

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### **Biblical and Theological Evaluation of Donald G. Bloesch's View on the Communion of Saints**

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Date Completed: April 2024

Communion of saints is a doctrinal view that asserts that there is communication between living believers and the saints in heaven. Writing on this view, Donald G. Bloesch asserts that the mediation of Jesus Christ enhances the communion of saints. Bloesch's view raises some theological concerns. First, how does the mediation of Jesus Christ enable the saints on earth to have communion with those in heaven? Second, how does his view differ from spiritualism and the African traditional worldview of spiritism? Third, if the mediation of Jesus Christ enhances communion, how does this mediation affect the unity of believers in the body of Christ?

This research followed a methodology involving four steps in chapters two to five. 1) Biblical etymological study of the terms "communion" and "saints" The etymological study aimed to find out the meaning and the uses of the terms "communion" and "saints" in both the Old and New Testaments; 2) Historical-theological investigation of the concept of the communion of saints; 3) Investigation of Bloesch's theological background; examination of Bloesch's theological method; examination of Bloesch's interpretation, theological, and exegetical study of passages that Bloesch uses to establish his view of the communion of saints; 4) biblical and theological evaluation of Bloesch's views.

The research findings indicate that Bloesch's view of the Communion of Saints lacks a clear explanation of how the mediation of Jesus Christ facilitates communion between earthly and heavenly saints. Furthermore, his view lacks scriptural support, making it difficult to distinguish from modern spiritualism or African spiritism. An analysis of biblical passages also reveals misinterpretations by Bloesch, which in turn affects the biblical view

of unity in the body of Christ. Hence, this dissertation concludes that the doctrine of the communion of saints is acceptable only when it focuses on the unity of living believers on Earth.

The study recommends that a phrase that insists on the unity of living believers only may be added to the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) fundamental belief number fourteen (14). Further studies may focus on the relationship between Bloesch's view of divine revelation and the biblical text (1 Cor 2:14), which considers spiritual things to be spiritually discerned. This could also include examining Bloesch's view of the struggling triumphant church in heaven in relation to the view of the cosmic controversy.