

**A TALE OF TWO COUNCILS**  
**And Their Significance for The Ecumenical Catholic Communion**

Gregory Holmes Singleton  
The Community of St. Francis, Chicago

**PROLOGUE**

Fifty years ago comedian Mort Sahl began his monologues with this offer: "Gotta minute? Let me tell you about the universe." It is with the same combination of arrogance and humility that I share a few brief observations that will hopefully place the ethos of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC), and other organizations of progressive liturgical and sacramental Christians, in a broader historical context and explain the concerns informing our individual journeys that led us to find our way into this communion. This summary is neither definitive nor adequate, but it is an invitation to further discourse within this part of the Body of Christ. I am a firm believer that corporate self discovery is the best reason to engage history.

While I am new to the ECC, I have been studying the multifaceted Old Catholic world since 1960 and have been a direct participant since the mid-1980s. Members of these jurisdictions tend to conceptualize their histories as insular chronologies, often limited to little more than charts of apostolic succession. While I am pleased to report that I have not found that perspective among the ECC clergy and laity I have recently encountered, I think we all (whether Old Catholic, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, or Christians from many other traditions) need to be reminded in every way possible that we are somehow inter-connected. We are all members of this family (no matter how dysfunctional) that is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church we proclaim every Sunday immediately following the homily. Because this essay is addressed primarily to ECC clergy and laity, let me share two assumptions from which most of my remarks will flow:

- 1) Most of us are in the ECC because we could not remain in or could not bring ourselves to enter a Church body that held the doctrine of Papal Infallibility promulgated by Vatican I. Indeed, the development of Old Catholic bodies beyond the See of Utrecht began with the immediate rejection of the doctrine in several German and Swiss communities.

- 2) Second, most of us are in ECC because we were attracted to the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church indicated by the deliberations and documents of Vatican II, but are disappointed by outcomes that do not match the promise.

Thus it would be far too easy for us (all of us, including me) to define ourselves primarily in opposition to Rome. I hope to engage the reader in the broader history of which the two councils and each of our individual journeys are a part and then to suggest the ways in which we can live out of, beyond, and unbound by that history into a future in which we put the "Ecumenical" part of our shared identity into full play, for our own good and the good of all the Church.

I write with the hope of stimulating thoughtful conversation that will explore our shared and corporate role as important agents in the continuing evolution of the Catholic tradition, and not simply as "alternatives" within that tradition. I will skim over much that begs for fuller detail and greater elaboration and leave other things out entirely. In partial atonement I have attached a limited bibliography at the end of the text of this brief essay. Each entry contains useful leads to additional primary and secondary sources.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Our various communities, and the communion that unites them, are the creatures of two councils as well as the historical dynamics that gave rise to these councils. This is both an oversimplification and a central thread in our diverse journeys that have led us together. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) and the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) stand as two important benchmarks in the modern history of Christianity. Although the two councils were remarkably different, they were both attempts to address questions about the role and place of the Church in the world.

In both councils these questions were given gravity by two considerations: 1) centuries of historical development which placed the Church in the center of human affairs in Europe and, through conquest and expansion, much of the rest of the world; 2) the enormous and rapid changes in all aspects of economic, social, technological, scientific, cultural, and political life that have their origins in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but went into high gear in the late eighteenth century and presented a forceful challenge to the place of both the Church as an institution and Christianity as a spiritual force. Each of these developments is the subject of a vast body of scholarly literature, and the meaning of each is still hotly

debated. While we can only give a brief overview here, these two considerations are crucial to understanding both Vatican Councils and their continuing implications for Christians in the twenty-first century.

One of the major historical phenomena that run through Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and continues on into the Modern Era is a tendency toward Papal centralism which goes back to the fourth century and slowly developed for the next twelve hundred years. For the first three centuries the Church was a confederation of local communities which were autonomous and in collegial fellowship with each other through their bishops. From time to time persecutions took place in the ancient world (not as often as History according to Hollywood portrays) but for the most part these communities concerned themselves almost exclusively with proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating the sacraments, and being of service to those around them.

When Constantine declared Christianity to be the religion of the Roman Empire and then called a council of bishops to meet at Nicaea in 325, bishops effectively became ministers of state. This coincided with the movement of the center of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, which left a power vacuum in Rome. The Bishop of Rome thus was now a dominant force in that city.

At the end of the fourth century, Damasus I brought significant attention to the office through his commissioning of Jerome to prepare a standard vulgate text of scripture, thus promulgating a canon of scripture. Over time (and we are talking centuries) both the text and the canon became generally (although not universally) accepted. While scriptural definition would become far more



important in the sixteenth century, the powerful of Europe in Late Antiquity were likely far more impressed by the appropriation of the title *Pontifex Maximus* used by the Bishop of Rome beginning at some point in the fifth century. The term had been used for the High Priest in pre-Christian Roman religion for centuries, was appropriated by Julius Caesar, and became one of the titles of subsequent Roman Emperors. With the development of feudalism in the Early Medieval period, bishops in general were considered not only Chief Pastors and Teachers, but also part of the aristocracy. In England the use of the term "Lord's Spiritual" is an inheritance of that development. And if the bishops were the equals of nobles, the Bishop of Rome increasingly was the equal of the emperor.

This then is the origin of a monarchical papacy in the west. In the east bishops continued a collegial relationship. Indeed, the Archbishop of Constantinople, the "New Rome" and capitol of the empire, was (and still is) referred to as *Primus inter pares*, first among equals—although within the context of a strict hierarchical arrangement unknown in the pre-Constantinian Church. The tension between collegial and monarchical styles of ecclesial leadership underlay and was likely more important than doctrinal issues in the tense relations between east and west that led to the Great Schism of the eleventh century.

The entanglement of the Church with the political sphere and the claims of papal supremacy, which continued steadily over the centuries (although often contested), became increasingly systematized during and following the various reform movements of the sixteenth century. The Council of Trent (1545-63)



The Council of Trent

intensified those claims based on assumptions of immutable arrangements in the way the world is structured. And the world changed.

The rise of commerce beginning in the fifteen century, followed by the industrial revolution starting in the late eighteenth century, led to radical changes in economic structures,

technological innovations, social relations, cultural networks, and political systems. These changes in turn disrupted arrangements in status, power, gender roles, sexuality, the role of the state, and a host of other elements that impact both personal and social identities. To assess and understand these emerging new realities, intellectual and cultural movements emerged seeking more nuanced understandings of ourselves as individuals, societies, and cultures. The quest was (and still is) less for absolute and clear generalizations than for an appreciation of the complexity, ambiguity, and contradictions inherent in the human condition.

These ideologies and idea systems either reduced or ignored the place of the Church in human affairs. Some gave primacy to the individual, often combined with assumptions of equality, human agency of each person, and moral autonomy. Others ideologies and idea systems gave primacy to political or social collectivities based on concepts of rights and/or economic interests. Beginning with the war for independence in North America in the late eighteenth century, the world would witness a succession of democratic revolutions and communist revolutions down to our own time. In addition we have also seen a multitude of more peaceful social movements for the liberation of classes of people and the dignity of each individual.

Of course, there is the dark side of modernity. The most striking example is the Third Reich—a remarkable monument to modern efficiency in technology, social control, and political organization coupled with an amoral and violent culture. This and other examples (including the perpetuation of slavery in a democratic republic, the relocation of Japanese-Americans, Stalin's Russia. . .the list goes on) stand as a warning against equating modernity with all that is good, right and just.

But whether the changes were beneficial or harmful, the Church was becoming more peripheral and less powerful. For Christians, these changes gave rise to the following serious questions:

- 1) How do we find what is eternal and enduring in ancient inspired texts that speak in metaphors that are increasingly remote to the rapidly changing realities of the emerging world?
- 2) How do we proclaim God's Word in a world that has a remarkably different cosmology than the world in which the Word was initially given human voice?
- 3) How do we find coexistence in a world more increasingly aware of pluralism and more resistant to the cultural and intellectual hegemony once exercised by Christian Europe and her North American progeny?

Having said that both Vatican councils were attempts to address the same dynamic changes, it would be difficult to imagine a greater difference in purpose, tone, and outcome of two deliberations within the same tradition. Both are of equal importance (albeit in quite different ways) in understanding the nature and recent history of Catholic bodies (including *especially* the various movements to flow out of the Old Catholic tradition). The First Vatican Council led to a

significant exodus from the Roman Catholic Church and the emergence of Old Catholic jurisdictions in Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. The Second Vatican Council provided the vision for a modern Christianity that is essential for understanding the ethos of the more progressive Old Catholic bodies (including the Ecumenical Catholic Communion), progressives in the Roman Catholic Church, and progressive Christians in general.

## THE FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL

By the mid nineteenth century the declining status of the Church could no longer be ignored. The diminishment of the role of the Vatican in European affairs was paralleled by the shrinking of the territories on the Italian Peninsula known collectively as the Papal States, which were miniscule by the time Italy was unified



Pope Pius IX

in 1861 during the pontificate of Pius IX. At the time of his elevation in 1846, Pius IX had already embraced emerging political and cultural liberalism. Indeed, his reputation as a progressive may well have contributed to his election by the Conclave as a reaction to the oppressive regime of his immediate predecessor, Gregory XVI. Pius IX initially was sympathetic to the emergence of a unified Italian state, but when by 1850 it became clear that movement in that direction meant the decline of Papal territory, he abandoned liberalism. Thus, perhaps the two most important outcomes of the pontificate of Pius IX were 1) a criticism of the historical realities of the world in which the papacy came to occupy a significantly less important place and 2) the elevation of notions of Papal supremacy to the level of binding doctrine at a time when intellectuals around the world were questioning absolutist claims in the realms of politics, scientific theory, economic theory, ethics, esthetics, and cultural norms. In short, the Vatican answered the questions facing Christians in the Modern era by condemning the world to which the Church is called to minister, and dealt with the declining influence of the papacy with an escalation of papal claims announced to a significantly reduced and increasingly skeptical world audience.

The criticism of the modern world came in 1864 by the simultaneously promulgated document of the Holy See, "Syllabus of Errors," and the Papal encyclical *Quanta Cura*. Taken together they constitute a blanket indictment of liberalism. In addition, these documents contain condemnations of various

Protestant beliefs, in some cases erroneously conflated with modernity. (These documents can be seen at <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm> and <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Ben14/b14quant.htm>)

The escalation of papal claims of supremacy came through the Vatican Council called by Pius IX in 1868, convened in 1869, and concluded in 1870. This was a curious council for two reasons.

1) While it seemingly sought to revisit the attempts at reunion of the divided Church that failed three centuries earlier at Trent, the intent was subverted by the wording of invitations to other Christian bodies in such a way as to make acceptance an affirmation of papal supremacy. None of the invitations were accepted.

2) The chief outcome of the Council, the dogmatic definition of Papal Infallibility (proclaimed by the First Vatican Council on July 18, 1870), potentially obsolesced the necessity for any further Councils. The teaching held that the Bishop of Rome when officially promulgating a statement on faith and morals is protected by the Holy Spirit from error. But there is more to this doctrine than that simple statement. The infallible teachings of the Bishop of Rome are thus placed within the Sacred Magisterium, along with the ecumenical councils. The Sacred Magisterium is placed within an orbit containing Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Thus, the Church's scrutiny of doctrine under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was proclaimed to be located in one identifiable person occupying a single office, rather than in a representation of the entire Church as the Body of Christ. (For the full text of that portion of the Dogmatic Constitution which contains this definition, see

<http://www.fisheaters.com/pastoraeternus.html>)

*(A side note: Although the implications of the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility are troublesome, one must keep two things in mind. First, the doctrine has been invoked only once. In 1950 Pius XII defined as a binding article of faith the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Second, there is an interesting caveat attached to the Doctrine of Infallibility. Any such proclamation must be in conformity with or at least not contradictory to both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. This raises an interesting question. Does the doctrine imply that one must find a way of reconciling what might seem contradictory because papal teachings ex cathedra are by definition in conformity with tradition or scripture, or does it imply that any teaching ex cathedra which is not in conformity is invalid? If the latter, who or*

*what body is the arbiter? I must confess that in my more silly moments I have constructed a scenario that would probably keep an army of Canon Lawyers and Jesuits busy for decades: The Bishop of Rome, ex cathedra, proclaims that the doctrine of Papal Infallibility is null and void. In my more impish moments, I hypothesize that is what John XXIII did by calling another council.)*

Before, during, and after the council, important voices in the Roman Catholic Church spoke out against the new doctrine and the fiat rejection of modern liberalism. The ramifications were often immediate, including schism over these issues (having more than a little to do with our own micro-tradition within Catholicism). Some of them reverberate down to our own time both within and outside of the Roman Catholic Church.



Johann Joseph Ignaz von Dollinger

Chief among the dissenters was theologian Johann Joseph Ignaz von Dollinger, to whom we owe a great deal for our own understanding of the office of the Bishop of Rome. Fr. Dollinger was appointed to the faculty at Munich in 1825 and spent the rest of his life there. For several decades prior to the council he used the critical methods of the emerging academic field of History to evaluate the cultural relativity and time-bound nature of dogmatic pronouncements. During and after the Council, Dollinger published several pieces critical of the concept of Papal Infallibility. (In an excellent article on the ECC constitution, Fr. James Farris has provided a useful summary of Dollinger's position on infallibility:

[http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/Unity\\_and\\_Peace.pdf](http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/Unity_and_Peace.pdf))

Döllinger's writings drew great attention and considerable support among both German and English-speaking Roman Catholics. Dollinger was excommunicated by the Archbishop of Munich in 1871. He was immediately and unanimously elected *Rector-Magnificus* of the University of Munich, and soon thereafter awarded honorary degrees by several other universities.

In September 1871, Dollinger and many of his colleagues held a congress in Munich which was attended by sympathizers from the Utrecht Old Catholic Church as well as Orthodox, Anglican and Lutheran jurisdictions. A significant number of

priests and lay people in Germany and Switzerland shared Döllinger's perspective. Many of them left the Roman Catholic Church, elected bishops, and were successful in their appeal for episcopal consecration from the Archdiocese of Utrecht (which had rejected papal authority in the early eighteenth century). In the United States several independent Polish Catholic parishes emerged in the 1890s, stimulated in part by a reaction to the doctrine of Papal Infallibility and in part by conflicts with non-Polish bishops. This led to the 1904 organizing General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church in Scranton, PA. The PNCC was accepted as a member of the Old Catholic Union of Utrecht.

Of course, most Vatican I participants and observers within the Roman Catholic Church remained. James Gibbons, at the time of the council the Vicar



**Cardinal James Gibbons**

Apostolic of North Carolina, voted in favor of the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility, but sought a more moderate understanding of the outcome of the council in the years to come. Soon after Gibbons returned from the council a story, perhaps apocryphal, circulated about his being asked what he made of the new doctrine. According to this tale, he answered, "All I know is that when last I spoke to the Holy Father, he called me 'Jibbons.'" This appeared often enough in print during Gibbon's lifetime, and in prominent publications, that one suspects that a lack of denial is close to confirmation.

### **A CHURCH IN TENSION**



**Father Isaac Hecker**

The nine decades separating the two councils witnessed the continuation of the tension experienced before and during the First Vatican Council. An early example is the controversy surrounding Fr. Isaac Hecker, one of the founders of the Paulist Fathers and Gibbon's theological advisor during the council. Hecker had serious misgivings about the doctrine of infallibility and wrote several pieces on the role of the entire Church as the object of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He devoted most of his clerical career to developing an interesting ecclesiology and evangelistic posture that combined a concentration on the work of the Spirit with an American sense of the fullest possible participation of the people of God in the discernment of God's will.

It was the publication of a sympathetic biography of Hecker by a French Paulist in 1891 that led to a condemnation of a heresy given the unusual name of "Americanism." The attack came in the form of a Papal Encyclical, *Testem Benevolentiae Nostrae*, promulgated by Leo XIII on September 22, 1899. It was addressed to James (now Cardinal) Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore. It was, in essence, a recapitulation of the major themes of the Syllabus of Errors and Pius XIX's *Quanta Cura*, with the addition of more than a hint that Catholics in the United States were prone to these errors. Three years earlier Leo XIII placed discussions between Roman Catholics and Anglicans on hold by promulgating *Apostolicae Curae*, declaring Anglican orders invalid. Leo did so against the advice of his own theologians and historians. Taken together, these two documents took Rome further from ecumenism and drove a further wedge between Rome and the modern world.

On the other hand, we must also take into consideration a remarkable document promulgated by Leo XIII which demonstrated great pastoral sensitivity to modern realities, and which also demonstrates that the tension existed



Pope Leo XIII

sometimes *within* individuals, and not simply *between* individuals in the institution. In *Rerum Novarum* (1891) Leo spoke about the rights of labor, the utility of democracy, and the need for economic justice. This established an important trajectory in Catholic thought that echoed through *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pius XIX 1931), *Mater et Magistra* (John XXIII 1961), *Centisimus Annus* (John Paul II 1991), Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker's Movement, and some elements of Liberation Theology.

During the time between the councils, perhaps no one was more outspoken with a modernizing agenda than Fr. George Tyrrell, S.J. a British convert of evangelical background. He had a string of popular publications from 1896 to 1903. His writing efforts were re-directed by the promulgation of *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (Pius X 1907), an escalation of the spirit of the Syllabus of Errors. The document called for efforts to cleanse the Church of modernizing influences. In response, Tyrrell published *Medievalism* (1907). His argument is aptly summarized in the title. Tyrrell's persistent theme was the failure of an institution still mired in the feudal past to understand and minister effectively to a world that had dramatically changed. He was expelled from the Society of Jesus and suspended from the sacraments. In 1909 he was given extreme unction on his deathbed, but denied burial in a Catholic cemetery.

Most of those who considered modernity more salutary than the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church would indicate were far less confrontational than Tyrell. The more conciliatory path ultimately paved the way to the Second Vatican Council. Among those who participated in the long discourse were prelates such as Richard Cardinal Cushing and theologians such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (whose work was suppressed by the Vatican), Henri de Lubac, Bernard Lonergan, Karl Rahner, John Courtney Murray (also silenced) and Gustave Weigel. The bibliography at the end of this essay lists a few works by and/or about each of these, and I commend them to the reader. You will find much of Vatican II pre-figured in these volumes.

## THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The spirit of reform found an advocate and champion in Angelo Giuseppe Cardinal Roncalli who was elected Pope on October 28, 1958, and chose to be called John XXIII. By his own account, the call for a new council was the result of a sudden and direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His instructions indicated that the task was to 1) renew the life of the Church, 2) update the teaching, discipline and organization of the Church, and 3) to hold as its ultimate goal the unity of all Christians. Toward this end cordial, sincere, and unqualified invitations went out to the Orthodox, Evangelicals, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, and liberal denominations to send official observers. The invitations were enthusiastically accepted. In contrast to the concentration of authority in a specific office that received official status in Vatican I, the second council sought to restore the collegial principle of the Early Church, with the additional stimulus to explore an increased participation of lay voices in future deliberations that would continue to guide the Church. Rather than a rejection of the modern world, the second council sought loving engagement with that world as the first step in renewed evangelism.



**Pope John XXIII**

The bishops, aided by an impressive array of theologians, deliberated in four sessions lasting between three and four months each. John XXIII died after the first session. His successor, Paul VI, immediately made known his intention to continue the council in the direction it began under his predecessor. By the end of

their deliberations, the bishops promulgated sixteen documents. I will summarize them briefly by simply stating that the words of the council admirably began discussion of John XXIII's initial vision, but I invite the reader to study each of these documents carefully and test my generalization. These documents are easily available in translation at:

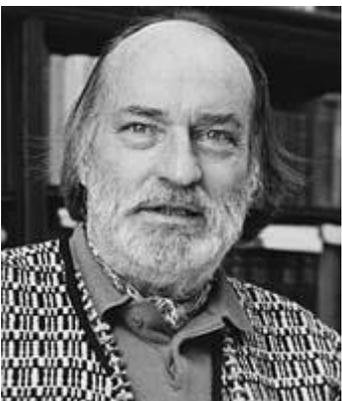
[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm)

One can get a sense of the excitement that greeted these promised changes by reading books by two theologians, one Roman Catholic and one Baptist, published within a decade of the closing of Vatican II: Hans Küng, *The Church* and Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View*.

Küng, who had been a theological advisor to the Bishops at Vatican II (along with his colleague Joseph Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI), composed his 600 page reconceptualization of the history of the Church through the lens of those sixteen documents immediately following the close of the council. In the spirit of the ecumenism explicit in those documents, he dedicated the work to Dr. Michael Ramsey, Archbishop of Canterbury, and spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion.



Hans Küng



Langdon Gilky

Langdon Gilkey wrote his book eight years later. By that time he had sufficient close encounters with Roman Catholic colleagues and students at the University of Chicago's Divinity School. He had this opportunity for constant exposure to Roman Catholic thought at a liberal Protestant center for graduate theological education thanks to the ecumenical spirit of the second council which allowed Roman Catholics to both work in and attend such institutions. Gilkey's book is filled with enthusiastic hope for a renewed Church led by a revitalized Rome. "A Catholicism that has relinquished its absolutism and has recognized the new world of relativity, and yet that as Catholic and sacramental can still relate grace and the wondrous width of divine activity to the total life-world of men and women, *this* Catholicism may well find itself more relevant to modern needs, more creative in the modern situation, and less anachronistic to modern sensibilities than any form of Protestantism."

Gilkey's was not a unique Protestant view. Vatican II had a profound impact on the entire world of Western Christianity. Indeed, one can't understand liturgical reform, liberation theology, or modern ecumenism—whether in Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Methodist circles—without reference to the second council, nor can one understand the second council apart from the preceding decades of ecumenical discussions among theologians, liturgists, and missiologists across traditions. Thus, one could say that The First Vatican Council was a statement of Roman Catholic isolation and exclusivism, while the Second Vatican Council was a statement of ecumenism that was shaped by the wider Christian world, and in turn influenced the wider Christian world.

The Second Vatican Council muted language that suggested a monarchical papacy, recaptured the collegial principle that guided the Church for the first three centuries, reminded us—in and beyond the Roman Catholic Church—of our essential unity in Christ, and challenged us to reach beyond institutions and embrace that essence.

## THE PRESENT STATE OF THE TEACHINGS OF VATICAN II

Even the most cursory knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church over the past four decades leads to the question, "OK. Great. So what happened to Vatican II?" That question is dramatically underscored when one reads, for example, Hans Küng's recently published *Disputed Truth" Memoirs II*, particularly Chapter XI, "The Great Confrontation." Having recounted his being barred from teaching at Roman Catholic institutions (1979) as the result of his publications in the spirit of Vatican II, Küng reiterates his rejection of a Vatican I militant authoritarianism and his embracing of a Vatican II commitment to ongoing discourse by giving Chapter XII the title, "*Roma Locuta - Causa non Finita: Rome has Spoken, but the Case is Not Over.*"

Küng remains in the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, he stays as a priest in good standing. His position as a theologian, however, is ambiguous from the perspective of the Vatican. When his license to teach on a Catholic faculty was revoked, the Theological faculty at the University of Tübingen created a chair of Ecumenical Studies specifically for him. When Küng was a Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago for the 1981-82 academic year, John Cardinal Cody (then Archbishop of Chicago) was asked what he had to say to the Catholic faithful about this world-famous theologian who would be giving several public lectures. The Cardinal's response captures the ambiguity well: "It is correct to think of Father

Küng as a Catholic priest. It is correct to think of Dr. Küng as a famous and important theologian. It is not correct to think of Hans Küng as a *Catholic* theologian."

It is through people like Küng that Vatican II lives on in the Roman Catholic Church. We should give thanks for him, for other theologians (like David Tracy, the late Anne Carr, Norman Tanner, and George Tavard), members of the hierarchy like Cardinal Cassidy, and for that great cloud of witnesses among the Roman Catholic clergy and laity who carry out the spirit of Vatican II day by day in significant moments of ecumenism.

At the same time we must recognize that there are within the Roman Catholic Church bothersome examples of statements and practices contrary to the spirit of Vatican II. There are many, but two are particularly striking.

First, in less than a year following the October 1, 1999, signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation, two proclamations from Rome seemed contrary to the spirit of that document. On January 18, 2000, Pope John Paul II announced a plenary indulgence for the Jubilee Year. On August 6, 2000, The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with John Paul II's approval, released *Dominus Iesus* over the signature of the Prefect, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

(For the full text, see:

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000806\\_dominus-iesus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html)) The document is a restatement of Roman exclusivism).

Second, in a recently published book on Vatican II (Matthew L. Lamb and



Pope Benedict XVI

Matthew Levering (eds), *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*), Pope Benedict XVI provides a reflection on the Council that will not resonate with most who read this: "On the one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call 'a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture'; it has frequently availed itself of the sympathies of the mass media, and also one trend in modern theology. On the other there is the 'hermeneutic of reform,' or renewal in the continuity of

the one subject, the Church that the Lord has given us. She is the subject that increases in time and develops, she always remains the same, the one subject of the journeying of the people of God."

That having been said, we should appreciate Benedict XVI's continuing the practice of his two immediate predecessors, opting for a simple investiture rather than a coronation. Like them, he eschewed the Triple Crown and even removed the Tiara from the papal coat of arms, replacing it with a mitre. The significance of the suppression of the Tiara is underscored by the language that attended the crowning of previous popes: "Receive the tiara adorned with three crowns and know that thou art Father of princes and kings, Ruler of the world, Vicar of our Saviour Jesus Christ."

We must, of course, observe that there is no official recognition of a need for discussions of gender, orientation, and ministry. At the same time we must be aware of the informal discussions that do continue among some Roman Catholics.

Happily, one can find the precepts and trajectory of Vatican II clearly alive,



**The Second Vatican Council**

well, and center-stage in a number of locations apart from the Roman Catholic Church. We can see this within denominations (particularly the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Episcopal Church, The Presbyterian Church, and the United Methodist Church). We can see it in a variety of

ecumenical endeavors (particularly the Liturgical Institute at Valparaiso University, the Center for Evangelical and Catholic Theology, and thousands of regular Taizé prayer services). Those of us in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion can see it clearly all around us. This observation can be validated by consulting the "Catholic Quiz" on the St. Matthew ECC Parish web site at:

<http://www.saint-matthew.org/Take%20the%20Catholic%20Quiz.htm>.

Compare the ECC positions with the documents of Vatican II. You will clearly see the articulation of a sense of *ecclesia* inherited from the Early Church and recovered by Vatican II. Let us keep faith with the history out of which we live by continuing the conversation.

At this point, the historian can offer no more advice. Hopefully, the preacher can.

## HOMILY

My texts are:

John 17:11 *I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.*

The Prayer of St. Francis . . . *grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.*

Dear Sisters and Brothers, we often hear the words from the Gospel According to John. We often join Jesus in the High Priestly Prayer. We yearn for that unity in Christ's Church to become palpable. We despair at the reality we perceive with our senses, a flawed and fractured institution that does not appear worthy of the name "Body of Christ."

We look at the recent history of the Church, from the First Vatican Council, to the Second, and on to the twenty-first century and we become overwhelmed with a history that seems to take one step forward and two steps back.

We look back further and we see the Church at odds with itself as long ago as the meeting between Peter and Paul in Jerusalem (and the author of Luke-Acts and Paul can't even agree on the details).

Let us recognize that while our *angst* is perhaps well founded, we need to look at the whole picture. As just one example, let us consider the following sequence. In the fifteenth century Jan Hus was burned at the stake for questioning ecclesial authority. In the sixteenth century Martin Luther was

excommunicated and under a death warrant, but was protected by a prince who had declared his independence from the political authority of Rome, and even the Holy Roman Emperor did not seek to challenge that independence. In the nineteenth century Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger was excommunicated but there was no concern about his safety and he continued his academic appointment with distinction. In the twenty-first century Hans Küng continues as a priest in good standing and is a world famous theologian unable to teach at Catholic institutions, but welcome at some of the most prestigious universities in the world. While we do not applaud any of these abuses of power, the last example is more tolerable than the first. We may find ourselves at odds with Rome, but there has been a clear progressive and diminishing pattern in the *degree* of abuse.

While the Roman Catholic Church seems a long way from even discussing the ordination of women, women clergy are to be found throughout the Church Catholic, including the ECC, and they aren't really absent from deliberations in the Vatican. As just one example, ever since October, 1999, there are regularly scheduled monthly meetings between Vatican representatives (sometimes including the Bishop of Rome) and the Director of Theological Studies of the Lutheran World Federation, who happens to be a cleric, a theologian, and a woman.

While we can't officially receive communion in a Roman Catholic parish, and Roman Catholics can't officially receive in our communities, can I see a show of hands of all those who have in fact received in a Roman parish and all those who have seen Roman Catholics receive in our communities?

While Rome may *seem* officially closed to us, many Romans are not. Have we explored fully enough fellowship with those in Rome who are open to us? Have we explored fully enough the ecumenical possibilities with our Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian neighbors? Have we explored fully enough our common identity as Christ's own through baptism with Evangelicals? Have we explored fully enough our connection to the larger Church that could result from our participation in such ongoing institutions such as the Liturgical Institute and the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology?

Many in the ECC have entered this communion feeling betrayed and mistreated by Rome. Others have come through different routes, often in disagreement with Rome, though never having been a part of it. Let us explore the implications of both the prayer Jesus offered and the prayer of St. Francis as we seek to live beyond those feelings of betrayal, mistreatment, or disagreement.

If we wish to live in a Church that is truly one, we must start perceiving a Church that is truly one. Let us, indeed, pray for the ability to see the unity that does exist. Let us pray that others will also see this unity. Let us pray that our eyes may not be so clouded by institutions that we fail to see *ecclesia*—the assembly of those who have been called apart, baptized, and sent back into the world. Let us pray for the Pope and all those we believe to be resisting the spirit of Vatican II. Let us pray for all those in and beyond the Roman Catholic Church who have embraced Vatican II. Let us not pray for outcomes, but for spiritual growth for us all. And let us give thanks for *both* Vatican Councils. They have given us a focus for thinking deeply about the Church.

And then let us concentrate on consoling, understanding and loving others, and let go of insisting that we be consoled, understood and loved by them in return. God will, and God does.

Are there those who do not perceive us as part of the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church? Undoubtedly. Let us refrain from spitefully returning the exclusion. Let us see unity even with those who would, at present, deny unity with us. In short, let us follow the example of our Lord Jesus and our Brother Francis. Let us concentrate on what we are called to be and do, and not on how others within the Body of Christ have failed to fulfill our expectations.

We are getting a handle on our complex and sometimes less than pretty history. Let us not be consumed with resentment and anger about that history. Let us center ourselves in the Gospel, reaching out to all who bear the mark of the cross and are Christ's own forever, joining hands with them to proclaim the good news of our reconciliation with God, and through God to each other.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

#### COLLEGIAL EPISCOPACY / MONARCHICAL PAPACY

Gerald Christianson, Thomas Izbiki, and Christopher M. Bellitto (eds.), *The Church, the Councils, & Reform: The Legacy of the Fifteenth Century*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.

Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

R. F. Evans, *The One and the Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought*. Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1972.

W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Judith Herrin, *Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

James J. O'Donnell, *The Ruin of the Roman Empire*. New York: HarperCollins, 2008.

Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church*. New York: Paulist Press, 2001.

Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*. Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 1990; 2 vols.

Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State: 1050-1300*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988.

Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages 300-1475*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:  
MODERNIZATION AND THE CHANGING WORLD

Richard D. Brown, *Modernization: The Transformation of American life 1600-1865*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1976.

Ronald Ingleheart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Barrington Moore, *Authority and Inequality Under Capitalism and Socialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Ingleheart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959-1964; 2 vols.

Walt Whitman Rostow, *Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960

FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL AND THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING:

Johann Joseph Ignatz von Döllinger and Johannes Huber, *The Pope and the Council*. Boston: Roberts Bros., 1870; originally published in 1869 as *Der Papst und das Concil* by E. F. Steinacker in Leipzig.

John Tracy Ellis, *The Life of James Cardinal Gibbons: Archbishop of Baltimore*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1952.

Edward Elton Young Hales, *Pio Nono: A Study in European Politics and Religion in the Nineteenth Century*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964.

James J. Hennesey, *The First Vatican Council and the American Experience*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963.

## BETWEEN THE COUNCILS

Pierre Teilhard De Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*. San Francisco, Harper, 2008 first published in 1955 as *Le phénomène humain* by Du Seuil, Paris; written 1938-1940.

Patrick W. Collins, *Gustave Weigel: Pioneer of Reform*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991.

John Henry Cutler, *Cardinal Cushing of Boston*. New York: Hawthorne Books, 1970.

Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Lonergan Reader* (ed. by Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Henri De Lubac, *Teilhard De Chardin: The Man and His Meaning*. New York: Mentor, 1967.

Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., *The Americanist Heresy in Roman Catholicism: 1895-1900*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963; originally published in 1957 as *The Great Crisis in American Catholic History: 1895-1900* by Henry Regnery, Chicago.

John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005.

David J. O'Brian, *Isaac Hecker: An American Catholic*. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.

Donald E. Pelotte, S.S.S., *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict*. New York: Paulist Press, 1975.

William L. Portier, *Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1985.

Noel Keith Roberts, *From Piltdown Man to Point Omega : The Evolutionary Theory of Teilhard de Chardin*. New York: P. Lang, 2000.

Mark Silk, *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988. See particularly Chapter 4.

George Tyrrell, *Medievalism*. Chicago: Thomas More Publishing, 1994; originally published in 1908 by Longmans, Green, and Co., London.

#### SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL AND FOLLOWING:

Angela Bonavoglia, *Good Catholic Girls: How Women are Leading the Fight to Change the Church*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Kenneth Briggs, *Double Crossed: Uncovering the Catholic Church's Betrayal of American Nuns*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2006.

Robert McAfee Brown, *Observer in Rome: A Protestant Report on the Vatican Council*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964.

Anne E. Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women's Experience*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Langdon Gilkey, *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

Hans Küng, *Christianity: Essence, History, and Future*. New York: Continuum, 1995; originally published in 1994 as *Christentum: Wesen und Geschichte* by Piper Verlag, Munich.

Hans Küng, *The Church*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967; originally published in 1967 as *Die Kirche* by Verlag Herder, Freiburg.

Hans Küng, *The Council, Reform, and Reunion*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962; originally published in 1962 as *Konzil und Wiedervereinigung: Erneuerung als Ruf in die Einheit* by Verlag Herder, Vienna.

Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth: Memoirs II*. New York: Continuum, 2008.

Hans Küng, *Infallible? An Unresolved Inquiry*. New York: Continuum, 1994; originally published in 1970 as *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage* by Verlag Herder, Freiburg.

Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (eds), *Vatican II: Renewal Within Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

David G. Schultenover (ed.) *Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?* New York: Continuum, 2007.

Leonard Swidler (ed.), *Küng in Conflict*. Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1981.

David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.

David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.

David Tracy, *Dialogue With the Other: The Inter-Religious Dialogue*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1990.

Gary Wills, *Bare Ruined Choirs: Doubt, Prophecy, and Radical Religion*. Garden City, NY: 1972.

Vincent Arthur Yzermans, *A New Pentecost: Vatican II, Session 1*. Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1963.

## ECCUMENICAL POSSIBILITIES

Carl E. Braaten, *Mother Church: Ecclesiology and Ecumenism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998.

Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism And Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate (Rediscovering Vatican II)*. Paulist Press, 2005

The Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology: <http://www.e-ccet.org/>

Norman P. Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et spes, Inter mirifica (Rediscovering Vatican II)*. New York: Paulist Press, 2005.

George M. Tavard, *Vatican II and the Ecumenical Way*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007.

The Valparaiso Liturgical Institute: <http://www.valpo.edu/ils/>