Catholic church, and because
> faith brings holy fellowship, we therefore enjoy the
> fellowship of saints, and so ought to believe in the
> resurrection and the remission of sins even while we
> are in the body.[24]

Kelly obviously stresses the personal meaning of this clause.

This, we contend, is a clear case of the ambiguous nature of the

sanctorum communio. And so, even if Kelly's explanation is correct,

we ought to realize that the sacramental meaning is not altogether

impossible. For if the "fellowship of saints" is brought about by

"faith" as well as by things holy (sancta), then both the neuter

and masculine meaning of "sanctorum" contribute to the bringing to

light the complete meaning of the Communion of Saints.

However, clear evidence of a personal meaning is furnished

by a commentary attributed to Nicetas:[24]

> After the confession of the blessed Trinity you profess
> that you believe in the holy, universal Church. What
> else is the Church but the congregation of all saints?
> From the beginning of the world, the patriarchs Abraham,
> Isaac, and Jacob; the prophets; the apostles; the martyrs;
> and the other first who were and are and will be, are one
> Church, because sanctified by one faith and conversation,
> signed by one Spirit, they are made into one body; the
> head of which is Christ, as it is written. I go even
> further. The angels, the virtues, and the powers from
> above are included in this one Church, for in Christ all
> things were reconciled, not only those on earth but also
> those in heaven (Col. 1:20) as the apostle teaches.
> Therefore, in this Church believe yourself to be gathered
> into the communio sanctorum. You know that this is the
> universal church, which is constituted all over the world,
> the communion of which you must firmly retain.[25]

First of all we may draw attention to the fact that Nicetas joins

the words "sanctorum communio" to the preceding article, "the

universal church", and thus regards it as a definition of the Church.

Accordingly the Church is an institution made up of holy persons. The Church is "the congregation of all the saints", past, present and future--indiscriminately! Obviously, Nicetas uses the word "saints" in the scriptural sense as a synonym for "Christians" in general.[26] Moreover, for him the communion of saints embraces not only the living Christians but also the dead as well as those who will be the members of the Church in the future. Thus "Communio" for him represents the "relationship" in which the members of the Church, the Body of Christ, stand to each other. "Communio" then constitutes the inmost essence of the Church. (Yet while clear, this explanation is not without some difficulties.)

It has been noted that Nicetas' explanation appears also to point to the ultimate fellowship of the saints which is anticipated and partly realized in the fellowship of the Church universal.[27] In this sense his explanation has adopted a specifically eschatological position, for he calls the existing church not only an assembly of saints, but also one which will attain the fullness of fellowship in the future. In this regard Benko feels that Nicetas' reference to the future contradicts the concepts of "fellowship" and "sainthood". According to Benko, there is no need for an eschatological hope if the Church is already made up of "saints" and enjoys the "fellowship" of saints.[28] Benko's criticism, however, is not completely convincing. Nicetas' position is clearly scriptural. Nicetas views holiness and fellowship not as possessions of the members of the Church, but as qualities of life to be appropriated in the ongoing life of the Church.

Another important source to which appeal is often made in support of the personal meaning of the "Sanctorum Communio" is a passage from a homily attributed to Faustus of Riez:

> Let us believe in the communio sanctorum, not as though they shared the prerogatives of God, but for the honour of God: let us do homage to the fear and love of God manifested in them; they are worthy of our veneration, inasmuch as by their contempt for death they induce in us a spirit of devotion to God and of eager longing for the life to come.[29]

Faustus here speaks of the communion of saints as he is expressing the honour due to these holy dead, probably the martyrs and other departed Christians of special sanctity. Accordingly "communio" is the relationship in which the departed saints of special honour stand to each other. It is indeed strange that Faustus appears to narrow down the meaning of the word "saints" by confining it to the technical modern acceptance of the word. Some writers have found a rationale for this by claiming that Faustus used the expression "communion of saints" against the supporters of Vigilantius who condemned the veneration of saints.[30] In this way Faustus was trying to defend as well as to control and to guide the growing cult of the martyrs.[31] This notion appears clearly in another text ascribed to Faustus:

> It follows: that we pass over to sanctorum communio. This sentence in the creed puts to shame those who blasphemously deny that the ashes of the saints are to be held in honour--who do not hold that the glorious memory of the blessed martyrs is to be venerated by doing honour to their shrines. Such persons sin against their creed and have lied to Christ at the font.[32]

In this statement polemical considerations appear to predominate.

Some critics, however, feel that if the purpose of the addition

was to emphasize the legitimacy of the cult of the saints, a less

ambiguous formula would have been selected, especially since during

the fifth century the word "saints" already had different meanings.[33]

This argument is, indeed, plausible. Nevertheless, even if the

purpose of the insertion into the creed was motivated by polemical

considerations, the truth contained in the suggestion ought not

to be ignored. First, from the way Nicetas spoke about the phrase

we have observed that it enjoyed a wide interpretation and was

not necessarily polemical. That is to say, according to Nicetas

the word "saints" included the living believers as well as the

departed saints and martyrs. Thus it could well be that Faustus

was trying to keep within common-sense bounds a popular enthusiasm

for the fellowship with the departed saints. Perhaps Faustus never

intended to preserve the word "saints" exclusively for the departed.

His main objective could have been to clarify the practice of the

veneration of saints in relation to the worship of God. Similar

views can be found, for instance, in sermon 242 falsely attributed

to Augustine:

> Communion of Saints: that is, we are bound with
> fellowship and the communion of hope with those saints
> who have passed away in this faith which we have
> embraced.[34]

This passage pinpoints our problem as it shows that the living

have a "fellowship" and a "communion of hope" with all the departed

saints (i.e. Christians), by virtue of faith which all have embraced.

And so, although it should be admitted that this passage is not explicitly polemical, it seems to be concerned with the relation of the living to the departed Christians.[35]

As might have been expected, Faustus' explanation has not passed without some criticism. Swete regards Faustus' view as an "after-thought" and comments: "the interpretation which Faustus and his age assigned to the Communion of saints erred by excluding the living, not by including the dead."[36] In other words, Swete understood the "communion of saints" to be the fellowship of holy persons, living or departed.

In short, the central issue in regard to the personal meaning of sanctorum communio is whether the word "saints" embraces both the living and the departed or refers exclusively to the departed. Most critics think that sanctorum communio refers to the Christians of all ages in general[37] and regard Faustus' interpretation as an after-thought.[38] A few interpreters state that Faustus and Nicetas are in essential agreement,[39] since in the earlier period the only meaning assigned to the phrase was 'fellowship of saints, living or departed'.

Now we must turn to the consideration of the views of the other school of interpretation which attaches an impersonal meaning to sanctorum communio.

C. The Sacramental View

While many scholars have done research on the sacramental meaning of the Communion of Saints, and several have contributed

valuable insights (notably Badcock and Zahn), none have contributed as much as Stephen Benko. In this section we shall pay very close attention to the work of Benko, at the same time also consulting other interpreters.

Part one of Benko's book deals with 'The Development of the clause Sanctorum Communio in the History of Doctrine'. Here Benko is specifically concerned with the development of the baptismal creed in the ancient church. He notes: "the third article [of the creed] developed out of the confession of Christ which emphasized the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection which were imparted through baptism."[40] That is, baptism was initially regarded as imparting both the forgiveness of sins and the benefits of Christ, eventually culminating in the resurrection. In the period from Cyprian to Ambrose, however, a crisis occurred when the idea of baptism as the means of conveying the death and resurrection of Christ could no longer be reconciled with the growing need for penance after baptism.[41] According to Benko, Cyprian then took a decisive step: he pointed to the Eucharist as a means of establishing communion with Christ![42] The resulting tension was ultimately resolved through a theological compromize, viz. the two sacrament doctrines of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine.[43] St. Augustine, observes Benko, recognised both Baptism and the Eucharist as means of personal salvation which incorporate and preserve the believer in the Body of Christ. Benko claims that St. Augustine formulated this idea through his concept of the "communio sacramentorum".[44] This concept expressed what had been sought

after for a long time, namely the belief that there are two sacra-

ments which effect the forgiveness of sins.[45]   In the Creed

"sanctorum communio"[46] was used instead of "sacramentorum communio",

because sancta is a shorter term and stylistically more suitable

than sacramenta. Moreover, because both Baptism and the Eucharist,

as sacraments, were described as sancta, the expression could not

have been misunderstood.[47]

    Benko is prepared to summarize the findings of his detailed

research as follows: "the expression sanctorum communio in the

creed is the result of the protracted struggles connected with the

doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. It expresses the belief that

the remission of sins is granted through participation in the

Eucharist, as well as by Baptism."[48] Accordingly Communion of

Saints means participation in holy things.

    Regarding the provenance of the phrase, Benko emphasizes

the distinction between the idea and the form of its expression.[49]

As for the idea of sanctorum communio Benko finds its origin in the

East, specifically in the formula ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

At the same time Benko views the form of the expression as a product

of the West. Contrary to Zahn[50] and Badcock[51] who claim that

sanctorum communio is the Western equivalent of the Eastern

expression κοινωνία τῶν ἁγίων which unquestionably refers to the

sacraments, Benko is of the conviction that this cannot be proven.[52]

Benko points out that this expression did not exist in the creeds

of the East. He also notes that most of the creeds do not contain

any statements that could be seen as synonyms with Communion of

Saints.[53]

Although such observations may be very helpful in solving the exegetical problems centred around the phrase <u>sanctorum communio</u>, they do not offer a completely satisfying explanation. Namely, although stressing the common sharing of things (sancta) in the communion, Benko does not sufficiently consider the persons who do this sharing and thereby constitute the Communion of Saints. It is therefore at this point that we shall turn to the next viewpoint which, although it does not settle the exegetical problems of this clause, nevertheless provides a useful basis for the development of this doctrine.

CHAPTER TWO

The Synthetic Approach to the Sanctorum Communio

The Synthetic approach to the sanctorum communio, which
integrates the sacramental and the personal meanings, began as early
as the Middle Ages. It reached prominence, however, in the thought
of the theologians who worked on this problem in the nineteenth
and twentieth centuries. Roughly speaking this clause was interpreted
as 'fellowship of holy persons through participation in holy things'.
In this way both the neuter and the personal meaning of Communion
of Saints are retained and viewed as inalienably belonging together.
The proponents of this view are cautious in not overemphasizing
one aspect of the concept at the expense of the other. They believe
that the complete meaning of this concept includes all that is
contained in the personal and impersonal interpretations of this
clause. A profound and detailed articulation of this view is found
in Karl Barth's Dogmatics in Outline. He asks "whether there is
not here intended a remarkable ambiguity in a deeper sense. For
only when both interpretations are retained side by side does the
matter receive its full, good meaning."[1] Barth notes that he does
not wish to end the dispute as to whether the nominative of "sanctorum"
is sancti or sancta.[2] But he feels rather strongly that the sancti
could be Christian men and women who are set apart for holy gifts

and works, i.e. for the <u>sancta</u>.[3] Accordingly the <u>sancti</u> belong
to the <u>sancta</u>, and the <u>sancta</u> to the <u>sancti</u>! Barth also points
out that the saints which are referred to in this clause are neither
specifically fine people nor the departed few who hold special
honours, but people like the "saints of Corinth" who in many ways
were very ordinary people.[4] For him these ordinary people and
therefore unusual saints are the <u>sancti</u> who are set apart for the
<u>sancta</u>. This suggestion implies a close interrelationship between
the fellowship of the saints, the ways in which the saints are con-
firmed in their sanctity, and also the ways in which the communion
is sustained and nourished. Common sharing in holy things i.e.
participating in the benefits of Christ's passion necessarily calls
attention to the complementary emphasis on the persons who are
involved in the fellowship. In short, participation in the <u>sancta</u>
is not apersonal. This approach has enabled the concerned theolo-
gians to go beyond the linguistic problem of whether "sanctorum"
is neuter or masculine and to consider whether the fellowship in
question embraces the living and the dead (or the dead of special
sanctity only).

The earliest comprehensive evidence of this approach is
found in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. In Thomas' short essay
on the Apostles' Creed,[5] there is clear attention to both meanings
of the <u>sancta</u>, thereby suggesting that he has integrated the sacra-
mental and the personal dimensions of the Communion of Saints.
Here the union of the communion of saints is interpreted with special
attention to the Body of Christ:

> Just as in a physical body the operation of one
> member conduces to the good of the whole body, so
> is it in a spiritual body such as the Church. And
> since all the faithful are one body, the good of one
> member is communicated to another; <u>everyone</u>, as the
> Apostle says (Rom. 12:5), <u>members of one another</u>.
> Wherefore among the points of faith handed down by
> the Apostles, is that there is a community of goods
> in the Church, and this is expressed in the words
> <u>Communion of Saints</u>. Now of all the members of the
> Church, Christ is the principal, for He is the Head:
> <u>He . . . hath made him head over all the Church which</u>
> <u>is His body</u> (Eph. 1:22). Accordingly, Christ's good
> is communicated to all Christians, even as the power
> in the head is shared by all the members.
>
> This communication is effected by the sacraments
> of the Church, wherein the power of Christ's Passion
> operates, the effect of which is the bestowal of grace
> unto the remission of sins.[6]

Unquestionably then St. Thomas views the communion of saints as

being materialized through the participation in the sacraments, for

he relates the <u>sanctorum communio</u> to "the remission of sins". More

specifically, St. Thomas thinks of the sacraments as communicating

to the partakers the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.

And in this account the personal meaning is not lost. St. Thomas

also pays an equally serious attention to the Church, the Body of

Christ and regards it as a corporate society whose members belong

to each other. Thus for St. Thomas the Church as a "spiritual body"

is characterized not only by the participation in the benefits of

Christ's passion but also by the fact that the "good of one is

communicated to the other".[7] Towards the end of his essay, this

concern receives a more explicit affirmation:

> It must be observed also that not only is the efficacy
> of Christ's Passion communicated to us, but also the
> merits of His life; and besides this all the good deeds
> of holy men are communicated to those who are in a state

> of grace, because all are one: <u>I am a partaker with</u>
> <u>all them that fear thee</u> (Ps. CXVIII:63). Hence it is
> that a man who lives in the state of grace is a
> partaker of all the good that is done in the whole
> world; but in a special way those for whom specially
> a good deed is done: since one man can satisfy for
> another, as instanced in those benefits to which many
> societies admit certain persons.
>
> Through this communion, then, we derive a two-fold
> benefit. One is that Christ's merit is communicated
> to all; the other is that one man's good is communicated
> to another.[8]

In this passage Thomas' emphasis is obviously on the fellowship

which the saints enjoy by virtue of being in the Church. This

insight is clearly brought out by his reference to the assaults

of the devil which the excommunicated experience outside the Church.[9]

Incidentally, this implies that "outside" of the Church there is

no salvation, i.e. for those who with wilful stubbornness reject the

truth. (At the same time St. Thomas believed that salvation is

extended to the heterodox, i.e. to those who were in principle

teachable, but had not received precise instruction; likewise,

Thomas also regarded as saved those who simply never had been reached

by Christianity without their own fault, i.e. the invincibly ignorant.

The culpably ignorant, of course, had no such excuse and were damned.)

As a result, since St. Thomas delineates the meaning of the communion

of saints in terms of the gifts conveyed in the sacraments alongside

the good which the Christians communicate to each other, we must

conclude that St. Thomas' thought contains both the sacramental and

the personal meaning of the Communion of Saints.

It is, however, remarkable that in this exposition St. Thomas

confines the membership of the Body of Christ, the Church, to the

living only. He is utterly reticent about the faithful departed
in relation to the communion of saints. Nevertheless in the
Supplement to the Summa Theologica where in dealing with the question
of whether the intention of the living could be directed towards the
faithful dead, it is stated:

> Charity which is the bond of uniting members of the
> Church, extends not only to the living, but also to
> the dead who die in charity.[10]

This idea is obviously in perfect accord with St. Thomas' understanding
of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ. If charity of the living
extends to those who die in charity, it follows that those who die
in faith and love continue their membership in the mystical Body.
Accordingly the fellowship of saints consists not only of those who
live in faith and love through Christ but also of those who die in
faith and love, including the invincibly ignorant.

In the tradition of the Reformation we find a similar conception
of the sanctorum communio which integrates its personal and impersonal
meanings. In his explanation of the Third Article of the Creed in
the Large Catechism, Luther says that the communion of saints is "a
term meaning the same thing as holy Christian Church."[11] Thus since
the Communion of Saints is for Luther a synonym of the "holy Christian
Church", it can be used as a definition of the Church.[12] Luther
says that he does not like the word "ecclesia" because its German
equivalent "Kirche" had come to mean a consecrated building. He
prefers to call the Church "Eine Heilige Christenheit" (holy Christendom)
since these words express the unity of those who are baptized and
believe.[13] Likewise Luther understands "communio" as a gathering

or as an assembly. "Sanctorum" he interpretes as "saints". Hence,

sanctorum communio means "a communion made up only of saints".[14]

Of course, Luther is far from understanding the meaning of the word

"saints" in a narrow sense. For this word embraces all who are

"called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind and one

understanding".[15] In this way Luther restores the original meaning

of the word "sancti". This is reiterated also in the Augsburg

Confession of 1530 where the Church is defined as "the assembly of

all believers".[16] For Luther the Church is a "holy communion" because

it consists of all those who live in true faith and love and are

regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Church there

prevails a spirit of oneness which grows out of faith and love.[17]

Luther emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit for bringing about the

unity and the sanctification of the members of the Communion of

Saints, the Christian Church.[18] Luther also stresses the role of

the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, for a clear understanding

of this article.[19] Paul Althaus points out that the role of the

Eucharist in Luther is in fact so vital that it "both expresses and

guarantees the reality of the Church as the community (communio)

of saints".[20] Likewise, the Augsburg Confession is not content with

the characterization of the Church as the assembly of the saints

(or believers), but goes on to attribute the presence of the Church

wherever "the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments

administered in accordance with the gospel."[21]

Thus it is evident that while the personal meaning of Communion

of Saints has remained dominant, the sacramental meaning in the sense

of a participation in the sancta has not been rejected. Indeed, it
can be said that for Luther the fellowship of the saints lies at the
very heart of the sacraments especially in regard to the Holy
Communion. In the "Sermon on the Brotherhoods and the Sacrament"
Luther writes:

> The significance or purpose of this sacrament is the
> fellowship of saints, whence it derives its common name
> synaxis or communio, that is, fellowship; and communicare
> means to take part in this fellowship, or as we say, to
> go to the sacrament, because Christ and all saints are
> one spiritual body, first as the inhabitants of a city
> are one community and body, each citizen being a member of
> the other and a member of the entire city. All the saints,
> therefore, are members of Christ and of the Church, which
> is a spiritual and eternal city of God, and whoever is
> taken into this city is said to be received into the
> communion of saints, and to be incorporated into Christ's
> spiritual body and made a member of Him . . . . To receive
> the bread and wine of this sacrament, then is nothing else
> than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and incor-
> poration with Christ and all saints.[22]

Thus for Luther the communion of saints is the simultaneous experience
of Christ and of all the saints. It is the awareness of the believer
that because he is one with Christ, he is also one with all the
saints. The believers attain to this experience through the parti-
cipation in the sacraments and in the forgiveness of sins. In this
regard Althaus is correct when he says that "Luther's doctrine of
the Communion of Saints represents an extremely vital conception of
Christ's presence in the community."[23] However, it is remarkable
that Luther, while emphasizing the oneness of the members of the
communion with Christ and with one another, does not stress the relation
of the faithful departed to the communicant. Luther's conception
of the Communion of Saints as the spiritual fellowship of believers

in the Body of Christ, born and sustained by the Word and the

Sacraments, contrasts strongly with his silence about the mystical

element of the Body of Christ. It appears that for Luther the

personalist or the ethical dimension took precedence over the

objective or mystical aspect of the community of saints.

Like Luther, Calvin also understands the communion of saints

as an appositional phrase explaining the Church:

> the article of the creed, in which we profess to believe,
> the Church, refers not only to the visible Church of
> which we are now speaking, but likewise to all the elect
> of God, including the dead as well as the living.[24]

Calvin argues however that, following Scripture, no one has discovered

that our dead fellow-believers have ears to hear our petitions or

that they have eyes so keen as to watch over our needs.[25] And so

for Calvin the reality of the communion of saints consists of no more

than the common solidarity and mutual interdependence of the living

members of the Church. Calvin explains as follows:

> This clause though generally omitted by the ancients,
> ought not to be overlooked, for it very well expresses
> what the Church is. It is as if one said that the saints
> are gathered into the society of Christ on the principle
> that whatever benefits God confers upon them, they should
> in turn share with one another.[26]

In other words, the Communion of Saints for Calvin is experienced

as the members of the Church share with one another the benefits

with which God has blessed them. As such it is a very important

experience, since according to Calvin it is sharing and solidarity

that constitute the only condition on the basis of which believers

may enter into communion with Christ.[27] At the same time Calvin

recognizes that such a condition is a gift of God, which is ultimately

derived from the oneness of Christ with the Father.

Indeed, Calvin's explanation of the meaning and reality
of the communion of saints is significantly coloured by the idea of
the Church defined as the Body of Christ or "the society of Christ".
Incidentally this allows Calvin to emphasize the personalistic aspect
of communion of saints. "Saints", as we must note, are for Calvin
the elect of God, and the true members of the community of Christ.
And "communio" is a specific relationship of blessedness with God and
with the rest of the members of the people of God. At the same time,
however, Calvin does not explicitly connect the sacraments with the
idea of the Communion of Saints. Yet his emphasis upon the quality
of the relationship with God in Christ and with the believers points
to a situation in which the sacraments are viewed as authentic means
of grace.[28]

Now in turning to a few representative Anglican and Roman
Catholic theologians, we shall be dealing with defenders of the syn-
thetic view in the interpretation of the sanctorum communio. It
must be acknowledged that the synthetic view has completely dominated
the Anglican and the Catholic scene.

In the Anglican tradition we may well begin with John Pearson's
An Exposition of the Creed (1893)[29] on account of his thorough treatment
of this subject and the high acclaim which his work has received.
Pearson understands the "Sanctorum Communio" as a definition of the
inner dynamics of the Church since the saints, i.e. the sancti,
constitute the Church.[30] In this way Pearson has returned to the
biblical meaning of the word "saints". For him

there is no doubt, but the saints mentioned here are
members of the Church of Christ, . . ., built upon the
apostles, laid upon the foundation of their doctrine,
who do not only profess the gospel, but are sanctified
thereby.[31]

Pearson believes that the membership in the Church universal consists
only of those after the time of Christ, who share the benefits of
Christ's passion, that is, who both profess the gospel and are sancti-
fied by it.[32]   Similarly, the criterion for membership in the
Communion of Saints is participation in saving grace, faith, and
love.[33]

Pearson's next consideration is to identify the persons with
whom the saints have communion. He approaches this task by the
following steps. First, he argues that the fellowship of saints
rests upon and issues from a communion with God the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit. That is, the saints have communion with the
Father because "by the great and precious promises given to them"
they have become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:14).[34]
And they have communion with Christ, the Son of God because "God
hath called us unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"
(I Cor. 1:9).[35] Finally, the saints also have communion with the
Holy Spirit, because it is through Him that they are sanctified.[36]
In this way the communion which the saints enjoy is primarily with
the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. At the same time, the
saints have communion with the angels as well. Pearson deduces the
evidence for this from those scriptural passages where the angels
are described as serving mankind.[37] Moreover, the saints must not

be viewed as solitary but as having communion with all the other living saints in the Church universal.[38] Put in another way, since Christ as the Head of the Church and all the saints are the members of the Body of Christ, all have communion among themselves.[39] In addition, the saints living in the fellowship with Christ have communion with all the saints who have departed out of this life and have been admitted to the presence of God.[40]

According to Pearson special attention must be paid to Baptism which is able to forge such intense links among fellow believers that cannot be interrupted by physical death:

> Indeed, the communion of saints in the Church of Christ
> with those which are departed is demonstrated by their
> communion with the saints alive. For if I have communion
> with a saint of God, as such, while he liveth here, I must
> still have communion with him when he is departed hence;
> because the foundation of that communion cannot be removed
> by death. The mystical union between Christ and his
> Church, the spiritual conjunction of the members to the
> head, is the true foundation of that communion which one
> member hath with one another. But death . . . maketh no
> separation in the mystical union, no breach of the spiritual
> conjunction, and consequently there must continue the same
> communion, because there remaineth the same foundation.[41]

Although Pearson emphasizes the continuity of the existence of the members of the Church, he also recognizes the uncertainty of the exact manner of the interaction between the saints in heaven and on earth. The reasons are as follows:

> What they do in heaven in relation to us on earth
> particularly considered, or what we ought to perform
> in reference to them in heaven besides a reverential
> respect, and study of initiation is not revealed unto
> us in the scriptures, nor can be concluded by necessary
> deduction from any principles of Christianity.[42]

Consequently Pearson rejects Roman Catholic views as "unwarrantable".[43]

Assessing the total impact of Pearson's perspective, we must note that for the most part, his exposition of the communion of saints favors the so-called personal view of the communion of saints. The impersonal dimension, however, has not been thereby negated. Within his concern for the communion of saints in their interrelationship with the Blessed Trinity, Pearson seems to be fully aware that the reality of the fellowship of saints also consists in the participation in holy things i.e. the sacraments. This idea has been developed further by several scholars of the early twentieth century.

First, George Lee has noted in The Christian Doctrine of Prayers for the Departed, that the word "saints" means those who have been separated from the world by Baptism and who now live according to the gift of God's grace.[44] In his discussion of the foundation of communion of saints he observes further that the union of all the saints rests upon the "mystical union betwixt Christ and His Church."[45] Thus, membership in the communion of saints for George Lee includes the Church militant, patient and triumphant:

> We are taught . . . that the One family of Christ
> is divided into three parts: (a) the Church militant
> here on earth, (b) the Church patient or waiting in
> the place of the departed spirits, beyond the grave and,
> (c) the Church triumphant in heaven. Now all the
> members who go to make up these three distinct and yet
> united portions are by God's favour--and first and
> especially by the grace of new birth in the sacrament
> of the font--fellow members of Holy Church and co-heirs
> of the eternal promises.[46]

In this passage Lee elaborates the idea that the unity of the members of the tripartite Church rests upon the grace of the new birth which

has been obtained in Baptism. He also calls attention to the

decisive role of the sacraments, notably Baptism and the Eucharist:

> Baptism, the only door by which men are admitted into
> the Church, creates new links in the golden chain.
> The other sacraments strengthen those links, more
> especially that which is commonly called "the
> Sacrament", viz. the Holy Communion of our Lord's
> body and blood.[47]

In short, the Communion of Saints is born and sustained by the

sacraments. The sacraments serve as a cohesive force in effecting

and sustaining the fellowship of the saints. Thus there is no doubt

that Lee in his understanding of the communion of saints embraces

both the sacramental and the personal aspects. This does not preclude

Lee from occasionally lifting up the personal element with excep-

tional force. A good case in point is when he says that the union

of the saints is of such a nature that every action undertaken by one

pertains to all and is profitable to all![48]

In a similar way F. W. Rede discusses the meaning of the

communion of saints, and then turns his attention to union of the

living with the dead. This comes to light most clearly in his defi-

nition of the communion of saints as "the spiritual relationship

which knits together all God's saints in the mystical body of

Christ."[49] For F. W. Rede the expression Communion of Saints

represents "a bond of union" which binds the saints to God and to

one another.[50] He emphasizes the significance of the membership of

the faithful departed in this communion when he points out that "the

Church of God is not all militant. Its vast majority has gone

before, into the other life, and is now expectant."[51] The saints

have come to enjoy fellowship with God and with one another as the
result of God's initiative. The continuity of this fellowship is also
the accomplishment of God:

> This spiritual life He plants within us at the
> baptismal font. He strengthens and renews it by the
> gift of the Holy Spirit in confirmation. He feeds
> it with the bread which came down from Heaven . . . .
> At every communion which we make we receive a new
> supply of spiritual vitality from Christ. At every
> participation in the sacred mysteries the superhuman
> life of Christ is poured into us, so that He lives
> in us and we in Him.[52]

Here Rede makes the point that the union of saints, living or departed,
is called into being and sustained through the sacraments of the
Church.

A similar conclusion has been reached by H. B. Swete:

> Whatever was the occasion which led to the words being
> inserted in the Western baptismal Creed, and however
> narrow the sense put upon them when they were first
> recited at the font, or explained in addresses to
> catechumens or to the newly baptized, they express one
> of the most profound convictions of the Christian
> consciousness, that a spiritual fellowship unites all
> who are in Christ, whether on earth or among the immense
> majority who have passed into the intermediate state.[53]

Swete has reiterated a significant insight which had been made already
by several other scholars, recognizing that the communion of saints
expresses the idea of a "spiritual fellowship" which embraces
all those who are in Christ, be they living or departed.[54] While
favourably disposed towards the personal interpretation, Swete also
realizes that the sacramental interpretation is equally significant.
Thus, even though he stresses that the communion of saints consists
in an interchange of life and common solidarity, he also equally

emphasizes that:

> the sacraments are the divinely appointed means for
> cementing and effecting the Communion of Saints. No
> Christian fellowship which ignores this sacramental
> basis, or seeks to be independent of it, corresponds
> to the New Testament ideal or to the experience of the
> Catholic Church.[55]

Moreover, Swete also singles out the Holy Communion in order to

suggest that it is "the perpetual symbol and an effectual means"

for the fellowship of the saints.[56] Swete, of course, is far from

confining the gift of grace to the Eucharist. Nor is he desirous

to exclude other opportunities from the fellowship. Swete's

concern is to make it clear that the communion of saints rests upon

the union of the believers with Christ and is sustained by intimate

relationship with Christ. Swete is convinced that the incarnation

and the cross have opened new avenues of communication between mankind

and God and established a deep union between them.[57] From this new

and intimate relationship there has also sprung the fellowship among

men and women. Thus, for Swete the new fellowship is nothing else

but the life of the Incarnate passed into His followers.[58] Christ

in man and for man is the true source of the spiritual fellowship

of the saints! Hence the communion of saints consists of communion

with Christ. It is precisely at this point that for Swete "the

eucharist is the most outstanding means of Communion with Christ,"[59]

for the Eucharist as a sacrament is the foundation of the union of

believers with Christ and with one another.

In addition, Swete also considers the work of the Holy Spirit,

who according to him animates the Body of Christ and fosters a sense

of interdependence among all the members of the communion.[60]

Without the Holy Spirit, suggests Swete,

> . . . there would be no Communion of Saints in the
> Church of Christ--there would be no true Saints to
> maintain communion with one another--if the Church had
> no Spirit of holiness, or no communion with Him. There
> could be no fellowship with the Father or with His
> Son Jesus Christ, if there were no fellowship of the
> Holy Spirit.[61]

In short, according to Swete, the fellowship of the saints stems

not only from the participation in the sacraments, but also from

the fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

In a similar fashion J. F. Bethune-Baker maintains that in

the confession of the article of the Communion of Saints, Christians

express their

> . . . belief in the intimate union and conjunction of
> all believers with one another in Christ--a union not
> broken by death--which the clause has commonly been
> understood to express. And so it interprets the
> meaning of the Church and membership of it as passing
> beyond the limits of time and space.[62]

This union of all believers in the communion is the result of common

aims, faith, hope, worship and participation of members in the

sacramental rites.[63]

William Temple likewise insists that this article expresses

the idea of the Church universal of all times. Temple also main-

tains that the union between the living and the deceased finds

expression in the rite of Holy Communion:

> But as in heart and mind we are lifted up into that
> heaven where the Ascended Christ eternally offers the
> sacrifice of Himself, what is the congregation in which

we find ourselves? It is not the few people assembled
in Church at the moment; it is the whole Communion of
Saints. "It is with Angels and Archangels and with all
the company of Heaven" that we laud and magnify His
glorious Name. Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles,
Evangelists and Martyrs, and all who have tried to put
their trust in the God and Father of Jesus Christ—these
are the real congregation in the service of the Holy
Communion or Holy Fellowship, into which we enter as we
receive into ourselves the Life of Christ.[64]

The idea of the Church universal as expressed in the clause Communion

of Saints transcends time and space and cannot be confined to a

particular era. This reality finds concretization in the celebration

of the Eucharist. A kindred interpretation is found in A. E. J.

Rawlinson's article on "The Communion of Saints".[65] For him the

idea of the communion of saints is "virtually identical with that of

the Church in its more mystical side."[66]

Now when turning to contemporary Roman Catholic interpretation

of the Communion of Saints, rather similar emphases may be noted.

Thus, for example both the personal and impersonal meaning of the

Communion of Saints is emphasized by Émilien Lamirande's, The

Communion of Saints. In his discussion of the meaning of 'Communion

of Saints', Lamirande clearly recognizes that the sacramental meaning

"may well have been anterior"[67] to the personal one. He also notes

that the official Roman Catholic position of today follows primarily

the personal interpretation, even though the sacramental meaning is

not lost.[68] Lamirande appreciates the intimate connection between

the two interpretations and states that although the main emphasis

among Catholic theologians is on the relationship which exists between

the members of the communion, the fellowship of the saints is

nevertheless specifically identified with the communion that occurs

through the sacraments.[69] He concludes his analysis of the official

Catholic position by saying:

> Without going so far, and basing ourselves on St.
> Thomas, the Catechism of Trent and Pius XII, we do
> not hesitate to include in this doctrine both its
> aspects as regards sacred things--sharing in every
> kind of possession in the Church--and its personal
> aspect--the relationship of the members of the mystical
> body with Christ and with each other. We are also
> mindful that this interchange is not confined to
> prayer, merit or 'satisfaction'.[70]

In this way Lamirande has made it clear that he favors the retention

of both aspects of the meaning of Communion of Saints. For him

it is not enough to emphasize the personal meaning, for it must also

be pointed out that "the sacraments and other means entrusted to

the Church produce, foster or manifest this fraternal communion"[71]--

which is entailed in the belief in the communion of saints! According

to Lamirande this specific recognition of a living experience expressed

in this phrase emerges with clarity only when both interpretations

are integrated. Thus he laments that

> . . . the notion formed of this article during the last
> sixty years, although not strictly inaccurate, appears
> to be one sided. It takes too little account of sacra-
> mental communion in sacred realities which may or may not
> have preceded the personalist interpretation, but is no
> less traditional. It also lays too much stress on the
> relations between the Church militant, the saints in
> heaven and the souls in purgatory, often leaving in the
> background the bonds which unite believers together on
> earth.[72]

For him, therefore, the persons involved in the communion and the

bonds uniting them are inseparable from the idea of common sharing

of holy things. Therefore both references, i.e. the idea of the persons involved in the communion and the notion of common sharing of holy things are necessary for an adequate concept of the communion of saints.

In short, we have analyzed not only somewhat differing scholarly perspectives, but also noted an increasing consensus in the interpretation of the communion of saints. As a result we have observed a general tendency to interpret the Communion of Saints as a definition of the Church, which in turn has affected the basic approach to the communion of saints. Because both the personal and the objective aspects of this phrase have been taken into consideration, it has also become possible to reflect upon the living experience entailed therein. For most of the scholars whom we have consulted, the experience expressed in the Communion of Saints is a spiritual fellowship, uniting all who are in Christ, whether on earth or a part of the immense majority who have passed away from this life.[73] Two major insights are embraced in this general definition of the Communion of Saints. One is that the communion of saints is born and sustained through participation in the sacraments which unite the believer with Christ and with all the saints. The other is that the communion of saints extends the fellowship of the Christian society to the saints of all times. That is, all the redeemed, living or departed by reason of their union with Christ through the sacraments are in one spiritual fellowship which physical death does not interrupt. Therefore, in the confession of the Communion of Saints, the believers express their experience of the intimate union and

conjunction with Christ and with one another.

The last important problem to be considered in this chapter is the foundations of the Communion, which we shall approach by keeping in mind the already stated synthetic principles of interpretation of the communion of saints.

The Foundations of Communion of Saints

The interpretation of the foundations of the communion of saints has been traditionally undertaken from the assumptions that this clause defines what the Church is. In other words the foundations of the communion of saints are recognized to be none other than the divine life that the Father and His Son in their one spirit live together as their own, and God in Christ has communicated to the fallen mankind. That is, it is in His Son made Man that the Father brought men and women into the sphere of divine life, made them "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4), and granted them communion with Himself and with His Son.[74] In this sense the communion of saints expresses the awareness that the believers (i.e. the "saints") are in one unbroken fellowship with God in Christ and thus with one another. For, Christ in His life and mediation of salvation did not merely bring mankind into the presence of God, but established a deep union between them and God as well as among men and women. In this way Christ's life and work opened up new avenues of intimate relationships.[75] To the believers this experience is realized through the participation in the divine life. By the sacrament of Baptism one is admitted into the communion of saints and thus

into fellowship with God in Christ. Baptism then serves as the door to the fellowship with Christ and with the saints, including the whole company of heaven.[76] Life with Christ and with all the saints, living or departed, is further nurtured by sacramentally partaking of the Lord's body and blood.[77] Here one can see the intimate connection between the idea of participation in holy things (sancta) and the fellowship of saints. In this perspective the sacraments become the means for establishing and developing the common life that the believers share with Christ and with one another. Therefore it can be stated that the union with God in Christ is the basic foundation for the communion of saints.

Several theologians have called attention to the observation that, ultimately considered, the communion of saints stems from fellowship with the Holy Spirit.[79] They have argued that participation in the life of Christ is through the influence of the Holy Spirit of whose work the communion of saints is a manifestation. Union in the Holy Spirit recorded in Scripture[79] is of such importance that without it the fellowship with the Father and Son would be impossible--for access to the Father is only possible in the Son and through the Spirit.[80] Accordingly the Holy Spirit is the ultimate principle of unity and fellowship in the Father, in the Son, and in the communion of saints. The Holy Spirit is especially significant for the communion of saints since He is the principle of unity and of fellowship as He joins the believers in faith, hope, and charity. In this context it must be noted that love has played a most vital role in the communion of saints. It may be accounted for by the

traditional theological insight that love of fellow human beings
is love of God. For instance, Karl Rahner who addresses himself
to this matter in some depth has argued that love of neighbour is
ipso facto the love of God.[81] Rahner views such love as being opened
by God in order to reach God.[82] At the same time Rahner also aids
in the understanding of God. Since God is the Father, Son and Holy
Spirit indwelling in mutual love, it follows that human love that
proceeds from the communion of saints is none other than this love,
rooted in God and now transcending the limits of time and distance.
On this basis, the communion of saints is not only the outcome of
the participation in the blessings of salvation, but is also a
manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the conclusion of this chapter, a retrospective and
personal comment may be in order. I appreciate the strength of the
synthetic view, as compared with the other options, in that it shows
in what way the individuals are gaining membership in the communion
of saints, the Church universal. The synthetic view also shows us
by what means the fellowship of saints with all its numerous benefits
is given and maintained with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and
with one another. Thus it is clear that the communion of saints is
not merely a human accomplishment, but the outcome of divine grace
active through human faith and love. And the fellowship which is
established through such activities, extends throughout the world
and continues throughout the ages into eternity, for unity with God
in Christ is not terminated by death. The same insight can also be
expressed in regard to the sacraments. By partaking of the sacraments,

especially Baptism and the Eucharist, the believer enters into a spiritual fellowship not only with God in Christ but also with other believers in different parts of the world, be they living or departed. As children in the Kingdom of Christ the saints are as one family, under the loving Fatherhood of God, which is not disrupted by physical death. As members of Christ's mystical body they are all incorporated not only with Him, their common Head, but also with one another, including those who have died in Christ.

CHAPTER THREE

Prayers for the Departed and Invocation of Saints

In the development of the concept of the communion of saints,

prayers for the departed and the invocation of saints have a central

position. This chapter seeks to highlight it by analyzing the

foundation, the obstacles, the problems and the significance of the

prayers for the departed as corollaries of the communion of saints.

An obvious obstacle to the discussion of these issues lies

in the human ignorance of the detailed condition under which the dead

live. The New Testament is exceedingly reticent with regard to the

condition of the faithful departed, apart from the fact that they

live with Christ and perhaps are conscious of their existence.[1] A

few instances such as in Luke 20:38 are content to record that God

is "not the God of the dead, but of the living," and that "all"

whether alive or dead to men, "live to Him". At the same time the

parable of the rich man and Lazarus represents the souls of the

righteous as reposing in "Abraham's bosom",[2] i.e. as enjoying

happiness and security in their new mode of existence. Also, in

2 Cor. 5:6-8 and in Philippians 1:23, St. Paul describes death as

the entrance into a fuller union with Christ than is possible on

earth. He says: "to depart and to be with Christ" is "far better"

than to live here.[3] Thus according to the New Testament, the faithful

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departed exist with Christ and are waiting for their resurrection
at the end-time.[4]

It is, however, understandable that much of the thought of
the early Christians is connected with faith in the resurrection.
This belief was sufficient while they regarded Christ's second advent
as imminent,[5] when Christ was to establish His kingdom on earth.
They believed that in this kingdom both the living and the dead, who
had shown themselves worthy by the fulfilment of the Lord's commands,
were to experience their redemption. Thus, on account of the strong
belief in the resurrection, the occurrence of death, which took away
the believers from their communities, was not a cause of despair.[6]
Nevertheless, as due to the delay of the parousia, the number of the
faithful departed increased, the concern for the condition of the
departed became acute. Were the souls of believers received into
Heaven immediately after their death or did they await the resurrection
in an intermediate state between earth and heaven? Furthermore, if
there is an intermediate state, what is the condition of the souls
while they are there?

To these questions the New Testament appeared to give only
tenuous and controversial answers. Nevertheless, Oscar Cullmann
thinks that there is sufficient New Testament evidence to the effect
that the souls of the faithful departed are not after death received
immediately into Heaven, but have to wait in an interim state for the
resurrection (Parousia). He claims that those Protestant theolo-
gians[7] are mistaken who think that according to the New Testament
the souls of the faithful departed are received in Heaven at once,
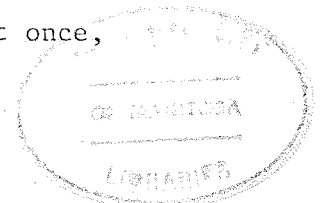
and that the transformation of the body occurs for every one immediately after death. According to Cullmann the New Testament teaches that the dead in Christ are still in time and are waiting in an intermediate state for their resurrection. In support of his view, he interprets the New Testament images, "with Christ" (Phil. 1:23), "in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), "in Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) and "under the altar" (Rev. 6:9) as representing a state of special proximity to God, i.e. the intermediate state in which all the faithful departed live before the Parousia. Cullmann also recognises that the New Testament does not say anything about the details of the interim condition. We are only told that they are near to God and in a state of consciousness.[8]

By contrast, the Early Fathers gave ample attention to the whole question of the existence of an intermediate state and of the condition of the faithful departed. Irenaeus, for instance, held that the souls of the faithful departed in the interim period between death and resurrection live in a state of expectation of that time when they shall receive their perfect and consummated glory:

> For as the Lord 'went away in the mist of the shadow
> of death' where the souls of the dead were, yet
> afterwards arose in the body, and after the resurrection
> was taken up [into heaven], it is manifest that the souls
> of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord
> underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible
> place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the
> resurrection, awaiting that event; then, receiving their
> bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is, bodily,
> first as the Lord arose, they shall come thus into the
> presence of God.[9]

Tertullian also has made several observations which throw light upon

this question. He declared that "heaven is open to none, while earth
still stands."[10] And in accordance with this statement he also wrote:

> no one, on becoming absent from the body, is at once
> a dweller in the presence of the Lord, except by the
> prerogative of martyrdom, he gains a lodging in
> Paradise not in the lower regions.[11]

Tertullian states in the most explicit manner that only the martyrs
have the privilege of attaining immediately after death to the Lord
"in Paradise". Yet Paradise in Tertullian's view is not heaven.
Tertullian makes it plain beyond any possibility of doubt that no soul
went to heaven immediately after death, but only after the resurrec-
tion of the dead at the Last Day.[12] Accordingly, all the souls of
the ordinary departed believers wait in the intermediate state the
day of the Lord's advent before they can attain to the heavenly
joy. Only the martyrs are spared from this waiting. Tertullian's
view concerning the place of the departed as contrasted with his
view on the condition of the martyrs—presupposes that some further
discipline is necessary for most of the believers before they can
enter into the joy of heaven and be with the Lord. Tertullian
actually applies the words of Christ (Matt. 5:25) about 'paying the
uttermost farthing' to this purgatorial punishment after death.[13]
At the same time it is not very clear whether in Tertullian's view
this idea of purification is connected with the intermediate state
or with the actual Day of Judgement. Johannes Quasten thinks that
it is connected with the intermediate state:

> Although the word 'purgatory' does not occur in
> Tertullians writings, there is no doubt that he knows
> of a penitential suffering of the soul after death.[14]

It seems that Quasten's suggestion is correct, since Tertullian could also make the following observation about a wife who prays for her husband after his death:

> To be sure, she prays for his soul. She asks that
> during the interval, he may find rest [refrigerium]
> and that he may share in the first resurrection. She
> offers sacrifice each year on the anniversary of his
> falling asleep.[15]

This suggests that in Tertullian's view the souls of the departed do not partake at once of the celestial joy with the Lord, but await in an interim state the judgement at the end, where they, if necessary, undergo some further discipline. H. B. Swete, an early twentieth century Anglican scholar who has carried out an extensive study of this subject, has summarized the views of the Early Fathers as follows:

> The great Christian teachers of the second and third
> centuries were generally agreed in regarding the dead
> in Christ as expecting the Resurrection in a state
> intermediate between earth and heaven, receiving already
> in part the reward of their faith, but looking for its
> completion at the Coming of the Lord. Some of these
> writers add that Christian souls meanwhile undergo
> discipline if discipline is necessary, or carry on their
> education for the higher life, receiving additions to
> their knowledge; and as their nature grows and ripens under
> this process, rising to greater heights, and drawing
> nearer to the fulness of their joy.[16]

In the history of Christian thought such an understanding of the condition of the faithful departed has given rise to a threefold description of the Church as the Church Militant, the Church Expectant and the Church Triumphant. The re-statement of the ancient view has contributed to the rise of the following modern controversy. Namely, if according to the Early Church all the departed wait in an

intermediate state for their resurrection, then, as noted by some

modern Anglican critics, it is an error on the part of the Roman

Catholic Church to abridge the intermediate state by assigning some

souls to purgatory while immediately admitting others to the beatific

vision.[17] Mason, for instance, who explicitly denies the Roman

Catholic view of purgatory with intent to defend the Anglican position

has written:

> But any further subdivision, making one region where the
> saved but imperfect are being purged, and another, into
> which they may be transferred when their purgation is
> over, the "Anglican tradition" knows nothing . . . .
> There is no ground which a disciple of Catholic antiquity
> can recognize as valid for believing that the souls of
> the saved are in two wholly distinct places or spheres,
> the one of chastisement and the other of bliss.[18]

At the same time the Anglican formulation of the intermediate state

has not been rigid but has allowed for a variety of emphases.[19]

Thus Rawlinson feels that the interim state ought to be a place or

period not only of waiting but also of purgation, yet not a 'Purgatory'

in the "debased medieval sense which is popularly suggested by the

term."[20] Rawlinson defines purgatory as

> a condition of being purified from imperfections and
> from sinfulness: a state of continuous growth in the
> direction of holiness and of the love of God.[21]

In his opinion the crude division of all souls at death into imme-

diately "saved" and the immediately "lost" is not satisfactory either

to the Christian mind or to the Christian heart, because it is altogether

a too rigid conception to accord with the complexities of life and a

too arbitrary solution to be worthy of God as Christ reveals Him.[22]

Thus while both the Anglican and Roman Catholic views have

their defenders, the specific defenses contain many uncertainties and rely on numerous vague statements. Hence the ecumenical concession may very well be in order that the literal truth of the exact condition of the departed and of their life beyond the grave are matters somewhat hidden from us. At the same time we know with certainty that the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God or "with Christ which is far better" (Phil. 1:23).

But what can be said about their present relation to ourselves? Is any effectual fellowship still possible between the living and the dead? Or more precisely in regard to the subject of our investigation: what do we mean when we profess our faith in the Communion of Saints? This question cannot be adequately answered without taking a serious look at the whole issue of prayers for the departed. To this we must now turn.

The scholarly argument in favour of the practice of praying for the departed issues from the recognition of the consciousness of the departed. Darwell Stone, for example, has argued that both the Old and the New Testaments depict with great clarity that the souls of the departed are in a state of consciousness.[23] In support of his theory he observes that our Lord reminded the Sadducees that the description of the living God in the book of Exodus as the God of those who had departed from this life was an indication that they were alive and perhaps even conscious.[24] Moreover, the imagery of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in the opinion of Darwell Stone could not have been employed if our Lord had not intended to represent the disembodied souls as still retaining consciousness.[25] Also, the preaching of our Lord in the unseen world which occurred

between His crucifixion and His resurrection suggests that His human soul and the souls of those to whom He preached were conscious.[26] Quite in accordance with these clues, St. John's Apocalypse represents the souls of the departed, who had been slain for their faith, praying to God after death---an indication that they were in a conscious state since they were engaged in prayer.[27] Thus according to Stone the early Christians believed that "to retain consciousness was to retain the power of prayer."[28] It is this belief which motivated the whole inquiry of prayers for the departed.

In addition we must call attention to the common belief of the early Christians that prayer is the chief means of fellowship with those Christians who are separated by long distances. Then as well as now it is a genuine Christian belief that our brethren in other parts of the world pray for us and we for them. Indeed, this lively interchange of prayer is the strong bond which links together the members of Christ throughout the entire world.

It is on the grounds of such observation that it has been concluded by those who favour the idea of prayers for the departed that they also pray for the living. Namely, if it is admitted that death does not involve a destruction or suspension of conscious life, it is inconceivable that those who in this life had prayed for their fellow-men should on passing through death cease to pray! In other words, it seems fitting to suppose that the departed will remember in their prayers all those whom they knew on earth, just as those who are still on earth can do the same.

The first issue to which we must then address ourselves is

the inquiry whether that which seems fitting may also be said to be true. In other words, do the departed pray for their brethren on earth?

The New Testament is generally silent on this matter except for one instance, which describes what appears to be a prayer of the dead for the living. In the Apocalypse the prophet sees the souls of the martyrs interceding with God for the speedy punishment of the persecutors of the Church![29] In the Early Church, however, there are several clear indications of the belief that the dead in Christ pray for the living. In a letter by Cyprian to Cornelius, the Bishop of Rome, written at a time when both were expecting martyrdom, Cyprian stated:

> Let us be mindful of each other in turn, agreeing and
> united, and, on both sides, let us always pray for each
> other. Let us relieve burdens and anxieties with mutual
> charity and, if one of us should die first according to
> a swiftness decreed by the divine condescension, let our
> love persevere in the presence of the Lord and let not
> prayer for our brethren and sisters cease before the mercy
> of the Father.[30]

In a similar perspective Origen could observe:

> Neither will it be unsuitable if we should say that all
> the saints who have departed this life, still having
> charity towards those who are in this world, are concerned
> for their salvation and help them with their prayer and
> intercessions with God. For it is written in the Book of
> the Maccabees thus: This is Jeremias, the prophet of God,
> who always prays for the people.[31]

It is Darwell Stone's considered judgment that the general sense of Christian thought on this subject was well expressed by St. Jerome:

> if the Apostles and Martyrs, while still in the body are
> able to pray for others when they still ought to be full
> of care for themselves, how much more can they do so after
> they have been crowned in victory and triumph. One man,
> Moses, obtains pardon from God for six hundred thousand

armed men, and Stephen, the imitator of his Lord and
the first martyr in Christ, begs forgiveness for his
persecutors; and shall their power be less after they
have begun to be with Christ?[32]

Thus in the Early Church those who looked on the faithful dead as

conscious and as capable of prayer, thought it legitimate to ask God

for the benefit of their intercessions. It should be observed

however, that the conviction held here was connected with the belief

that all who participate in the benefits of redemption are united

with one another by spiritual bonds. Thus the early Christians

believed that the faithful departed remain in touch with the living.

The entire perspective was further enriched by the medieval

conviction that the departed have knowledge of the affairs of the

living owing to their vision of God and of His revelation to them.

St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, explained regarding the saints who

have already attained to the beatific vision:

> Since no rectitude is lacking to the saints, they wish
> to know what concerns themselves, and consequently it
> follows that they know it in the Word. Now it pertains
> to their glory to assist the needy for their salvation:
> for this they become God's co-operators, than which
> nothing is more Godlike, as Dionysius declares (Coel
> Hier. III). Wherefore it is evident that the saints are
> cognisant of such things as are required for this purpose;
> and so it is manifest that they know in the Word the vows,
> devotions and prayers of those who have recourse to their
> assistance.[33]

Clearly, St. Thomas does not regard the saints by virtue of their

own strength and initiative to be omniscient and able to hear the

prayers of the living and to help them. Rather, the saints are also

always dependent upon the power and the mercy of God.

In Christian thought this theory is somewhat complicated by

the limitations due to the number of those who may be invoked. St.

Thomas, for instance, assumed that some of the departed Christians

are already in heaven while others are in a purgatorial state of

discipline. From this premise he drew the conclusion that the souls

in purgatory may not be invoked or be requested to offer prayers

because they do not yet enjoy the vision of God and therefore are not

in a condition to hear the petitions offered to them.[34] This theory

involves some difficulties from the Anglican point of view. First,

it is not in full accord with the Apostolic tradition which regards

all who die in the Lord as being with Him or in proximity to Him

awaiting the great resurrection. Second, in actual practice it does

not intensify the Christian conception of the Church as the mystical

family in which all the departed are knit together with the living.[35]

At the same time it may be noted that the Eastern Church which has

refrained from the two-fold classification of the faithful departed,

has always requested the prayers of all. An Eastern Christian, for

instance, could request the prayers of his mother who has passed

away into the unseen world, and offer his own prayers to God on

behalf of her.[36] This approach appears to this writer to be more

edifying and less judgemental.

Where authentic religious use is in vogue, it must come as

no great surprise that abuse can also creep in. Without being desirous of

pursuing this observation much further, we shall note that in the age

of the Reformation numerous criticisms emerged. The central charge

was that those who venerated the saints, had come to assume both

that their petitions were directly heard by the saints and that help

came directly from the saints. In other words the whole practice was thought to infringe upon the authority of God.

Leaving the evaluation of these charges aside, we shall now turn our attention to the next key issue, that is, whether the Church on earth may pray for the departed.

The biblical evidence is slight in regard to the question whether the prayers of the living avail for the dead. Yet critics agree that 2 Maccabees 12:39-49 is an indication of the use of prayers for the departed in Judaeo-Christian tradition.[37] According to this text, Judas Maccabaeus provided for the offering of sacrifices for the souls of certain Jews who had fallen in battle fighting for their country, and in life had been guilty of idolatrous practices. The ancient writer contends that "in doing this he [Judas] acted very well and honourably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead."[38] The New Testament texts which might be interpreted as recording prayers for the departed are more controversial. Exegetes are not agreed whether St. Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus, "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains" (2 Tim. 1:18), is a prayer for his acceptance in the day of the Lord or for his well-being in the intermediate life.[39] They agree at least that both the passages in which Onesiphorus is mentioned in this Epistle seem to presuppose that he was dead.[40]

In the Early Church, however, there is sufficient evidence
of a widespread belief in the practice of prayers for the dead.
Tertullian spoke of the wife who prayed for the husband after his
death asking that during the interim period he may find rest and
refreshment, and that he may share in the great resurrection. Also,
year after year on the anniversary of the day, the Eucharist was
offered for the deceased.[41] And this was not an isolated incident.
We learn from Cyprian that the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice
for the repose of the departed one's soul was a general feature of
Christian life.[42] Similarly Cyril of Alexandria stated in a lecture
on the Eucharist delivered to the newly baptized:

> After the spiritual sacrifice is perfected, the bloodless
> service upon that sacrifice of propitiation, we entreat
> God for the common peace of the Church, for the tranquility
> of the world, for kings, for soldiers and allies, for the
> sick, for the afflicted, and in a word, for all who stand
> in need of succour we all supplicate and offer this sacrifice.
>
> Then we commemmorate also those who have fallen asleep
> before us, first Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, that
> at their prayers and intervention God would receive our
> petition. Afterwards also on behalf of the holy Fathers and
> Bishops who have fallen asleep before us, and in a word of
> all who in past years have fallen asleep amongst us, believing
> that it will be a very great advantage to the souls, for whom
> the supplication is put up, while that holy and most awful
> sacrifice is presented . . . we offer up Christ slain for
> our sins in order to obtain pardon from our merciful God both
> for them and for ourselves.[43]

Similarly, in the East the liturgies of St. James and St. Mark also
show explicit mention of prayers for the departed. The liturgy of
St. James prays thus:

> Refresh them thyself in the land of the living, in Thy
> Kingdom, in the luxury of Paradise, in the bosom of
> Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whence pain and grief and
> sighing have fled away; where the light of thy

countenance visits them and shines for evermore.[44]

These instances provide us with sufficient proof of the Church

praying for the departed and offering the Eucharist on their behalf.

Without a doubt this was an indication of the Church's concern for

the perpetual fellowship between the living and the dead. We must

note, however, that the prayers were meant to commend the departed

to God and to request that they be given rest, refreshment and growth

in knowledge and holiness. The practise of prayer for the departed

continued until the Reformation when the use of public prayers for

the departed was slowly abandoned by the Protestants. In order to

approach the question of why the Reformers abandoned the practice of

prayers for the departed, we must take a look at the invocation of

saints.

The New Testament provides no basis on which the departed

Christians could be asked for their prayers. Yet it has been observed

that while the practice is introduced, it is also not forbidden.

Such a situation is in accordance with the New Testament's lack of

speculation about the future state of the dead—due to the daily

expectation of the parousia.[45] When the parousia, however, does not

arrive and the ordinary life in the Church must continue, the

rationale for the invocation of the saints is derived from the human

need for active fellowship with the departed. It is in this way that

the invocation of the saints serves to concretize the reality of the

communion of saints which includes not only those on earth but also

those already departed from us.

As has already been shown, those in the Early Church, who viewed the dead Christians as conscious and as capable of prayer, did not hesitate to ask God for the benefit of their intercession. One instance may suffice here to show in what way the practice was encouraged in the Early Church. St. Ambrose taught:

> Martyrs are to be besought, whose patronage we seem
> to claim for ourselves by having their bodies as a kind
> of pledge. They who washed away whatever sins they had
> in their own blood are able to entreat for our sins; for
> they are God's martyrs, our leaders, the spectators of
> our life and actions. Let us not be ashamed to employ
> them as intercessors for our weakness of the body, even
> when they overcame.[46]

There is also sufficient evidence to the effect that beginning with the third century the martyrs were regarded as perfect imitators and true followers of Christ and therefore victors in the struggle against the powers of darkness and the enemies of the Church.[47] The attribution to the martyrs of such a privileged position could not take place without a considerable influence upon the relations between the living and the dead. Belief in the spiritual success of the martyrs and their great devotion impressed upon the minds of men the necessity of seeking aid from them. Nevertheless in this process some of the Early Church theologians exhibited exceedingly great caution. Thus wrote Origen, for example, in his treatise 'On Prayer':

> If we understand what prayer really is, we shall
> know that we may never pray to anything generated—not
> even to Christ—but only to God and the Father of all,
> to whom even Our Saviour Himself prayed.[48]

We assume that here Origen was not speaking against the practice of invocation _per se_, but emphasized the truth that prayer in the

strictest sense is to be addressed to God alone as the only Supreme Lord. Hence the requests of the prayers of the martyrs were to be made through God.[49]

During the Middle Ages new elements were added to the practice of invocation. In popular piety the saints came to be regarded as direct authors of those spiritual benefits and gifts which can only be given by God.[50] Thus invocation came to mean a direct and unmediated request from the saint for some benefit. Such popular practice turned away the believers from God in Christ and directed their attention to these secondary intercessors. In short, the saints had often come virtually to take the place of God.

At the same time the use of prayer for the departed ceased to be a request to God for rest, refreshment or growth in the knowledge of God, but opened up the way for mercenary traffic. It is well known how Johannes Tetzel, a Dominican monk, claimed to possess the power to absolve from all sins, however terrible and numerous.[51]

Such are some of the main reasons why the practice of invocation and prayers for the dead were objected to by the Protestants and removed from the liturgy. A brief examination of the attitudes of the English reformers will provide a brief account of what actually happened to the practice of the invocation.

The first official document of the Anglican Church which shows some influence of the Reformation, known as "The Ten Articles", was drawn up in 1536. Of these articles, the seventh, eighth, and tenth relate to the subject of our investigation.

Article seven entitled "of honouring of Saints", stated that

it was correct and honourable to pay homage to the saints in

heaven, "but not with that confidence and honour which are only due

unto God, trusting to attain at their hands that which must be had

only of God."[52]

Article eight bearing the title "of praying to Saints"

handled the question in the following manner:

> albeit grace, remission of sin, and salvation, cannot
> be obtained but of God only by mediation of our Saviour
> Christ, which is only sufficient for our sins; yet it is
> very laudable to pray to saints in heaven everlastingly
> living, whose charity is ever permanent, to be inter-
> cessors, and to pray for us and with us, unto Almighty
> God after this manner: All holy angels and saints in
> heaven pray for us and with us unto the Father, that for
> His dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, we may have grace of
> him and remission of our sins.[53]

Article ten entitled "Of Purgatory" speaks favourably of the practice

of praying for the departed and declares that it has a solid foundation

in ancient usage. But concerning the place where the dead may be and

the whole question of purgatory, the article declares:

> this with all other things we remit to Almighty God,
> unto whose mercy it is meet and convenient for us to
> commend them, trusting that God accepteth our prayers
> for them, referring the rest wholly to God, to whom
> is known their estate and condition.[54]

In 1537 a commission of bishops presided over by Archbishop Cranmer

drew up The Institution of a Christian Man also known as the "Bishops'

Book". Regarding the invocation of saints this book cautioned against

yielding "the glory of God to a creature" and praying to the saints

for gifts "which cannot be given but by God".[55]

By 1543 the "Bishops' Book" of 1537 was revised and published

under the title, <u>A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian</u>

<u>Man</u>. It came to be known as the "King's Book" because it was set

forth by the authority of both the parliament and King Henry VIII,

whereas the "Bishops' Book" had no authority from either. On the

invocation of saints and purgatory it was in part similar to the

"Bishops' Book". The only major changes were two. First, the

authority of God was re-affirmed over against the saints.[56] Second,

further discussion about purgatory was forbidden:

> it is much necessary that all such abuses as heretofore
> have been brought by the supporters and maintainers of
> the papacy of Rome, and their complices, concerning this
> matter, be clearly put away; and that we therefore
> abstain from the name of purgatory, and no more dispute
> or reason thereof.[57]

These extracts show that "The Ten Articles of 1536," the "Bishops'

Book" of 1537 and the "King's Book" of 1543 held the same views about

the invocation of saints and prayers for the departed. It was

declared unlawful to seek from the saints what can be obtained only

from God. At the same time it was declared legitimate to ask them

for their prayers and to pray for them in turn.

However, in the revision of the service books from 1549 to

1562, including   the present Book of Common Prayer which has also

been revised in 1928, all forms of invocation that would accrue to

the benefit of the departed have been omitted and only the commemoration

is retained. Thus the present version of commemoration, which is

similar in every way to the 1562 version, reads:

> We remember before thee, O Lord, all thy servants
> departed this life in thy faith and fear: and we
> bless thy holy Name for all who in life and death

> have glorified thee; beseeching thee to give us grace
> that, rejoicing in their fellowship, we may follow their
> good examples, and with them be partakers of thy
> heavenly Kingdom.[58]

In 1571 the Anglican Church drew up the so-called "Thirty Nine Articles of Religion". These articles were prepared on the basis of the Forty-Two Articles of 1553 and the Thirty-Eight of 1563. The twenty-second article of 1571 'On Purgatory' is our main concern here. This article is very similar to the twenty-third of 1553 except that the phrase "the doctrine of school authors" was altered to "the Romish doctrine" which in the Latin version was rendered by "doctrina Romanensium".[59] The article in the 1571 version reads:

> The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons,
> worshipping and adoration, as well as of reliques,
> and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly
> invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture,
> but rather repugnant to the word of God.[60]

Anglican scholars do not quite agree as to what precisely it was that the compilers of the present articles of Religion condemned under the title of "the Romish doctrine" and "invocation of saints". Whereas Bicknell could say that "we incline to the view that the Article condemns all kinds of invocation",[61] Stone on the other hand contended:

> the article . . . was intended to condemn the practices
> which had already been condemned in 1537 and 1543 by
> the 'Bishops' Book' and the 'King's Book', and to leave
> open the right or the wrong of the limited practice of
> asking the saints for the help of their prayers, which
> those books had allowed.[62]

The question at stake is whether article twenty-two condemns all forms of invocation, particularly including the requests to the saints both for their prayers and some particular benefits. Darwell Stone's

argument is sound. Stone has argued that the term 'Romish doctrine' could not have been used to condemn the doctrine of Trent on this subject because the appropriate Session of Trent did not take place until December of 1563, whereas the article under consideration had been issued in its present form in February 1563.[63] If then the article could not have been set forth so as to express condemnation of the teaching of the Council of Trent, what was intended in the condemnation of "the Romish doctrine" and "invocation of saints"?[64] Stone suggests that the terms were intended to express disapproval of the current popular teachings of Roman theologians of the time, namely, requesting from the saints such gifts which God alone can grant or the supposition that the saints have independent knowledge of the words addressed to them. In other words, the condemnation of the Romish doctrine was set forth against any form of recourse to the saints which might infringe upon the prerogatives of God. Incidentally this accords with the form of invocation set forth in the Bishops' and the King's Books. The point of the argument that the Anglican Reformers never rejected officially the practice of invocation, at least in the form of requesting the departed Christians to pray with us and for us, is made clear in a statement made by Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh who died in the seventeenth century. He wrote concerning the invocation of saints:

> Let God alone be religiously adored; let Him alone
> be prayed to through Christ, who is the only and sole
> Mediator truly and properly speaking, between God and
> man. Let not the very ancient custom, received in the
> universal Church, as well as Greek as Latin, of addressing
> the Angels and saints after the manner we have mentioned,
> be condemned or rejected as impious, nor even as vain and

> foolish, by the more rigid Protestants. Let the foul
> abuses and superstitions which have crept in be taken
> away. And so peace may thereafter easily be established
> and sanctioned between the dissentient parties as regards
> this controversy.[65]

Since the Reformation repeated attention has been paid to the problem

of invocation and prayers for the departed. It has been often

acknowledged that Communion of saints, as an experience of Christian

faith, consists of a fellowship of mutual prayer and includes the

Church on earth as well as those departed. As great a theologian

as bishop Charles Gore, for example, criticizes the Medieval Church

for introducing misconceptions and exaggerated practices, and

Protestants, including the Anglicans, for neglecting the fellowship

with the dead:

> Current ideas about purgatory and indulgences and
> invocation of saints and current practices based on
> these ideas, were most urgently in need of amendment
> and reform. But the reaction of Protestantism was
> culpably unguarded, and the Church of England shared
> in this lamentable reaction, so that, in result, we
> almost forgot in our practical and public religions
> our continued fellowship with the blessed dead.[66]

Consequently Gore calls for a restoration of the practice of prayers

for the dead in both private and public worship.[67] Yet at the same

time he discourages the practice of direct invocation of the saints

on the grounds that it depends on the saints' ability to hear the

prayers of the living. Gore thinks that such an assumption has no

theological basis. Thus he favours the practice of addressing God for

the prayers of the saints, a practice otherwise known as comprecation:

> Certainly we are not called upon to forbid such
> invocation. But the sense of what is not revealed to
> us should restrain our use of it, even in private, and,

following the practice of the ancient Church, we
should admit into our public services no prayers but
those addressed to God.[68]

In a similar fashion, Archbishop William Temple presents his case

for the legitimacy of prayers for the departed from the point of

view of the universality of the Church. According to Temple the

"Catholic Church is universal not only in space but in time; the

living and the dead alike are members of it . . . . Death is no

ultimate division in that society."[69] In his view, the right of

the Church on earth to offer prayers for the dead is something that

is "implicit in the doctrine of Communion of Saints."[70] Thus the

believers ought not to shun from praying for the dead and asking them

for their prayers. For Temple the universality of the Church and

the unity of the living with the dead in the mystical Body of Christ

is a reality which is manifested and expressed in the Eucharist:

> Our faith is so feeble that this great company is
> usually hidden from us. We think of Christ as present
> only in the consecrated elements or only in the souls
> of those who faithfully receive them; we think the wor-
> shippers are just the few who are present with us in the
> same building. But this is plainly wrong. Christ is
> present wherever God is present; and that is everywhere . . .
> only we need aids and helps if we are to realize His
> Presence and appropriate His gift of life; the congre-
> gation at His "service" is the whole Communion or
> Fellowship of saints.[71]

In the light of the observation that Christians believe in eternal

life, it would be inappropriate to shrink from commending to the

loving mercy of God the souls of those whom we have loved and lost,

and to entertain fears about a continuing fellowship of prayer with

them. The key to this, of course, to a certain measure lies in the

kind of requests which the living Christians could ask on behalf of

the departed. Unfortunately most writers are silent about these

issues. F. W. Rede favours the principle of invocation as long as

the mediation of the saints is not viewed as equal to that of Christ.

Rede enumerates the kind of requests for which the Christians on

earth may ask in behalf of the departed:

> There is therefore much which we may ask of God
> for them. The blessings of rest, and peace, and
> spiritual growth in Paradise; the shining of a
> perpetual light; the entrance into the knowledge of
> God; the enjoyment of full communion with the saints;
> a joyful resurrection of their bodies from the grave;
> and a merciful judgement in the great day of God;--
> these things they need, and our hearts prompt us to
> ask these gifts for them from God.[72]

A.E.J. Rawlinson is also of the opinion that the living could ask

on behalf of the departed and that

> God would grant unto them a place of refreshment,
> light and peace, where all sighing and sadness are
> vanished away and the light of His countenance shineth
> for ever and ever.[73]

It should be noted that older discussion has been ordinarily limited

to the Christian framework, without explicit attention to the non-

believers. More recent statements, notably those of Karl Rahner,

are universalistic in perspective, speaking about both the explicit

and the anonymous believers. Accordingly, it is our working assumption

that our prayers for the departed may include the non-Christian dead

as well. We believe that God is our Father and that He is always

ready to listen to us even more than we are to Him. Hence we ought

to make known to Him all our desires including our concerns for all

of the dead.

To say this is not to be unaware of several main objections that have been raised against the practice of prayer for the departed and the invocation of saints. The first and perhaps the most significant objection is the apparent weakness or insufficiency of Scriptural support for the lawfulness of prayer and invocation in regard to the departed. There are only two brief references in 2 Timothy and the interpretation of the same is controversial.[74] As we have already indicated, here Paul speaks of Onesiphorus in a way that suggests that Onesiphorus was already dead. And after the mention of loyal services rendered by Onesiphorus to the imprisoned Apostle at Rome, Paul continues, apparently in prayer: "may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day" (2 Tim. 1:18). Finally, in the salutation, "the household of Onesiphorus" is mentioned, without mention of the man himself. The question is what had become of Onesiphorus? Critics assume that the text favours the assumption that Onesiphorus was dead. If this be admitted then we have an instance of prayer by the apostle for the soul of a deceased benefactor! However, apart from the fact that this interpretation is questioned, it is but a solitary instance in the New Testament. In the Old Testament see II Mac. 12:46. Those who favour the practice of prayer for the departed have argued that a doctrine is true whether it be found formulated in one or more places.[75] H. M. Luckock's illustration on this question is relevant to our purpose in this study. He has argued that even though Scripture alone is the principal guide for Christian thought and practices, we have no right to commend for observance anything that is not sanctioned by Scripture.

Some of the most essential characteristics of the Church's life have been formed without it. As an example Luckock points to the observance of Sunday instead of the Sabbath day. He notes that there is no text of Scripture which can settle the question whether this change was agreeable to the mind of God. Yet Luckock recognises the fact that the observance of Sunday in the place of the Sabbath day rests upon the authority of Christ Himself about which we learn from the Early Church.[76] Luckock is convinced that the prayer for the dead is an exactly parallel case. Luckock believes that the legitimacy of this practice ought not to be judged exclusively on the basis of the insufficiency of Scriptural authority, but also, in addition, on the tradition and authority of the Early Church. In this way the authority of the Early Church is seen as supplementing the New Testament wherever the latter does not supply clear and ample information. Admitting the need to use such an approach with caution and care, we find it helpful.

The second objection is based on the observation that the invocation of saints rests upon the assumption that the departed can hear the petitions of the Church on earth. Otherwise the venture is meaningless, as suggested by Calvin who once asked:

> who has disclosed that they have ears long enough to
> reach our voices or that they have eyes so keen as to
> watch over our needs?[77]

The explanation usually adopted in dealing with this problem is that the saints enjoy the vision of God, and as God sees all things they also see them in God as in a mirror.[78] Admittedly, this hypothesis is a piece of pious speculation, for there is no scriptural ground for

the belief that the departed are aware of our prayers and possess

all knowledge concerning what is happening on earth. Furthermore

this issue is somewhat complicated by the Catholic specification that

only those who have already been admitted to the beatific vision

understand what is occurring on earth and may therefore be invoked.

Yet even when these theories are recognized as human ways of searching

for the truth while the literal truth of what happens beyond death

is hidden from us--they are at least a witness of one certain fact:

we know that the departed Christians are with Christ! Christ through

his suffering has conquered death and provided a link between the

living and the dead. Nevertheless while it is highly probable that

the living are linked with the dead through mutual prayer, objections

against affirming this belief will always be possible. This, however,

does not invalidate the Christian belief that prayer is one of the

vital means of fellowship with Christians who are separated from

each other.

A third and final objection, or at least a note of caution,

pertains to the fact that the Early and Medieval Church witnessed the

rise of a cult of martyrs and saints which in popular piety sometimes

came to take the place of the worship of God. Is it then not reasonable

to fear that the revival of invocation can again be easily degraded

into superstition and lead to the dishonouring of God? This is indeed

an appropriate warning to the modern Church, for it is possible that

those who invoke the saints to assist them by their prayers may slip

into a conception of God which is less than Christian. At the same

time, however, it must be stated that sound doctrine must not be

built with fear but must be developed in courageous faith. We cannot

discard a useful practice simply because it has been once abused and

corrupted! Indeed, the axiom of Christian faith is that worship

should be offered to God alone. And the theologians of the Roman

Catholic Church, which has a cult of saints, are always careful to

insist that the saints are to be reverenced and approached not in

virtue of any merits of their own but as the vessels of God's grace.

Karl Rahner, for instance, has argued that in order for the veneration

of saints to be specifically religious, "the exercise of it must be

directed towards God, and must bear upon the saints only in general

terms in the attainment of this end."[79] That is to say, it must be

God in Christ as manifested in his saints and not the saints as such

to whom reverence is directed. This does not mean that veneration

of saints may not be genuine; it is merely an acknowledgment that it

is an activity at a different level than the worship of God. Roman

Catholic theology has sought to recognize the qualitative difference

between God and the saints by the distinction that it draws between

various degrees of reverence. Thus latria is the supreme worship

due to God alone; hyperdulia, a degree of reverence due to the

Blessed Virgin alone; and dulia that degree of reverence due to the

saints. The line between the worship of God and the veneration of

saints is thus drawn with striking clarity.

Rahner has attempted to re-state the traditional insight in

a modern way. He recognizes the difficulty at hand:

> The distinction which is drawn between mere veneration
> and invocation of saints (dulia) and the adoration of
> God (latria) is important and certainly correct in
> itself. But it rather obscures than solves the important

problem involved. For while we think that we have
arrived at a clear and valid distinction we overlook
the fact that the unity of the two kinds of veneration
represents just as great a problem, and indeed one that
is even more important. Unless we can find a clear
answer to this second problem it will be impossible to
explain what is specifically Christian and religious in
the nature of our veneration of the saints, and equally
impossible to find out whether the veneration of the
saints, is in fact a Christian activity or a sort of
mitigated spiritualism, magic or a watered-down form
of polytheism.[80]

At the same time Rahner is prepared to offer several positive insights

as well. He first of all notes, by way of a question: ". . . why

does Jesus as man not disappear into the silence and darkness of

the divinity?"[81] Rahner suggests in answering his own question that

"the humanity of Jesus is the medium through which our immediate

relationship with God is achieved."[82] As in the maturing process

we achieve selfhood by way of relationships to others so also in religion.

Now that the unique saving role of Jesus is acknowledged, Rahner is

concerned to point out how the saints are connected with Jesus:

"They are a part of his Body . . .".[83] More precisely, suggests

Rahner: the saints "are our brothers who have already attained

their perfection, and they entreat the God of the living to let the

light shine upon us too which is the manifestation of his own love

and the blessed eternity of his own life."[84] In other words, the

love which unites the members of the communion of saints is the kind

of love which is opened up by Christ in order to attain to God.

This suggests therefore that the exercise of the veneration of the

departed Christians when recognized as ultimately directed to God

may avoid the danger of honouring creatures in the place of God.   In

this way the prayers for the dead and the exercise of invocation may

also emphasize for practical religious life such great Christian

truths as the relevance of the communion of saints and the unseen

world, the actuality of life after death, and the reality of the Church

as a Christian family consisting of the living and the dead. It is

our conviction that these truths cannot have their due practical effect

without those who believe in them participating in the invocation and

prayer for the dead. We do not think that it is better and safer

for the Church to suppress the truth than to risk the danger of

abuses. Admittedly these are issues to which we cannot give an answer

which solves all the problems at hand. Nevertheless, we are prepared

to appreciate the validity of the distinctions maintained by Catholic

scholars concerning the worship of God and the veneration of saints.

Also, it seems appropriate to note that in the reaction against

Rome and while criticizing the abuses connected with purgatory and

invocation, the Reformers forgot the maxim that the abuse of a good

thing is not a sufficient cause for its disuse. The practice of

praying for the departed has so much to commend it and it is so full

of comfort on the part of the living that it almost demands a full

and unqualified recognition both in private prayer and in public

worship. Boniface Lautz in his study of The Communion of Saints in

Anglican Theology[85] has noted that the war was one of the factors that

created a climate for an intensive consideration of the meaning of

Communion of Saints. According to his study consciousness of death

and the loss of loved ones created among the believers, in the Anglican

tradition at least, a climate more agreeable for the recognition of

the validity of prayer for and the invocation of the departed rela-
tives.   In support of this view, Lautz has quoted a statement by
the bishops and other delegates assembled at the Lambeth Conference
in 1920:

> Belief in this reality [communion with departed souls]
> and the nearness of the other world has been deepened
> by the war.   The bereaved heart of mankind with earnest,
> if not always wise, endeavour is straining to bridge
> the space that lies between.   It is in this endeavour
> that many distracted souls turn to treasures of comfort,
> and assurance of the world beyond this, with which to
> bring to the sorrowing the solace which is the right
> and heritage of Christians.   It is for the commissioned
> teachers of the Church so to present the Communion of
> Saints as to make it a satisfying force in the life of
> the mourners.[86]

It is perhaps paradoxical that the death of the loved ones in the
war should bring into focus, for the Anglican communion, the reality
contained in the Communion of Saints,   while it continues to reject
communion with the departed souls in other parts of the world where
it has always been a fact of religious life![87]   In any case the central
concern relevant to us is that more loss than gain has resulted by
the suppression of prayers for the departed and invocation of the
loved ones who have gone before us.   The Christian religion believes
that the Church is a family which extends beyond space and time.
Hence the saying of prayers for the departed cannot be suppressed
without the Church losing the sense of the mystical brotherhood of
being in Christ; the sense of being a family which embraces both the
living and the dead.   The Anglicans, for instance, declare in the
Prayer of Consecration during the Eucharist that it is "with Angels
and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven" that "we laud and

magnify thy [God's] glorious Name."[88] This is a clear and certain witness

to the family character of the Church. But do we in actual practice

and day-to-day living experience the meaning of these words? Perhaps

there is even a connection between the defective sense of the mystical

brotherhood in the Church of Christ with the departed and the com-

parative absence of the spirit of brotherhood and fellowship among the

living!

The main truth which underlies the practice of the prayers

for the departed, we believe to be this: the race of man is one

family. Death does not and can not destroy the network of relationships

which binds us together and makes us necessary for one another. And

so the dead are not lost, but gone before us, and continue to con-

stitute, together with those left behind, one family. Now, nothing

is so well calculated to keep this truth alive in our minds as the

exercise of praying for the departed and permitting the theory that

they too pray for us. Therefore, if we repudiate the exercise of

prayer, we deny equally well our family relations and responsibilities.

Karl Rahner addresses himself precisely to this defective sense of

social relations of modern societies and observes:

> Most contemporary Christians have already ceased to
> have any sense of being actively in communication with
> their own dead, the members of their own family and the
> relations whom they have lost. Though there are
> exceptions to this the general attitude is that they
> have departed and vanished from us. They are forgotten,
> and in so far as they are thought of at all attention is
> focussed upon their lives while they were still among us
> and not in any true sense upon the fact that they are
> still living . . ., so far as we are concerned they are
> not alive. They have been, so to say, completely and
> totally removed from our sphere of existence.[89]

Yet Rahner, however correct, may have been too hasty in his generali-
zation. While some contemporary Christian societies have completely
discarded their own dead, there are also others whose hearts refuse
to believe in death and to accept it as the natural and final destiny.
They search unceasingly for their dead relations and refuse to believe
that they have ceased to be or that their relations with them are
broken off. This latter experience is particularly true of the
Africans. The African people wish to be actively in continuous
communication with their own dead. Therefore the central teaching on
the communion of saints, and the whole question of prayers for the
departed and invocation, has particular relevance to the experience
of African Christians. The fundamental or basic experience of the
African man is such that a practical confession of faith in the
Communion of Saints can make Christianity immediately relevant to the
African situation. Now it remains for the following pages of this
thesis to examine the African experience among the Xhosa of South
Africa and to see if the Christian idea of the Communion of Saints
as discussed in the preceding chapters can offer a common ground for
the incorporation of the African idea of an extended family into Christian
faith and practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Communication with the Dead: Worship or Veneration

Since the beginning of Christian missions in Southern Africa
two centuries ago, the native African practice of communication of
the living with their own dead has been given the name of "ancestor
worship" and treated as participation in idolatry. Accordingly, the
African Christians have been forbidden to continue in practices which
are the result of the ideas they hold about their dead ancestors.

The following are the main explicit assumptions underlying
the rejection of the African ideas about the ancestors: (a) "ancestor
worship" is the very basis of the religion of Africa and, (b) the
Africans had no knowledge of God before the coming of Christianity.
It is the claim of this thesis that the Christian rejection of
African concern with ancestors was partly due to the Church's failure
to investigate these issues thoroughly and to take seriously the
Christian concept of the communion of saints.

This long overdue project will now be undertaken on a limited
scale in regard to the tradition of the Xhosa population. We shall
begin with the consideration of some of the major problems which
were caused by the missionary attitudes and policies. Subsequently,
attention will be focussed upon the Xhosa belief in survival after
death, the various ways which attest to this belief, including a
brief definition of the concept of ancestors. Our goal is to lay

some foundation for an appropriate understanding of the complex

phenomenon known as "ancestor worship". Finally, we inquire whether

the means by which the Xhosa communicate with their dead constitute

actual and true worship.

We believe that this is a vital question which deserves

consistent consideration if the African idea about the ancestors is

to be properly understood and related to Christian theology. To put

it another way, our concern is to inquire whether the African idea of

a family community extended in time as well as space does not resemble

the already familiar Christian concept of the communion of saints.

We should make it clear from the outset that we do not intend

to advocate any form of syncretism. This is not an attempt to issue

a scholarly license for the joining of the worship of God and the

worship of the ancestors. In short, our intention is to reflect on

the qualitative difference between the worship of God and the

veneration of the ancestors.

Missionary motivations, policies and methods

In his thoughtful article entitled "Some Traditional African

Religions and Christianity", R. LaRoche, W.F. makes an important

statement which illuminates the problem of the Church in Africa:

> Christianity comes not to destroy but rather to
> transform the institutions of the peoples to whom
> it brings the message of Christ. Among many African
> peoples religion and culture are one and the same.
> Can Africans then abandon their pagan cults and
> embrace the Christian religion without having to
> renounce their culture and their traditional
> institutions? . . . Must an African who becomes
> Christian give up being himself? Must he abandon

the institutions among which he has grown up and
so become a stranger among his own brethren?
Conversion to Christianity does not lead to this,
although it requires the African to abandon certain
beliefs and practices incompatible with this religion.[1]

Yet, despite such belated wisdom, the distinguishing mark of

missionary work in Africa has been the almost unanimous refusal to

incorporate elements of the traditional cults in any shape or form

into the Christian thought and practice.[2] Ironically, such a strict

policy has not been very successful.

It has been noted by several anthropologists who have studied

the culture and religion of the Xhosa-speaking people that, although

the majority of them are devoted Christian Church members, concern

with the ancestors is still a vital part of their lives.[3] Philip

Mayer, among others, states:

Christians including the full Church members are often
also partly committed to ancestor cult. Some admit it
openly, others try to conceal it. "I am a Christian
who believes in God," said a Presbyterian from Tsomo,
"and I also have a belief that our ancestors look after
us. But I believe God is the Almighty, while Red people
believe in the ancestors most of all." Though Christians
are not supposed to attend or participate in pagan
sacrifices, many of them do so. A considerable proportion,
even of full Church members, actually conduct sacrifices at
their homes.[4]

Moreover, Mayer is prepared to generalize:

The statement, "A Red person sacrifices to his ancestors
but I do not" must be taken as the official standard
rather than the literal truth.[5]

Such observations indicate the tenacity with which the Xhosa

Christians cling to the ideas about their ancestors.

In order to understand the Christianization process that has

left the Xhosa Christians where they are today, specific attention must be paid to the context of the policies and attitudes of the early missionaries.[6] On the whole there were two types of missionaries who evangelized the Xhosa people. The first desired that Christianity should adapt itself to the everyday life of the converts and was sensitive to the disruption that the Christian gospel may have caused to the social life of the native community. J.T. van der Kemp and several other missionaries expressed such conviction with force.[7]

The other type appears to have been coloured by what H. Richard Niebuhr has called "Christ-against-culture",[8] wherein Christ is portrayed as opposed to the customs and institutions of the society irrespective of the human values these conserve. It is well known that the converts were required to leave their homes and to settle in the mission settlements in order to be completely away from the 'old way of life' known to the Xhosa as 'the way of our fathers'.[9] This process of Christianization touched directly upon the ideas about the ancestors, for the missionaries insisted that their converts forsake their 'heathen' ways. As a matter of course, Church members were and still are forbidden to continue in practices which are the result of the ideas they hold about their dead ancestors. And as B. A. Pauw has noted, the Dutch Reformed Church does "on occasion still express explicit opposition to Xhosa ancestor beliefs."[10]

This method of missionary activity has had fundamental social effects. It has meant a far reaching division between the Christian believers (amakholwa) and the non-Christian believers commonly known as abantu ababomvu (literally, the Red people), often less politely

known as <u>amaqaba</u>, the smeared ones--from the smearing of their
clothes and bodies with red ochre.[11] The social life of the two
sections tends to operate on different and seldom overlapping planes.
And so, considering the attitude of the missionaries towards the
indigenous community and the effects to which it has given rise,
the dilemma of the Xhosa Christians is rather painful. Monica
Wilson notes in regard to the missionaries:

> They were Victorians imbued with a conviction of the value
> of their whole manner of life and they pressed all sorts
> of peripheral changes . . . . Not only did they preach
> the Protestant gospel of work, but they expected their
> converts to wear a Western style of clothing; to build
> square houses rather than round ones, to settle in a
> village round the Church and school rather than in
> scattered homesteads; to change the division of labour
> between men and women; and to abandon ancient festivals,
> such as the traditional initiation dances which were judged
> by the whites as lewd.[12]

It is true that the missionaries saw their faith as identical with
European ways of life. Thus they preached against the traditional
African ways of life.

Now, it is the claim of this thesis that the double existence
and guilt conflict on the part of the Xhosa Christians has not been
necessary. The Christian concept of the communion of saints, if
properly understood, can allow the Xhosa Christians to relate to
their own dead in a real and meaningful way. At the same time it
must be noted that the so-called "ancestor worship" requires a new
and better understanding. We now turn to this issue.

Belief in Survival after Death

The concern with their ancestors among the Xhosa is first

and foremost due to the fact that in their perspective there is no
impenetrable boundary between life and death.[13] For the Xhosa death
is not the end of life. It is only a means whereby the present
earthly existence is changed for another. After death, it is
believed that one passes into a 'life beyond', known to the Xhosa
as first "another world" or "elinye ilizwe". Investigators often
refer to this world as a "spirit world".[14] This is not an accurate
translation, since the Xhosa never use the word 'spirit' in this
sense. There are clear indications that this world is in many ways
identical with the physical world. Those who depart from the
physical world do not become impersonal spirits but retain some of
their essential features of humanity and hence their former identity.[15]
It is a common occurrence to hear the people saying of the deceased
"ugodukile", "he has gone home". Similarly, the frequent use of
libations for a deceased person indicate the physical resemblance
between the earthly world and the 'other' world. Hence death makes
no break in the continuity of the family community. Everybody who
has belonged to it is considered a member of it even if he is not
physically present with it. Cullen Young observes:

> The African community is a single, continuing unit,
> conscious of no distinction, in quality, between its
> members still here on earth, and its members now there,
> wherever it may be that the ancestors live.[16]

At the same time that the firm belief in survival after death among
the Xhosa has been noted with unanimity, its causes have been inter-
preted variously. Thus Hammond-Tooke has spoken of a "philosophy
arising from the resistance of the mind to admit that life and society

are transient and meaningless."[17] On the other hand, W.M. Eiselen

and I. Schapera have been of the opinion that it:

> may have arisen from a sense of helplessness experienced
> by the relicts of the dead, which in turn drove them on
> to hope that he [the dead] who had cared for them and
> theirs since life began would continue to care for them
> still, even though now out of sight; that as they prayed
> to him in the past and been ever heard, he would not
> reject them now . . . .[18]

It is our own considered opinion that the belief in the survival

after death is not merely a compensation for death on the part of

the survivors. Rather, it is accepted as part of the total social

and religious heritage and must therefore be understood in terms of

the customs and institutions which surround this belief. To these

we must now turn.

Burial and Funeral Rites

The burial and funeral rites make it very clear that the

survivors believe that the deceased is making only a journey, albeit

a final one, into another life.[19] When death has occurred, particu-

larly in the case of an elderly person in a rural setting, the Xhosa

people send messengers from house to house to inform (ukubika) the

people of the occurrence. Friends and relatives immediately stop

whatever they are doing and even the community at large on the day

of the funeral cancels jobs like ploughing the fields. This suggests

that the funeral is an occasion of communal importance. On the

day of the funeral an ox known as inkomo yokukhapha, an accompanying

beast, is slaughtered.[20] Also, it is a widely spread practice to

bury the deceased with gifts from relatives and friends. Just what

is placed in the grave varies from family to family. The gifts are often meant for personal use of the deceased in the next life and underline the belief that he would continue to live in the same manner as he did during his life time.

After the actual burial, all the mourners wash their hands at the gate before entering the home from which the corpse was taken to be buried. This symbolizes the purification of the mourners from contamination with death.[21]

After a period of about a year, another rite known as 'ukubuyisa', 'the bringing home of the deceased', is held.[22] This ritual does not involve a bringing home of the bones of the deceased. Rather, it marks the end of the mourning period and in the case of the death of a married man, the widow takes off her black clothes she had worn since the death of her husband. But it is believed also that, by this rite, the survivors will again be able to resume their intimate relationship with the deceased. From now on, the family will speak to him and will pour libations by allowing a few drops of beer or milk to fall on the ground. Libations are tokens of fellowship, hospitality and respect, but are also symbols of family continuity and contact, for they are done with the understanding that the departed is still alive. In addition to strengthening the fellowship and renewing contact, the pouring out of libations is done so that the members of the family may remain on good terms with their departed. This is evidenced by the fact that if a family neglects to pour libations, then misfortunes would be interpreted as resulting from the anger of the deceased. Thus the Xhosa are careful to observe them.

Also, it is commonplace after the rite of ukubuyisa has been performed to hear the Xhosa observe when anything precious falls to the ground: "ifunwe ngamawethu", "it has been claimed by those of the household [i.e. the dead ancestors]." Also, when solid foods and especially liquids such as milk happen to fall accidentally from the hands of the user, the remark is evoked: "those of the household have claimed it for themselves". Apart from this the Xhosa feel that they can talk to a deceased person when necessary especially during the moments of crisis, notably, the birth of a child, initiation and marriage.

Likewise, the Xhosa people believe that the deceased can be seen in dreams, and that they can impart both information and explanation on any matter about which the family is in a serious predicament. In lonely places, or during the night, it is believed that the deceased can appear to a person.

Communication with the Ancestors

As may be seen from what we have said above, the so-called "ancestor worship" rests upon the invincible conviction that those who have departed from this world have only passed into another life. But before we analyse this phenomenon in detail we must note that only men who live up to a ripe old age become ancestors after death.[23] This follows from the fact that old, experienced and knowledgeable men are themselves known as ancestors already while they still live.[24] However, this does not mean that the other dead, like children and young people, have no existence after death. Ideas about their

condition are simply undefined. That is to say, the existence of children and the youth in general after death is neither asserted nor denied even though Hammond-Tooke has claimed rather categorically that "individuals who die young do not become ancestors."[25] Monica Hunter specifies:

> The dividing line is not between those who have had children and those who have had none, but between those who were persons of weight and influence before their death and those who died while still children or young men and women.[26]

This suggests that not all the individuals who die in an old age become ancestors of equal importance and recognition. To be an ancestor of important standing and recognition, one must have lived in an exemplary manner and done much to enhance the standing and prestige of his family. This is the whole point of the observance of the rites of passages and those performed at the return of a family member who had abandoned his family ties. These rites integrate a person into the community of his family and thereby crystalize his position as a member of a family. New obligations and responsibility are expected of him. Diligence in sharing the full privileges and performing the duties of a community member goes to the credit of one's personality even after death. And if, for example, a man has abandoned the community of his family, he would never be an ancestor of importance and recognition to that community, unless he is again ritually reconciled to his family. This shows very clearly that age and death are not the only decisive factors for the attainment of ancestorhood.[27] The amount of influence the deceased has had during

his lifetime on earth and his standing in the community of his family are equally important. Thus the ancestor rituals can be seen as a form of remembrance of the personality of the deceased. By the performance of a ritual, social relations with the dead are re-established.

At the same time, as some anthropologists have noted,[28] ancestor rituals supply a sanction for family morality: although the parents have departed, the authority and jurisdiction which they wielded during their life time, go on. Thus ethical conduct is sustained by showing reverence to them. This shows that even though the ancestors are separated from their descendants by physical death, they are not torn away from the social bonds of their family communities, since the ancestor rituals preserve the solidarity between the living and the dead.

Accordingly, the so-called "ancestor worship" is nothing else but an extension into infinite distance of the family activities on earth and a continuation of the social duties towards the dead. We have seen that those who die, according to Xhosa tradition, do not perish in the grave, but retain their essential self-hood, remaining as the fathers or grandfathers or great grandfathers which they were before their death, capable of exercising their parental functions over their survivors. This is evidenced by the fact that the Xhosa people still say 'my father' or 'bakhuluwa', 'elder brothers' or 'mawethu', 'household-men', when they address their own deceased. They never speak of them as 'spirits'. So, the deceased continue to have their titles of relationship which they had borne while they

were still on earth, and their attitude is primarily parental--

protective, corrective and aimed at the welfare of their descendants.

Thus to speak of 'ancestor worship' is to misrepresent the

case as there is no 'worship' but a manifestation of an unbroken family

relationship between those who have departed from this world and

their offspring who are still here. This fact has been well

recognized by African theologians. Thus Mbiti writes:

> 'Worship' is the wrong word to apply in this situation;
> . . . Africans themselves know very well that they are
> not 'worshipping' the departed members of their family.[29]

It must be noted that the obstacle to the understanding and appreciation

of the African idea about their ancestors is not only practise of the

so-called "ancestor worship", but also the mistaken view that the

"ancestor worship" is the very basis of the religion of the native

Africans. Even researchers as careful as Hammond-Tooke maintain

that Xhosa religion is "fundamentally an ancestor cult, the worship

of the spirits of the deceased members of the family."[30] Similarly

Olof Pettersson believes that "it is an undisputed fact that the

religion of the South-Eastern Bantu has its character from the

ancestor worship."[31] Even a more basic preconceived assumption is

that the black Africans did not know God until the beginning of the

Christian missions. Such an assumption can be seen in a statement

like the one made by John Campbell who visited South Africa at the

beginning of the nineteenth century under the auspices of the London

Missionary Society and wrote:

> they [the South African tribes] have scarcely any
> religion; but some of them profess to believe that some
> great being came from above, and made the world after

which he returned, and cared no more about it. It
is very probable that even this feeble ray of light
was obtained by means of their intercourse with the
Dutch boers during several ages.[32]

Since Campbell made this statement several books on the traditional

concepts of God in Africa have been published and his position has

been severely contested.[33] In his latest article, "The Encounter

of Christian faith and African Religion", J. Mbiti has noted:

The God described in the Bible is none other than the
God who is already known in the framework of our
traditional African religiosity. The missionaries who
introduced the gospel to Africa in the past two hundred
years did not bring God to our continent. Indeed God
brought them. They proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ.
But they used the names of the God who was and is already
known by African peoples [by name].[34]

M. Hunter who is also careful and sympathetic in her study of the

Xhosa religion and culture, states positively:

When asked, all [Xhosa] even great grandfathers who
have not come under direct Christian influence, assert
positively that they have always known the word uThixo,
and that they always called upon uThixo when they
sneezed, and when they were saved from danger . . . .
Deformed births are attributed to uThixo. Of a deformed
person it is said udaliwe nguThixo, he was created by
uThixo, and an insane person is called umntu kaThixo,
the person of uThixo.[35]

J. Henderson Soga also illustrates this fact clearly about his own

people, the Xhosa, when he writes:

They have a conception of a Supreme Being clearly
defined: a God who is the creator of all things, who
controls and governs all, and as such is the rewarder
of good and the punisher of evil . . . . The Xhosa
name for God is uDali i.e. the Creator or Supreme Being
and it is from the same root as um-Dali--the Creator.
Other names by which He is known are Thixo and Qamata.
Both of these latter are of alien origin . . . . The

term Thixo, strange to say, is that by which God is
most generally known and spoken of by the Xhosa. It
has almost submerged the original Xhosa term Dali--the
author of all existent life, the creator of man, the
animals and all forms of living things.[36]

In the light of these considerations which demonstrate the distinction
between God and the ancestors, some theologians, both Western and
African have made the suggestion that, since the term "ancestor
worship" is very much questionable, and since it is wrong to say
that 'ancestor worship' constitutes the very basis of African religion,
"ancestor veneration" is a much more appropriate term to describe the
attitude of the Africanstowards their ancestors.[37]

Indeed, this suggestion provides us with an adequate paradigm
for understanding the African religious beliefs and practices con-
cerning the ancestors: worship of God and veneration of the ancestors.
Nevertheless, while we do not question the validity of this distinction,
it must be noted that the margin between 'worship' and 'veneration'
is very thin. Thus E. G. Parrinder's suggestion for the adoption of
the term "dulia", used in Roman Catholic theology, to denote the
veneration of the ancestors in Africa is a meaningful one.[38] It makes
clear that the veneration of the ancestors is on a lower level than
the worship of God. Apart from this, the adoption of this term and
the subsequent recognition of the distinction between the worship of
God and the veneration of the ancestors provides a genuine basis for
the identification of the so-called "ancestor worship" with the
Christian concept of the communion of saints and that in a manner
that will allow the incorporation of the African idea about the
ancestors into Christian theology.[39]

Our conclusion, then, is: that we as men become akin to God and so with our fellow men, touches upon a key concept in African traditional life which would remind our people of the solidarity of mankind. Thus it is the claim of this thesis that "ancestor worship" could serve as one exemplary illustration of relations between the living and the departed in the Christian Church. The relationship with God works in two ways: it unites every individual with every other individual and also the living with the dead. In this manner, the African ancestors would be embraced within the framework of the universal Church and included in the fellowship of the communion of saints.

This idea of the manifestations of the relations with God finds support in the 'synthetic' interpretation of the phrase sanctorum communio which means fellowship with holy persons of all ages, living and departed, through participation in the holy sacraments. Here the communion of saints is seen strictly within the context of the relations of God in Christ with man which is realized at Baptism and the Eucharist.

At Baptism we are able to have fellowship with men who are separated from us because we are linked with the death and resurrection of Christ, and so, with every other person for whom the sacrifice was made. Moreover, since fellowship in the Body of Christ, the Church, is not limited by time and space, and since it is not broken by physical death, at Baptism we are joined with Christians of every age, and are linked with the faithful departed too.

Similarly, at the Eucharistic service, we commemorate the

sacrifice of Christ. In this way we join company with Christians all over the world and of all ages to glorify and praise God. And so, at these services we are linked for fellowship not only with those present, but also with the faithful dead. This way of emphasis and teaching would allow the African Christians to communicate with their own dead and thereby avoid the dangers of inner conflict.

One vital issue facing directly the attempt to embrace African ancestors within the framework of the communion of saints is the matter of the ancestors who died before they ever had the opportunity to hear the gospel. This in itself implies that we cannot justifiably say that the African ancestors are embraced within the framework of the communion of saints without discrimination. If the concept of the communion of saints is to be acceptable to the universal Church and provide a solution to the dilemma of African Christians, then this problem calls for a theological reflection on and interpretation of Christian belief about the destiny of the dead. We must postpone our reflections until we have looked more closely at the synthetic interpretation of the communion of saints which touches indirectly upon this issue.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sanctorum Communio in African Religious Experience

In order to place the central topic of this thesis into focus, this chapter discusses two aspects which we consider to be important for the conceptualization and application of the communion of saints in Africa: (a) the problem of African ancestors who died without having been evangelized and, (b) the African belief in the solidarity of the living with the dead in relation to the biblical affirmation that the souls of those who die in Christ live because they belong to God in Christ.

In the foregoing chapters we have emphasized the relevance and abiding validity of the synthetic view and made clear that the interpretation of the phrase sanctorum communio as fellowship of the sancti (Christians) through participation in the sancta (i.e. the sacraments), provides a useful basis for the development of the doctrine of the communion of saints. Now our task is to reflect on sanctorum communio in the perspective of African religious experience.

Stephen Benko has justly emphasized the centrality of the sacraments as the means by which forgiveness of sins is bestowed and through which a believer participates in the benefits of Christ's sacrifice.[1] However, there is one crucial insight which Benko has consistently de-emphasized, namely, the concern for the actual sancti, i.e., the persons involved in the new relationship of the communion

of saints.

The sacraments represent not only the means by which for-
giveness of sins is bestowed upon a believer but also manifest the
solidarity and unity of Christians with Christ by reason of their
common sonship to God. In other words, through the sacraments those
who believe in Christ are knit together into a mystical family not
only with Christians in various parts of the world but also with
the faithful departed. This implies that union with God in Christ
through the sacraments of the Church has the merit of establishing
a spiritual fellowship in the religious life of the believers, a
fellowship which is not terminated by physical death.

Assuming the validity of this traditional Anglican idea, we
suggest that at the sacrament of the Eucharist, African Christians,
who already believe in the active communion with the dead, can be
readily led to celebrate this communion by way of fellowship in
Christ and mutual prayer. At the Eucharist, Christians join with
the whole company of heaven—the faithful departed, the angels,
archangels and Christ—to praise and glorify God. This link is
effected by the perpetual intercession of Christ. Thus it is in the
context of worship that there exists the possibility for African
Christians to live with their dead in fellowship and unceasing prayer.

In accord with such thinking, a further question must be raised
whether such a fellowship ought to be limited to the Christian dead?
What of the unevangelized and unsaved dead? For the African Christians
this is not an idle rhetorical question because it is fundamentally
important for their conceptualization of the meaning of the communion

of saints. The fact that the question is raised implies our
awareness that in traditional Christian terms we cannot simply say
that they are embraced within the framework of the communion of
saints. In reflecting on the destiny of the dead who departed from
this life without hearing the gospel, the following reflections are
in order.

The biblical answer (often cited by the missionaries) to the
question concerning those who died without hearing the gospel was that
they go to hell.[2] However, there have been notable theologians who
have thought otherwise. William Temple, for example, took for
granted the possibility of salvation of those whom we generally call
"non-Christians" in order to assert his theory of the universality
of the Church:

> Before the coming of Jesus Christ, the eternal Church
> had its representatives on earth, just as the "Word"
> had lightened every man before it became flesh. The
> Jewish Church was a such representative, and in St.
> Paul's view, Christ did not found the Church but
> redeemed a Church which was already there. But we
> cannot limit the pre-Christian Church to Israel any more
> than we can deny the presence of Christ's spirit in
> persons and bodies other than Christians and the Church
> (visible). Abraham and Isaiah, Socrates and Phidias,
> Buddha and Confucius, must all be reckoned as, each in
> his degree, a representative and organ of the eternal
> Church.[3]

Carried to its logical conclusion, this statement has the merit of
admitting our inability to judge who are the true members of the uni-
versal Church, since we cannot measure "the presence of Christ's
spirit in persons and bodies other than Christians."[4] This admission
also safeguards against the hasty presumption that certain persons

are admitted to the beatific vision while others are condemned to hell at the moment of death. However, of interest for us in this study is not so much the question of what happens to the souls of the faithful and the pagans at death, but whether the Christians as Christians are extracted from relationship and solidarity with the pagans, living or dead.

It may be suggested that this is not merely a sentimental issue which appeals to theological humanitarians. The situation is not that we are expressing just a human wish that all men be saved in order that mankind may be one in the service of God. This is also a clear desire voiced by Jesus Christ.[5] Missionary activities including the unceasing prayers of the Church for those who have not yet heard the Word of God and accepted it are a witness to the truth of that biblical insight.

However, there is a dilemma facing these sentiments. On the one side is God's purpose which intends man's salvation. And on the other side is man's freedom entrusted to him by God so that he can make a positive, free and personal response to Him. Without immediately solving this dilemma we observe that universal salvation is not automatic--yet it is an authentic possibility; otherwise it would be superfluous for the Christian Church to embark on a missionary enterprise, to be concerned about, and to pray for those who have not yet made their personal response to their Creator.

Here the point to be raised is this. If the communion of saints continues after death, does not the possibility of this communion imply an opportunity for an evangelizing contact with the

departed unbelievers? Christ's descent into Hades[6] certainly was

interpreted in that way. May not the Church, the communion of

saints joined with Christ, participate in this task? In short, it

may not be presumptuous to suggest that the forefathers of African

Christians who died without having received Christ could be led to

salvation by the active and faithful remembrance and unceasing inter-

cessions of their living Christian descendants. Furthermore, insofar

as the dead are in an intermediate state between earth and heaven,[7]

where they can receive discipline and experience growth in the know-

ledge of Christ's work, then the Eucharist is the appropriate place

and occasion for African Christians to pray for their ancestors and

to plead with God that the merits of Christ's sacrifice may be effective

in their case as well. Indeed, no one can measure the extent of the

Work of Christ since the Scriptures do not supply us here with any

definite limits. Therefore it is not in order simply to dismiss as

unbiblical the suggestion that the prayers of African Christians may

help their ancestors to respond to the Word of God and to receive

that salvation which will link them firmly to Christ and hence to

their living Christian descendants. As Harry Sawyerr has so aptly

put it: "the prayers of African Christians might in the providence

of God lead to the salvation of their pagan ancestors."[8]

At this time in South African Anglicanism, for example, there

does not as yet exist such a custom in a recognized form. Should

prayers to the dead be openly introduced, there is no doubt that

black African Christians would obtain a twofold benefit. On the one

hand they would appreciate the privilege to witness to their as yet

unsaved ancestors. On the other hand, their link to their departed ancestors would obtain a distinctively positive Christian meaning: (1) they would not be venerated wholesale, but with appropriate distinction between saved and unsaved, (2) while love and admiration could be expressed to the known saved ancestors, (3) authentic compassion and care could be, in the name of Christ, proffered to the unsaved ones.

In this entire discussion a central role is played by the question with which we started, viz., whether the fellowship of the communion of saints ought to be limited to the Christian dead. We noted that the whole question of membership in the Church and hence in the communion of saints is in the forefront of current theological discussion.[9] Nonetheless solutions to this question vary. Some writers think that it is possible that one living a good life with the aid of God's grace is in better standing as regards his membership in the communion of saints than is a Christian who has lapsed from the practice of his faith.[10] At the same time strict conservative voices have also been heard. Thus E. Lamirande has suggested:

> Only those who may be rightly called, without qualification, members of the Church and of Christ's mystical body can fully communicate in all that belongs to the Church. On the other hand, in the degree in which anyone is really connected with the Church, although not fully a member, he enters into communion with all who, in any way, are in the spiritual realities of the ecclesiastical community, and sometimes even in certain of its extrinsic realities.[11]

But such a position is ordinarily not embraced by the Anglican Church. Moreover, there are even points of unclarity and disagreement among the strict conservatives. Generally speaking, they agree that at

least some kind of membership is a pre-requisite for fellowship in the communion of saints, and that the closer the ties with the Church the closer and more perfect is the membership in the fellowship of the communion of saints. However, what such conservatives do not tell us is the exact criteria for judging membership in the communion of saints. Thus, for example, in our judgement the offering of prayers for all the departed without discrimination has the merit of admitting our ignorance about the true members of the Church of Christ including the communion of saints. Similarly, the traditional Roman Catholic definition of "invincible ignorance" (or "anonymous Christianity" according to Karl Rahner) includes among the saved all such non-Christians who did not with comprehension and will reject Christianity. Hence not having been a Christian is not automatically synonymous with being lost.

Finally, we must now turn to the theological implications which arise from relating the African belief in the solidarity of the living with the dead to the biblical assertion that the faithful departed to the Sheol are in "Abraham's bosom" or "Paradise".[12]

The African concept of corporate personality as exemplified in the extended family has already been briefly mentioned in the third chapter. Moreover, we have also noted the fact that the community in the African sense is made up of the living and the dead. African people believe that the dead, though ending earthly life, do not cease being their family members. They continue to participate in the ongoing life of their families here on earth. The question then is, how can this consciousness be transposed into the Christian

perspective of thought and practice especially in the light of the Christian affirmation that the faithful departed are in Christ?

We believe that the African conception of a community is most open to an experience of growth. This is particularly true in regard to the Church in its relationship to Christ, and to the oneness of all men in Christ, living or departed. The New Testament lays great stress on the concept of corporate existence in Christ. St. Paul's constant use of the metaphor of "the Body" in relation to the Church is a key for understanding the theology of corporate existence in Christ. This concept makes clear that our relationship with Christ is reciprocal. First, it is a relationship with God in Christ and second, it is also a relationship with our fellow-human beings who are also joined with Christ. It is precisely in this regard that the African consciousness of the unity of the living with the dead can be transposed into Christian and ecclesial solidarity opened up by the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Christ, through the new relationship which He has made possible, the individual is indissolubly joined with Him and so with fellow Christians. On this basis it has been continuously assumed that those who have been united in and with Christ during their life time, are not extracted from the relationship and solidarity with Christ and fellow Christians in virtue of their physical death. Wherever it is that they go when they are taken away from the scenes of earthly life, they continue to live or rest because they belong to Christ. And if they live because they belong to God in Christ, then the dynamics of relationship with Christ still prevail.

Since the African people believe from their religious heritage

that there is life for the dead, then in the Church their consciousness of the solidarity of the living with the dead can now mean a solidarity of Christians with essentially living persons whose souls live because they exist in Christ. It may be that it is with this consciousness in the solidarity of the living with the dead that the Church in Africa can make an authentic contribution to the discovery and experiencing of the meaning of relationship in and with Christ.

Furthermore, we must point out again the vital importance of the sacraments, for it is within the sacramental life of the Church that this discovery can be made and experienced. That the sacraments are pregnant with Christological meaning and terms of relationship in Christ is known and needs very little elaboration.[13] Baptism identifies the believer with the Redeemer. Through Baptism a person becomes mystically united with the Lord. One becomes a member of the Messianic community, and shares in all the privileges of that community.

The Eucharist on the other hand brings the individual and the community into the most intimate communion with the Lord. It proclaims the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord, until He comes again. And so, at Baptism and the Eucharist the individual comes to know Jesus as He is. In this experience, the believer comes to realize his existence in two dimensions. First, he discovers his individuality in relation to Christ, and second, he begins to gain a new sense of corporateness and to perceive his relationship with Christ in connection with the others in the Body of Christ. If then such a relationship also involves a relationship with the

dead in the sense we have consistently assumed in this thesis, then
the black Africans are more than ready to appropriate such a teaching.

It is in this regard that we see the theology of the communion
of saints as a field of tremendous potentiality in the practical
existence of the Church in Africa. The Church in Africa can take
over the consciousness of the African people concerning the departed
and transpose it into a Christian and ecclesial solidarity which is
rooted in a relationship of mankind with Jesus Christ. In this way,
through teaching and proclamation of the Gospel, the Church will
undoubtedly be for the African Christians a centre of their existence,
or as J. S. Mbiti once put it, the Church will become:

> a community in which [the African people's] corporate
> aspirations are not destroyed but fulfilled and intensified,
> in which tribal foundations are not simply shaken and
> replaced with a vacuum but are made more secure in Christ.[14]

This thought leads to the concluding observation concerning the
liturgical form that would express the African people's continued
relationship with their own dead, and the significance of the original
rituals such as libations for Christian worship. As already stated
in the introduction of this study, the purpose of africanization of
Christian theology and worship ought not to involve the abandonment
of theology and worship which are christocentric in their essential
aspects. Similarly, this thesis has not intended to suggest that
Christian worship in Africa must take the exact form by means of
which the Xhosa people, for example, express their continued rela-
tionship with their own departed. Rather we intended to suggest the
use of more suitable resources already developed in black Africa,

resources which do not detract from the quality and purpose of
Christian theology and worship. Thus it is the opinion of the present
writer that, as to the form of liturgy this would take, the Church
in Africa must wait for the Cranmers of Africa. The Cranmers of
Africa will need to explore the depth of the Christian convictions
and proceed with a sympathetic understanding of the problems of
worship, then only will they be in a position to re-create a truly
Christian worship and that in a manner that will make the African
worshipper feel more at home in the church. At the same time we must
not cease to pray that the Holy Spirit which has guided Christian
worship throughout the ages may also guide the efforts of the Church
in Africa, so that she may grow in love and knowledge of Jesus Christ
and be a source of inspiration to numerous others who as yet do not
know Him.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a study of the Christian concept
of the communion of saints in order to see how this concept can be
best understood in the African context. In the course of the study
it became clear that a theology of the communion of saints for Africa
must take in account the non-Christian dead as well, and it is the
presentation of this theme that constitutes one of the main contri-
butions of this work.

Now it remains to be emphasized that the traditional African
practice of the veneration of ancestors which among the Christians
manifests itself in their fervent zeal to be actively in communication
with their ancestors, can be incorporated into Christian theology
by a sound development of the concept of the communion of saints.
This concept provides for a fellowship in Christ, and so with
Christians in different parts of the world including the dead. It
is in this field that Africa can make a valuable contribution to a
significant aspect of Christian theology which has often been neglected.

This thesis has not intended to show the full impact which
the doctrine of the communion of saints might have upon the African
people. Yet it may be in order to say with some degree of confidence
that its application will undoubtedly raise their vision of society
and communal life beyond that of kin and thereby contribute toward
solving the continuing problem of tribalism.

We deemed it significant to support the synthetic interpretation of the phrase <u>sanctorum communio</u>, since it is in the sacraments of the Church that the relationship with Christ and with our fellow human beings is achieved and realized. The sacraments make it possible for us to merge our lives indissolubly with that of Christ, and so with others throughout the world and throughout all the ages. By implication this interpretation rightly stresses both the persons involved in the communion of saints and the consequences of common sharing of sacred realities which are necessary for a sound conception of this idea.

Put in another way, the concern with the sacraments and the communion of saints must go hand-in-hand. Rightly understood, it will give the Church and its leaders in Africa a better knowledge of the meaning and value of both. It is to be noted that already many Churches in Africa regard the sacrament of Baptism as extremely important, and among the independent Churches individuals get baptized more than once. The Eucharist on the other hand is given a minor place or is ignored completely. Some Churches either do not have it or celebrate it only occasionally. Yet if the Gospel is to make sense to any people, it can happen only through such a vision and experience of Jesus which is realized within the full scope of both preaching the Word and celebrating the sacraments. Concerning the subject of this thesis this implies that the Church in Africa can only be aware of herself as a universal Church including the communion of saints if and only if she places the teaching and observance of the sacraments at the centre of her life.

Finally, if there is any area where we could help the
African Christians to avoid the dangers of inner conflict and double
existence (accepting the Church's rejection of ancestor beliefs on
the one hand, while participating in them to satisfy the demands
of their culture), it is here through a sound development of the
Christian concept of the communion of saints. In aiding them the
Church at large will also benefit, for she will have a better
understanding and realization of what we profess in the Apostles'
Creed: "I believe in . . . the Communion of Saints".

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

[1] G. C. Oosthuizen, Post-Christianity in Africa: A theological and anthropological study, 1968, p. xi.

[2] The Xhosa-speaking people are the southernmost representatives of the so-called Bantu-speaking peoples of Africa. They speak a language called isiXhosa. Generally these people are referred to as the Xhosa, but this is hardly accurate. They are all Xhosa-speaking, but the people themselves are divided into the Xhosa proper, amaMfengu, abaThembu, amaMpondo, amaMpondomise, amaBhaca and amaBomvana. The Xhosa-speaking people are sometimes collectively called the Cape Nguni.

Besides speaking the same language and having similar cultures, the Xhosa-speaking people are united by their history of neighbourhood and by ties of intermarriage. A person discovers that one is a Bhaca or iMpondo, etc., only when he has heard what his clan-name (isiduko) is. And so, for this reason, Xhosa or Xhosa people will be used in this thesis as a short form for the Xhosa-speaking people.

Chapter One

[1] Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, 1950, especially
Chapter XIII.

[2] Ibid., p. 101.

[3] See J.F. Sollier, "Communion of Saints", The Catholic
Encyclopaedia, 1913, 4: 171-174; John Pearson, An Exposition of the
Creed, 1893, p. 534; Johannes Quasten, Patrology, 1950, 1:27; J.N.D.
Kelly, op. cit., pp. 368-397.

[4] Cf. J.P. Kirsch, The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints in
the Ancient Church, 1910; J.N.D. Kelly, op. cit.; A. von Harnack, The
Apostles' Creed, 1901; J. Köstlin, "Communion of Saints". The New
Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge, 1909, 3:181ff.

[5] This tendency was dominant in the thought of the Reformers.
See also Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Sanctorum Communio, 1963, in which
he discusses the subject of the Communion of Saints in terms of the
sociology of the Church.

[6] See Faustus of Riez in J.N.D. Kelly, op. cit., pp. 391ff.

[7] Cf. Stephen Benko, The Meaning of Sanctorum Communio, 1964;
F.J. Badcock, "Sanctorum Communio as an Article of the Creed", Journal
of Theological Studies, 1920, 21:106-126; Theodor Zahn, The Apostles'
Creed: A Sketch of its History and Examination of its Contents, 1899.

[8] See especially Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, 1959; Émilien
Lamirande. The Communion of Saints, 1963; H.B. Swete, The Apostles'
Creed, 1905; The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, 1915;
F.W. Rede, The Communion of Saints, 1893.

[9] Kelly op. cit., p. 391; Kirsch op. cit., p. 255; Wilhem
Breuning, "Communion of Saints", Sacramentum Mundi, 1968, 1:391;
Swete, The Apostles' Creed, p. 83; Lamirande, op. cit., p. 71; Sollier
op. cit., p. 171.

[10] Kirsch op. cit., p. 261.

[11] Swete, *The Apostles' Creed*, p. 83; Köstlin op. cit., p. 182, Kelly op. cit., pp. 390ff.

[12] Cf. Kirsch op. cit., p. 256; Kelly op. cit., p. 391.

[13] Cf. Kelly op. cit., p. 392; see also Benko op. cit., pp. 101ff.

[14] August Hahn, ed., *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der Alten Kirche*, 1962, pp. 47-49.

[15] Harnack op. cit., pp. 31ff.

[16] Especially Sollier op. cit., p. 171; Kirsch op. cit., p. 259; Kelly op. cit., p. 389.

[17] Kelly op. cit., p. 389.

[18] Swete, *The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints*, pp. 158ff.

[19] F.E. Brightman (ed.), *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, 1965, 1:138; H.M. Luckock, *The Divine Liturgy*, 1889, p. 186. I have pointed out that the words koinōnia and ta hagia in Eastern liturgies referred to the sacraments. Some authors have worked upon this basis in order to suggest that sanctorum communio could refer only to the sacraments and should be interpreted as such.

[20] See especially Kirsch op. cit., p. 260; Kelly op. cit., p. 392.

[21] Quoted in Benko op. cit., p. 105.

[22] Zahn op. cit., p. 192.

[23] Ibid., p. 192.

[24] Kelly op. cit., p. 392.

[25] Cited in Benko op. cit., p. 99.

[26] For instance, see I Pet. 1:15ff; Phil. 1:1; I Cor. 6:1; Acts 9:13. However for a more thorough treatment of the meaning and use of the word "saint" (hagios) in the Old and New Testaments, see especially Lampe, G.H.W., "Saint", *The Interpreters Dictionary of the*

Bible, 1962, 4:164ff.; Kuhn, "hagios", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, G. Kittel (ed.), 1964, 1:88-110.

[27] See also Kelly op. cit., p. 391.

[28] Benko op. cit., p. 101.

[29] Quoted in Swete, The Apostles' Creed, p. 85-86.

[30] Harnack op. cit., p. 32; Benko op. cit., p. 102.

[31] Kelly op. cit., p. 391.

[32] Cited in Swete, The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, pp. 162-3.

[33] Lamirande op. cit., p. 19; Swete, The Apostles' Creed, p. 86; Kelly op. cit., p. 396.

[34] Quoted in Benko op. cit., p. 106. See also Kelly op. cit., p. 392; Swete, The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, p. 163.

[35] Köstlin op. cit., pp. 181-182, argues that the Faustus' words adopt the same interpretation as that borne by the words of Nicetas. Moreover, he argues, the words were introduced not for the purpose of sanctioning the cultus of the saints and defending it against attacks. Rather, the interpretation which Faustus attached to the words was intended to meet a prevailing problem, hence it is defensive in style.

[36] Swete, The Apostles' Creed, p. 87.

[37] Cf. Mary Shideler, A Creed for a Christian Skeptic, 1968, p. 140; Kelly op. cit., pp. 388-397.

[38] Swete, The Apostles' Creed, pp. 87ff.

[39] Köstlin op. cit., p. 181.

[40] Benko op. cit., p. 64.

[41] Benko's treatment of this issue is more clear on pp. 34-47.

[42] *Ibid*., p. 38.

[43] *Ibid*., p. 49.

[44] *Ibid*., pp. 53ff.

[45] *Ibid*., p. 54.

[46] *Ibid*., p. 55.

[47] *Ibid*., p. 55.

[48] *Ibid*., p. 7.

[49] *Ibid*., p. 140.

[50] Zahn *op. cit.*, p. 196-197.

[51] Badcock *op. cit.*, pp. 119-126.

[52] Benko *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[53] Cf. Kelly *op. cit.*, p. 395.

Chapter Two

[1] Karl Barth, _Dogmatics in Outline_, 1959, p. 144.

[2] Ibid., p. 144.

[3] Ibid., p. 144.

[4] Ibid., p. 144.

[5] St. Thomas Aquinas, _The Three Greatest Prayers: Commentaries on Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Apostles' Creed_, 1956.

[6] Ibid., p. 80.

[7] Ibid., p. 83.

[8] Ibid., p. 83.

[9] Ibid., p. 83.

[10] St. Thomas Aquinas, _Summa Theologica: The Supplement_, 1948, 3:Q71, A2.

[11] Martin Luther, _Large Catechism_, 1935, Part II, Article III, Paragraph 157, p. 123.

[12] Ibid., Paragraph 158, p. 123.

[13] Ibid., Paragraph 158, p. 123.

[14] Ibid., Paragraph 158, p. 123.

[15] Ibid., Paragraph 158, pp. 123-124.

[16] Cf. "The Augsburg Confession of 1530", Article VII in _The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church_, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert et. al., 1959, p. 32. See also Article

VIII which defines the Church as "the assembly of all believers and saints", p. 33.

[17] For a more elaborate discussion of Luther's understanding of Communion of Saints, see also Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther, 1966, pp. 294-322; Herman Amberg Preus, The Communion of Saints: A Study of the Origin and Development of Luther's Doctrine of the Church, 1948.

[18] Luther op. cit., Article III, Paragraph 153, p. 121.

[19] Ibid., Paragraph 155, p. 122. See also Althaus' discussion of the role of the Eucharist in relation to the Communion of Saints in the thought of Luther. Althaus op. cit., pp. 318-322.

[20] Althaus op. cit., p. 318.

[21] The Augsburg Confession (1530), Article VII, Tappert, op. cit., p. 32.

[22] Quoted in Preus op. cit., p. 121. See also Althaus op. cit., p. 296.

[23] Althaus op. cit., p. 332.

[24] Calvin, Institutes IV, i, 2.

[25] Ibid., III, XX, 24.

[26] Ibid., IV, i, 3.

[27] An illuminating treatment of Calvin's understanding of Communion of Saints may be found in Ray C. Petry, "Calvin's conception of the Communio Sanctorum" Church History 5(1936), 227-238.

[28] Petry, op. cit., pp. 235ff. A similar interpretation of the Communion of the Saints as an appositional phrase which explains the social reality of the Church is found in Bonhoeffer's Sanctorum Communio, 1963.

[29] Cf. John Pearson, An Exposition of the Creed, 1893.

[30] Ibid., p. 535.

[31] Ibid., p. 535.

[32] Ibid., p. 510.

[33] Ibid., pp. 540ff.

[34] Ibid., p. 538.

[35] Ibid., p. 539.

[36] Ibid., p. 539.

[37] Ibid., p. 540.

[38] Ibid., p. 541.

[39] Ibid., p. 541.

[40] Ibid., p. 542.

[41] Ibid., p. 542.

[42] Ibid., p. 543.

[43] Ibid., p. 543.

[44] Cf. George Lee, The Christian Doctrine of Prayers for the Departed, 1872.

[45] Ibid., p. 9.

[46] Ibid., p. 18.

[47] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[48] Ibid., p. 7.

[49] F.W. Rede, The Communion of Saints, 1893, pp. 4-5.

[50] Ibid., p. 5.

[51] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[52] Ibid., pp. 153-154.

[53] Swete, The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, p. 168.

[54] Ibid., p. 168. Incidentally, Charles Gore whose book was published only a year later than Swete's makes the same point. He observes that the article of the Communion of Saints is an extension of the preceding one on the Holy Catholic Church. According to him it means "that all the redeemed, living and departed, are in a fellowship, which death does not interrupt. The visible Catholic Church is only a part of the whole Church" (p. 95). For him the concept of the Communion of Saints bears the truth about the mystical element of the Church. Cf. Gore, The Religion of the Church as Presented in the Church of England, 1916.

[55] Swete, The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, p. 192.

[56] Ibid., p. 178.

[57] Swete op. cit., p. 174.

[58] Ibid., p. 177.

[59] Ibid., p. 180.

[60] See especially, ibid., pp. 193ff.

[61] Ibid., p. 185.

[62] J.F. Bethune-Baker, The Faith of the Apostles' Creed, 1918, p. 166.

[63] Ibid., p. 166.

[64] William Temple, "The Church" in Foundations: A Statement of Christian Belief in terms of Modern Thought (ed.) B.H. Streeter, 1914, p. 344.

[65] A.E.J. Rawlinson, "The Communion of Saints" in The Meaning of the Creed (ed.) G.K.A. Bell, 1918, pp. 209-226.

[66] Ibid., p. 209.

[67] Emilien Lamirande, The Communion of Saints, 1963, p. 25.

[68] See especially his discussion of the official position of the Roman Catholic Church on pp. 51-58.

[69] Ibid., p. 52.

[70] Ibid., p. 57.

[71] Ibid., p. 58.

[72] Ibid., p. 36.

[73] Cf. Swete, The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints especially p. 168; Kirsch op. cit., pp. 254-268; Lamirande op. cit., pp. 83-94.

[74] Swete op. cit., p. 177.

[75] This idea is brought out by several scholars by discussing the foundations of Communion of Saints in the context of Incarnation and the Cross thereby suggesting that the union of believers with God in Christ derives from the Work and Life of Christ.

[76] Swete op. cit., p. 192.

[77] Cf. I Cor. 10:16-20; see also Breuning op. cit., p. 392.

[78] Cf. Luther, Large Catechism, Article III; Swete op. cit., pp. 181ff; Pearson op. cit., pp. 539ff; Breuning op. cit., p. 393.

[79] The Scriptural passages commonly referred to in this regard are 2 Cor. 13:15, Phil. 2:1.

[80] Pearson op. cit., p. 540.

[81] Karl Rahner, "Why and how can we venerate the Saints", Theological Investigations, 1971, 8:16-19.

[82] Ibid., p. 18.

Chapter Three

[1] See Oscar Cullmann's Immortality of the Soul Or Resurrection of the Dead?, 1958, on the New Testament witness to the condition of the dead.

[2] Luke 16:22ff.; cf. John 13:23. See also E.W. Saunders, "Abraham's Bosom" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 1962, 1:21ff.

[3] See Philippians 1:23.

[4] These observations are drawn from Cullmann's exegetical analysis of New Testament texts such as our Lord's saying on the Cross "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), the parable of the rich man, where Lazarus is carried directly to Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22) and Paul's saying, "I desire to die and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). In Cullmann's opinion these texts do not prove that the resurrection of the body takes place immediately after death. Rather they are images of special nearness to God. On account of the fact of the Resurrection at the End and Judgement he finds it difficult to reconcile this idea with the view that the departed are received at once in Heaven. Thus Cullmann's thesis that the dead are still in time, in an intermediate state waiting and anticipating the End as much as the living seems to accord with the fact of the Parousia. Cf. Cullmann op. cit., pp. 48-50.

[5] Nothing, however, was revealed concerning the precise date of the return of Christ. It was to remain hidden from mankind just as the hour of death was to be hidden from each individual. Cf. Matt. 24:36; I Thess. 5:2; Mark 13:35.

[6] See Cullmann op. cit., p. 27.

[7] Cullmann makes reference in this regard especially to Karl Barth. See Cullmann op. cit., p. 49 n. 2 for references to Karl Barth and n. 3 for the critique of Barth's position.

[8] Cullmann op. cit., pp. 54-57.

[9] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, 31:2, Ante-Nicene Fathers (heretofore to be referred to as ANF), 1:560.

[10] Tertullian, On the Soul 55, ANF 3:231.

[11] Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh 43, ANF 3:576.

[12] For full quotations and account of Tertullian's eschatological views, see J. Quasten, Patrology, 1953, 2:338-340.

Apparently, St. Cyprian also held the view that only the martyrs attain immediately after death into the presence of the Lord. He wrote to several imprisoned confessors thus: "Joyful you await daily the salutary day of your departure and every moment about to leave the world, you hasten to the rewards of martyrdom and to the heavenly dwellings, after this darkness of the world about to see the most shining light and to receive a glory greater than all sufferings and struggles since the Apostle bears witness and says: 'the suffering of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us" (Cyprian, Epistle, 76, 7, The Fathers of the Church, 51:318).

[13] See Tertullian, On the Soul, 58, ANF 3:235.

[14] Quasten, Patrology 2:338.

[15] Tertullian, De Monog., 10 quoted by Quasten 2:339.

[16] H.B. Swete, The Holy Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, 1916, p. 219. See also his "Prayer for the Departed in the First Four Centuries" in Journal of Theological Studies, 1907, 8:500-514.

[17] See especially A.J. Mason, Purgatory, 1901; H.M. Luckock, The Intermediate State between Death and Judgement, 1890.

[18] Mason, op. cit., pp. xii-xiii.

[19] The Anglican position on this question will be considered briefly in the course of this discussion.

[20] A.E.J. Rawlinson, "The Communion of Saints" in The Meaning of the Creed (ed.) by G.K.A. Bell, 1918, p. 212.

[21] Rawlinson op. cit., p. 212.

[22] Rawlinson ibid., p. 213.

[23] Darwell Stone, Invocation of Saints, 1903, pp. 3ff.

[24]Cf. Ex. 3:6; Matt. 23:29-32.

[25]Stone op. cit., p. 4.

[26]I Pet. 3:18-20.

[27]Rev. 6:9-10.

[28]Stone op. cit., p. 5.

[29]Cf. Rev. 6:9ff.

[30]Cyprian, Epistle, 60, 5, The Fathers of the Church 51:196.

[31]Origen, Canticle of Canticles, 3, 7, Ancient Christian Writers (hereafter to be referred to as ACW) 26:194-195.

[32]St. Jerome, Contra Vigilantium, 7, quoted by Darwell Stone op. cit., pp. 5-6.

[33]Aquinas, Summa Theologia, Suppl. III, Q72, A1, Corpus.

[34]See Aquinas op. cit., Q72 "Of Prayer with Regard to the Saints in Heaven".

[35]That even the Catholic theologians are divided on the question of who may be invoked is shown by Darwell Stone in his argument that, whereas St. Thomas repudiated the invocation of the souls in Purgatory on the grounds that they are not in a position to be able to offer prayer, Bellarmine and the Jesuit Schouppe, thought the greater probability was that the souls in purgatory pray for the living just as they pray for themselves; that it was equally valid to invoke the souls in purgatory just as it is legitimate to ask for the prayers of fellow-Christians who are still living. See Stone op. cit., pp. 24ff. See also the footnotes for reference to the works of the said critics. In my judgement the strength and weakness of these schools of thought consist in the division of the souls at death into the immediately saved and lost in need of purification, and the ardent desire to affirm the unity of the Church, i.e. the living and all the departed in the mystical Body of Christ. Perhaps if a viable solution were to be found concerning the actual condition of the dead, the second concern, on the unity of the Church would be more meaningful.

[36]Stone illustrates the position of the Eastern Church by quoting A.C. Headlam on the custom of the Russian Church: "Often

when a child who has lost its mother is praying, he may be heard adding her name to those of the other saints whom he asks to pray for him. Mutual prayer of the dead for the living, of the living for the dead, and of both for the whole Church, is to the Russian the bond which links together the Church in one Communion of Saints." Darwell Stone op. cit., p. 26.

[37]Cf. P.J. Toner, "Prayers for the Dead", The Catholic Encyclopaedia, 1913, 4:654; Swete op. cit. p. 223; J.H. Wright, "Prayers for the Dead" New Catholic Encyclopaedia, 1967, 4:671; E. Lamirande, The Communion of Saints, 1963, p. 143.

[38]2 Maccabees 12:43-44.

[39]See also 2 Tim. 4:19.

[40]See H.M. Luckock, The Divine Liturgy, 1889, p. 181; Wright op. cit., p. 671; Swete, "Prayer for the Departed in the First Four Centuries" Journal of Theological Studies, 1907, 8:500; Toner op. cit., p. 655. Further comments on this text will be rendered when we deal with the objections to the exercise of prayer for the departed.

[41]See J. Quasten, Patrology, 2:338-339.

[42]Cf. Cyprian Epist. 1, 2 in Quasten Patrology 2:382.

[43]Cyril of Alexandria, Cat. Myst. 5, 8-10 in Quasten Patrology, 3:376.

[44]F.E. Brightman (ed.), Liturgies Eastern and Western, 1965, 1:57.

[45]F.G. Lee, The Christian Doctrine of Prayers for the Departed, 1875, p. 23; Kirsch J.P., The Doctrine of the Communion of Saints in the Ancient Church, 1910, p. 1; Cullmann op. cit., p. 45.

[46]St. Ambrose, De viduis, 55, cited in Stone op. cit., p. 15.

[47]For a more adequate discussion of the position of the martyrs in the Early Church, see J.P. Kirsch op. cit., pp. 72-120.

[48]Origen, On Prayer, 15, 1, ACW, 19:57.

[49]See also Origen, On Prayer, 14, 6, ACW, 19:57.

[50]Assuming that The Colloquies of Erasmus convey an accurate portrait of simplistic popular piety, "The Shipwreck" and "A Pilgrimage for Religion's Sake" provide a perfect example of the high regard with which the saintly dead were held during the Middle Ages and the superstitions which accompanied their invocation. In 'The Shipwreck' for instance, Adolph depreciates the popularity of the invocation of saints on the grounds that it was a "bargain according to the form, 'I'll give this if you do that' or 'I'll do this if you'll do that'; 'I'll give a taper if I can swim'; 'I'll go to Rome if you save me" (p. 142). He claims that he himself did not call upon any saint for help during the wreck "because heaven's a large place. If I entrust my safety to some saint--St. Peter, for example, who perhaps will be first to hear, since he stands at the gate--I may be dead before he meets God and pleads my cause." And so what he did, he says, was to pray "straight to the Father Himself, reciting the Pater Noster", for "no saint hears sooner than He or more willingly grants what is asked" (p. 142). These and other instances give us the impression that it was popularly believed that what God could give, the saints as well could grant it. See Erasmus, The Colloquies trans. by C.R. Thompson, 1965, pp. 138-152; 285-312. See also N. Bonwetsch, "Veneration of Saints", in Religious Encyclopaedia, 10:175-176.

[51]Cf. Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther, 1950, especially pp. 59-64.

[52]"Ten Articles" of 1536 in Charles Lloyd (ed.) Formularies of Faith Put Forth By Authority During the Reign of Henry VIII, 1825, p. xxix.

[53]Ibid., p. xxix.

[54]Ibid., pp. xxxi-xxxii.

[55]"The Institution of a Christian Man" of 1537 in Lloyd (ed.) op. cit., p. 141.

[56]Lloyd op. cit., p. 305.

[57]Ibid., p. 376.

[58]This extract is taken from the prayer "For the Whole State of Christ's Church militant here on earth" in The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the Use of the Anglican Church of Canada, 1958, p. 76. For purposes of comparison, see also the 1789 version in The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to

the use of The Episcopal Church, 1789. Its version of commemoration
reads as follows: "And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy
servants departed this life in thy faith and fear [especially
_____], beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy
love and service; and to grant us grace so to follow the good
examples of [_____ and of] all thy saints, that with them we
may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom" (p. 330).

[59] See E.J. Bicknell, The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church
of England, London, 1955, p. 276.

[60] Ibid., p. 276.

[61] Ibid., p. 293.

[62] Stone op. cit., p. 39.

[63] Cf. H. Edward Symonds, The Council of Trent and Anglican
Formularies, 1933, pp. 179-183; Stone op. cit., pp. 36-45.

[64] The decree which the Council of Trent set forth on the
subject of invocation of saints in its Sessions of December 1563 read
as follows: "The Saints reigning together with Christ offer their
prayers to God on behalf of men, and it is good and useful to invoke
them as suppliants and to take refuge in their prayers, support, and
help, on account of the benefits to be obtained from God through His
Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our only Redeemer and Saviour; and
those who deny that the saints enjoy eternal felicity in heaven are
to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for men, or that
the invocation of them to obtain their prayers for us even as indi-
viduals is idolatry or that it is contrary to the Word of God and
opposed to the honour of Jesus Christ, the one Mediator of God and
men, or that to supplicate verbally or mentally those who are
reigning in heaven is foolish, hold an impious opinion." See Symonds
op. cit., p. 176.

[65] William Forbes, Works, 2:313 in Symonds op. cit., p. 179;
Stone op. cit., p. 51.

[66] Charles Gore, The Religion of the Church as Presented in
the Church of England, 1916, p. 96.

[67] Ibid., p. 96.

[68] Ibid., p. 100.

[69] William Temple, "The Church" in B.A. Streeter (ed.),
Foundations: A statement of Christian Belief in terms of Modern
Thought, 1914, p. 343.

[70] Ibid., p. 346.

[71] Ibid., p. 345.

[72] F.W. Rede, The Communion of Saints, 1893, p. 142.

[73] Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 224.

[74] See 2 Timothy 1:16-18 and 4:19.

[75] Cf. Luckock, The Intermediate State, p. 218ff; Lee op. cit.,
p. 120ff.

[76] Luckock op. cit., pp. 219-221.

[77] Calvin, Institutes III, xx, 24.

[78] See Mason op. cit., pp. 144-153 for relevant quotations and
treatment of this question in Christian thought; also Swete, The Holy
Catholic Church: The Communion of Saints, pp. 231-240.

[79] Karl Rahner, "Why and How Can We Venerate the Saints",
Theological Investigations, 1971, 8:8.

[80] Ibid., p. 90.

[81] Ibid., p. 11.

[82] Ibid., p. 12.

[83] Ibid., p. 21.

[84] Ibid., p. 23.

[85] Boniface Lautz, O.S.B., The Doctrine of the Communion of
Saints in Anglican Theology, 1967.

[86] "Encyclical Letter", Lambeth 1920, in Lambeth Conferences,
1867-1948, p. 28, as cited by Lautz op. cit., p. 84.

[87]We are thinking here especially of the African experience where the people live with their dead in the sense that the departed are regarded as though they still live.

[88]See "Thanksgiving and Consecration" in the Book of Common Prayer according to use in the Anglican Church in Canada, p. 79.

[89]Karl Rahner, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

Chapter Four

[1] R. LaRoche, W.F., "Some Traditional African Religions and Christianity" in _Christianity in Tropical Africa_ (ed.) by C.G. Baëta, 1968, p. 289.

[2] In a paper originally read at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences held in London in 1934, entitled, "How far Can African Ceremonial Be Incorporated in the Christian System", T. Cullen Young came to this conclusion: "my belief is that only the African, and none other, can do this" (p. 213). This belief is mistaken, for the task of relating the Gospel to the traditional way of life of any people is a mutual responsibility of all those who have been called to bear witness to the Word of God. Cullen Young's belief only serves to justify the attitudes and way of activity of some of the missionaries. See this article in _Africa_, 1935, 8:210-217.

[3] See especially, Monica Hunter, _Reaction to Conquest_, 1961; B.A. Pauw, _Christianity and Xhosa Tradition_, 1975; Philip Mayer, _Townsmen or Tribesmen_, 1971; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, _Bhaca Society_, 1962; J.H. Soga, _The AmaXhosa Life and Customs_, 1932.

[4] Philip Mayer, _op. cit._, p. 30.

[5] _Ibid._, p. 30. The people known by the Xhosa as 'abantu ababomvu', the 'Red people' are the non-Christians. The term is derived from the smearing of their bodies with red ochre.

[6] Cf. John Carter, _Methods of Mission in Southern Africa_, 1963; M. Hunter, "Results of Culture contact on the Pondo and Xhosa family" in _South African Journal of Science_, 1932, pp. 681-686; M. Wilson, "Co-Operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier" in _Oxford History of South Africa_, 1969, 1:233-270; Poikail J. George, "Racist Assumptions of the 19th Century Missionary Movement", in _International Review of Mission_, 1970, 59:271-283.

[7] J.T. van der Kemp was an early nineteenth-century missionary to the Xhosa people. He is known in South African history as a protagonist in the emancipation of slaves, which led to the Great Trek. See also, W.M. Macmillan, _Bantu, Boer and Briton_, 1963; M. Wilson, "Co-Operation and Conflict" pp. 238ff.

[8] H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture, 1951, pp. 40ff., 76ff.

[9] Cf. M. Wilson, "Co-Operation and Conflict", p. 266.

[10] B.A. Pauw, op. cit., p. 209.

[11] Cf. P. Mayer, op. cit., pp. 3-4; Noni Jabavu, The Ochre People, 1963.

[12] Wilson, "Co-Operation and Conflict", p. 266.

[13] W.C. Willoughby, The Soul of the Bantu, 1970, is still a standard book which presents carefully and clearly the belief in survival after death in the tradition of the blacks in Southern Africa.

[14] For example, Mayer op. cit., p. 151 wrote: "The spirits are usually termed iminyanya, or amawethu ('our people')." Similarly M. Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 231 has translated the word 'amathongo', which is another Xhosa word for the ancestors, as "ancestral spirits". Whereas for the Xhosa the ancestors are no different from the men they were during their life time, the word "spirit" suggests an existence of a different kind. Thus it would be a distinct gain if the investigators were to stick to the original terms.

[15] Similarly, P.A.W. Cook, Social Organization and Ceremonial Institution of the Bomvana, 1931, pp. 106ff. has suggested: "it would be better to call this world "another" world in preference to "spirit" world, as things spiritual and things earthly are not clearly distinguished in the way we differentiate them." See also Charles Brownlee, "A Fragment on Xhosa Religious Beliefs", in African Studies, 1955, 14:39ff.

[16] T. Cullen Young, "The Idea of God in Northern Nyasaland" in African Ideas of God (ed.) by Edwin W. Smith, 1950, p. 39.

[17] W.D. Hammond-Tooke op. cit., p. 227.

[18] W.M. Eiselen and I. Schapera, "Religious Beliefs and Practices" in The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa (ed.) by I. Schapera, 1960, p. 250.

[19] The best accounts of Burial and Funeral rites among the Xhosa people are that of Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, 1961, pp. 227-231; Hammond-Tooke, Bhaca Society, 1962, 228-233; Report on the

Missiological Institute, Umpumlo on Concepts of Death and Funeral Rites; M. Gluckman, "Mortuary Customs and the Belief in Survival After Death among the South-Eastern Bantu" in Bantu Studies, 1937, 2:117-136.

[20] Cf. Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 230; P. Mayer, op. cit., p. 151; Olof Pettersson, Chiefs and Gods, 1953, p. 117.

[21] See also J.H. Soga, op. cit., p. 323.

[22] This ritual is generally performed only when the 'inkulu' (head) of the family has passed away.

[23] See also Hammond-Tooke op. cit., p. 234; M. Fortes, "Some Reflections on Ancestor Worship in Africa" in M. Fortes and G. Diertelen (eds.) African Systems of Thought, 1965, pp. 122-141.

[24] This is also noted by Hammond-Tooke op. cit., p. 53 when he writes: "very old people are themselves called amathongo".

[25] Hammond-Tooke, op. cit., p. 233.

[26] Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 231.

[27] M. Fortes, op. cit., p. 133 has noted that among the Tallensi of Ghana, only those people who have had sons are recognized as ancestors after death. He has also observed that the question of weight and influence left in the minds of the survivors does not affect the deceased's standing as an ancestor: "the personality and character, the virtues or vices, success or failures, popularity or unpopularity, of a person during his life time, make no difference to his attainment of ancestorhood. This was repeatedly brought home to me by Tallensi elders. A man may be a liar, or a wastrel, or an adulterer, a quarrelsome neighbour, or a negligent kinsman, he may be a mean and bad tempered parent who has made his son's life miserable; he may have been abroad for years and have contributed nothing to their upbringing. If he dies leaving a son, he becomes an ancestor. To put it in the believer's words, he acquires the power to intervene in the life and the affairs of his descendants in exactly the same way as any other ancestor."

[28] Cf. Eiselen and Schapera, op. cit., pp. 247-270; Hammond-Tooke, op. cit., pp. 241-244; Soga, op. cit., pp. 7ff.

[29] John S. Mbiti, African Religion and Philosophy, 1969, p. 9.

[30] Hammond-Tooke, op. cit., p. 226.

[31] O. Pettersson op. cit., p. 146.

[32] John Campbell, Travels in South Africa, 1815, p. 513.

[33] See for example, Edwin W. Smith (ed.), African Ideas of God, 1950; E. Bolaji Idowu, Olódùmarè, 1962; Gabriel Setiloane, The Image of God among the Sotho-Tswana, 1976; J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, 1970; M.J. McVeigh, God in Africa, 1974.

[34] John Mbiti, "The Encounter of Christian faith and African Religion" in The Christian Century, Aug. 27 - Sept. 3, 1980, p. 818.

[35] Hunter, Reaction to Conquest, p. 270.

[36] Soga, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

[37] John S. Pobee, Toward an African Theology, 1979, p. 66, has noted that he is as yet reluctant to accept the idea that the ancestors are not worshipped but are rather venerated as elder brothers, "because for all practical purposes the ancestors are treated as ends in themselves". Pobee does not prove his case beyond this statement. Perhaps Pobee would find substance for his case if he were to ask himself whether the Akan people attach the same quality to the "worship" of ancestors as they do to the Supreme Being.

[38] See E.G. Parrinder, African Traditional Religion, 1968, p. 66.

[39] Of course, there are some aspects of Xhosa ideas about the ancestors which are incompatible with Christian faith and must be rejected. A significant example is the belief that the ancestors can cause death and give children. Christian faith is clear that life and death are in the hands of God. So, such aspects as are inconsistent with Christian faith ought to be rejected.

Chapter Five

[1] Cf. Chapter I.

[2] Cf. Byang H. Kato, Theological Pitfalls in Africa, 1975, pp. 172-184 and also; T.H. Gaster, "Abode of the Dead" in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 1962, 1:787ff.

[3] W. Temple, "The Church" in Foundations, (ed.) B.H. Streeter, 1914, p. 341.

[4] Ibid., p. 341.

[5] See John 17.

[6] Cf. II Peter and the Apostles' Creed.

[7] In the Anglican tradition the "intermediate state" is understood as a term embracing all the departed, faithful and otherwise. This is regarded as a matter of common sense based on the fact that the souls of most men are not perfect at the moment of death. However, it must not be thought that the souls on the intermediate state are all in the same condition. There must be some distinction between those who have lived lives of eminent holiness on earth and the ordinary run of Christians including the "anonymous Christians".

[8] H. Sawyerr, Creative Evangelism, 1968, p. 95.

[9] See, for example, W.N. Pittenger, His Body the Church, 1945; Karl Rahner, "Membership of the Church According to the Teaching of Pius XII's Encyclical 'Mystici Corporis Christi'" in Theological Investigations, 2:1-88 and; "Anonymous Christians" in Theological Investigations, 6:390-398.

[10] Cf. Pittenger op. cit., pp. 126ff.; B.H. Kato op. cit., p. 179.

[11] Emilien Lamirande, The Communion of Saints, 1963, p. 101.

[12] Cf. Chapter II.

[13] See, for example, L.E. Mascall, Corpus Christi, 1957.

[14] John S. Mbiti, "The Ways and Means of Communicating the Gospel" in Christianity in Tropical Africa (ed.) C.G. Baëta, 1965, pp. 341-342.

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I. The first part embraces the written material which has something on the Communion of Saints.

II. The second section embraces those written works which have something on the religion and culture of the Xhosa-speaking people.

III. The third section contains other books and articles of use in this inquiry.

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