

Appendix to Chapter Five:
Brandon Gallaher: „Great and Full of Grace“, P. 69–121

Church and World

Essays in Honor of Michael Plekon

Edited by
William C. Mills



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APPENDIX

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PARTIAL INTERCOMMUNION

(Notes and Comments

by Fr. S. Bulgakov for Advisory Committee and Fellowship Exec.)

3.V.1935.

The idea of partial intercommunion conceives an immediate realization of Eucharistic intercommunion between separate groups, without waiting for the time when the bodies of the two Churches in their integrity will find themselves in a condition for a complete Reunion. Such Eucharistic intercommunion is quite possible between members of the Fellowship of St. Alban & St. Sergius who find themselves in agreement, and who have already been united, even now, through communion in prayer.

The dogmatic postulates for such intercommunion for the Anglicans are represented at least, by the dogmatic minimum expressed in the Terms of Intercommunion (*Documents on Christian Unity*; ed. by S.K.A. Bell, Oxford 1924). One should supplement this by the dogmatic content (as regards the veneration of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints, prayers for the departed, the sacrificial significance of the Eucharist, etc.) which is found in the order of the Orthodox Liturgy — as it is usually taken for granted in any liturgical intercommunion. Therefore, generally speaking, members of the Anglican Church are invited to partial intercommunion with the Orthodox, not according to their formal membership of that Church, but in accordance with a definite dogmatic outlook. (position). Moreover one should mention here also that from both sides — the Orthodox and the Anglican — only those who desire it should take part in such in-

tercommunion. And those who do take part in it should not rebuke those who do not wish to participate in it, or reversely, for here we are confronted with a very intimate act and with an extremely personal movement of the spirit.

Such fellowship in the Eucharist should not be hap-hazard, but must receive the sanction of a Church action, through which the actual, existing unity of the Church is realized — though at present it is hidden from us by historical divisions. Therefore such intercommunion can only take place when the blessing of the diocesan bishop has been received for the purpose. For the Russians the blessing (sanction) should come from the Exarch of the Russian Churches in Europe, Metropolitan Eulogius. Metropolitan Eulogius is under the canonical authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople and would therefore ask for a corresponding blessing from him. Or, directly, the blessing might be received from the Patriarch of Constantinople. For the Anglicans the appropriate blessing would have to be obtained either from the local diocesan bishop or from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A solemn episcopal blessing would be necessary for this Eucharistic intercommunion to acquire full Church power (significance). Such a blessing, though it would not have the significance of a Sacrament (*sacramentum*), would nevertheless represent a certain partial appropriation (use) of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, but not of the *Sacramentum*, but of the *Sacramentale* (the number of sacramentalia in Orthodoxy is numerous and is not confined to but exceeds the Seven Sacraments).

The idea of the sacramental blessing which is given by the Orthodox and the Anglican bishops does not in any way imply reordination, or conditional ordination (which as a matter of fact is unknown in Orthodox practice and theology). On the contrary the sacramental blessing presupposes a new and sincere mutual recognition of ordination. From the Orthodox side this involves a recognition of the validity [2nd page] of Anglican Orders. Any such recognition from the Orthodox side remains abstract and ineffective until it can find expression in Sacramental intercommunion. On the other hand to

overcome the division of the Churches which actually took place (as between the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox) a hierarchical agreement alone is not sufficient. Some kind of sacramental action is required which would correspond to the idea of a sacramental blessing as described above.

Thus the sacramental blessing is a solemn blessing bestowed by the appropriate episcopal authority for the purpose of establishing eucharistic intercommunion. It is bestowed, from the Orthodox side, by the bishop prior to the celebration of the Liturgy during Prime [First Hour] (as in the rites of blessing given to a reader and to a ipo-deacon [sub-deacon]), through the laying on of the hands of the bishop on the Anglican priest with the words of the prayer from the ordaining of priests, however, with the words changed in an appropriate manner (see Service Book, Hapgood, p. 316: "The grace divine . . . cleaveth through the laying-on of hands on the priest N. for intercommunion with the Orthodox members of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius. Wherefore let us pray for him, that the grace of the all-Holy Spirit may come upon Him." Choir: God, have mercy.) The corresponding blessing is bestowed from the Anglican side by the Anglican bishop, on the Orthodox priest (and also on the layman?) for the same purpose of intercommunion in the Eucharist. The form of this should be worked out by the Anglicans themselves — something analogous to the Orthodox order. On the basis of this blessing the Anglican priest is permitted not only to communicate at the Orthodox Liturgy, but to co-celebrate with the the [sic] Russian priests if he so desires. But the main right which is given both to the Anglican and the Orthodox priests through the sacramental blessing, is that of communicating the Orthodox and Anglican laity who are amongst those who desire this.

If, for some reason or other, the competent episcopal authority will object to the giving of the sacramental blessing, and suggest that it should be replaced by a general form of blessing — we would have to be content even with this, although this would be a less adequate form for establishing intercommunion.

I do not feel myself competent to put forward suggestions as to

how the sacramental blessing could be extended to cover bishops, if there would be any bishops — members of the Fellowship who would personally wish to participate in such intercommunion, but I do not think that the same order could be adapted to them as that used for the priests. Possibly, the Orthodox bishop in laying on his hands reads the same prayer as over a priest; the Anglican bishop uses a corresponding form over an Orthodox bishop.

In relation to the Anglican laity I would suggest an anointing with holy myrrh with the words: in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the practice of the Orthodox Church cases are known when anointing with holy Myrrh (Chrismation) is applied to the confirmed, not in the sense of a repetition of the Sacrament, but in the sense of a sacramentale, which would correspond to a sacramental blessing. It would imply the conveying of a special gift, to one who has already been confirmed, for the purpose of intercommunion with the Orthodox in the Eucharist. I do not think I am competent to define a corresponding form of sacramental blessing for the Russian laity from the Anglican side. Chrismation for the Anglican laity could be replaced by a corresponding blessing given by an Orthodox bishop, although the first, in my opinion, is preferable.

[3rd page] **Only** those members of the Fellowship who **have** received the sacramental blessing take part in intercommunion at the Conference. **To start** with this Eucharistic intercommunion should be confined to the **Conferences** of the Fellowship, or to the meetings of its members who remain in direct contact with the life of the Fellowship. Further steps will be indicated by life, but of course we must hope that this practice of intercommunion will spread, when the first stone has been moved, for the results of this step, we are convinced, will be great and full of Grace.