



St. Francis Virtual House of Studies

UNDERSTANDING THE ECUMENICAL CATHOLIC COMMUNION

Introductory Bibliography



The Ecumenical Catholic Communion was formed on September 19, 2003. As an incorporated entity it is therefore very young. However, like all assemblies of Christians, the ECC needs to be understood within the context of the long faith tradition that goes back thousands of years to the Hebrew and Greek scriptures, through the early history of Christianity, and on to the present.

This brief bibliography is something of a guided tour through readings providing a basic understanding of the deep background of the ECC. Other bibliographies will deal in greater detail with scripture, various epochs in the history of the Church, and theological developments. We recommend that you follow your interests to any and all of the other bibliographies.

1. The Early Church

This is the heritage to which various reformers appealed over the centuries. These reformers include the 13th-century Franciscans and Dominicans, the 14th-century Brethren of the Common Life, the 16th-century Wittenberg Augustinians, the Archdiocese of Utrecht in the 18th century, the Roman Catholic dissidents following the First Vatican Council in the 19th century, significant Roman Catholic periti (theological advisors) during the Second Vatican Council in the 20th century, and prophetic writers who provide the continuing evaluation of the outcome of that council into the 21st century.

The three following books will give you a glimpse of the importance of those early centuries for those reformers and for us today.

Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity: The Thousand Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How it Died*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.

Jenkins provides a wealth of information on the delicate balance between autonomy and mutual accountability that characterized the Early Christian Churches. This balance was maintained in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia until the end of the first millennium. Jenkins makes a compelling argument for our need to recover this ancient conceptualization of the Church in order to revitalize an institution that in the West has been encrusted in monarchical assumptions about authority.

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

*Sullivan places the emphasis on the **function** of both Apostles and Bishops rather than the **personas** of those who hold the office. Thus he gives us a useful perspective on the pragmatic role of leadership that is subordinate to the perpetuation of the called assembly of the baptized that defines the Church.*

John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church In the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop in the First Three Centuries*. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001.

Zizioulas begins his understanding of the concept of unity in the Early Church with ponderings about various phrases from the letters of Paul—particularly “coming together as a church,” “church in the household,” and church as “the body of Christ.” These musings develop into a clear analysis of ideas and praxis in Early Christianity and foundations for a recovery of what is vital and important from that period.

2. Old Catholic History

If you hang around the Ecumenical Catholic Communion you will hear the term “Old Catholic” used with regularity. The following works will provide a useful introduction.

Robert W. Caruso, *The Old Catholic Church: Understanding the Origin, Essence, and Theology of a Church that is Unknown and Misunderstood by Many in North America*. Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2009.

Caruso is an Old Catholic priest in one of the many jurisdictions in the United States. His critical assessment of the American scene is deserved. One may differ with him on how we address the problems (as the compiler of this bibliography does), but the dialogue is useful.

C.B. Moss, *The Old Catholic Movement: Its Origins and History*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1948; rev. editions 1964 & 1977; reprinted by Apocryphile Press, 2005.

Moss gives a sympathetic overview from an Anglican perspective. He provides a brief background to the early 18th-century developments leading to the secession of the Archdiocese of Utrecht (Holland) and then provides considerable detail on the development of both polity and doctrine. His chapters on the prelude to the First Vatican Council, the Council itself, and the outcome of the Council are particularly detailed and insightful. The revised edition provides a perspective on Vatican II by Michael J. Woodgate.

John P. Plummer and John R. Mabry, *Who are the Independent Catholics? An Introduction to the Independent and Old Catholic Churches*. Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2006.

This is a useful brief overview of the multifaceted world of Old Catholic / "Independent" Catholic bodies in the United States. That having been said, read this with a critical eye and explore further. For example, there is no discussion of Carfora in the historical chapter, and the brief statement on Protestant views of the Eucharist ignore Calvin's variation on "Real Presence" and the wide-spread renewal of sacramental theology in the United Methodist Church.

3. The Second Vatican Council and Following

Most of us who have found our way into the Ecumenical Catholic Communion did so after experiencing both the hope of the Second Vatican Council and disappointment in developments since that time. Thus, the following works are a good starting point for understanding the nature of this communion.

Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*. New York: Orbis Books, 2006.

This is a useful brief overview by one of the editors of the massive five volume series of essays on the history of the Council

Hans Küng, *My Struggle for Freedom: Memoirs*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003.

In the first volume of his memoirs Küng (who was a theological consultant) presents a view of the world in which Vatican II emerged. He gives considerable attention to the hope under the promulgation of John XXIII and the difficulties the bishops and theologians encountered during the council as Paul VI returned more and more power to the Curia.

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

In the second volume of his memoirs Küng presents a sustained critique of the failure to meet the promise of Vatican II. In this volume Küng for the first time in his writing career gives attention to Old Catholicism and to one of the most important 19th-century formulators of an Old Catholic perspective, Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger (although Döllinger himself never became an Old Catholic).

Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism*. New York: HarperOne, 2008.

This is both history and ecclesiology. For many of us in the ECC it will place us within the context of a long historical development and locate us fairly precisely within an ecclesiological map.

5. Ecumenical Catholic Ecclesiology

This is a field that is still under construction, but three essays available on the ECC website provide a start. The titles are self explanatory and will not be annotated.

James M. Farris, “Unity and Peace: The Foundations and Vision of the of the Constitution of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion”

http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/Unity_and_Peace.pdf

James M. Farris, “A Catholic Dilemma”

<http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/TheCatholicDilemma.pdf>

Gregory Holmes Singleton, “A Tale of Two Councils: And Their Significance for the Ecumenical Catholic Communion.”

http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/two_councils.pdf

Gregory Holmes Singleton, “Discerning Our Unity, Embracing Our Diversity”

http://www.ecumenical-catholic-communion.org/eccpdf/discerning_unity.pdf

*Several other essays relevant to ECC ecclesiology appeared in the first issue of **The Progressive Catholic Review**, published by St. Francis Virtual House of Studies. The issue is online at:*

<http://www.csfcecc.org/sfvhouse/ecr/v01n01.html>