

## "The Australian Hierarchy at Vatican II"

Thang Vu, 2007, written during seminary formation towards the priesthood.

### **Part I: A Brief Survey of the Deepening Crisis in Relationships between the Catholic Church and Society during the Post-Tridentine Period**

#### **Impact of the world's events in Australia**

In the midst of the deepening crises in the relationship between the Church and society during the Post-Tridentine period, namely: the Scientific Revolution (1543); the Enlightenment; American and French Revolutions; Restoration; *Risogimento* and the Modernist crisis, it is not suggested that the Church in Australia imported or affected – without any qualifications whatsoever – the dogmas and attitudes of mind of Europe and other parts of world. Nonetheless, Roman authority, and its own inclinations, influenced the Church in Australia to take a conservative direction. In particular, spurred by conservative ultramontanism, and concerned about the threat of secularism and anti-clericalism that was largely attributed to the growth of liberalism in Europe, the Church in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries opted for the establishment, and maintenance of a unified and centralised Church.

#### **Sectarianism and Ecumenism**

In Australia, the Church Act of 1836 sought to treat all religions equally by providing financial aid to all religions. However sectarianism, which arrived with the convicts and settlers, was never far away and when the churches refused to give up their rights to run their own religious schools, the government of the day withdrew financial funding and declared, in the 1872 Act, that education should be *free, secular and compulsory*.<sup>1</sup> There has never been a state religion here and all religions have been treated equally before and after the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, when it ceased to be a colony. The strong sectarianism among Christian denominations in the eighteenth and nineteenth century abated in the twentieth century with the foundation of the World Council of Churches and then, for Roman Catholics, the Second Vatican Council and its embrace of ecumenism.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1987), 48-48.

## **Australian Catholicism**

Perhaps, the primary influence on the dynamics of Catholic life in Australia, as a remote location in the Catholic world, was the piety and practices that flowed either directly or indirectly from the Council of Trent (1545-63): “[Trent] had a direct and long-term impact on modern Catholicism that in its pervasiveness transcended the immediate influence of any single person or any other happening in the period.”<sup>2</sup> Although the Council of Trent sought to reform manifold aspects of Catholic life, its primary aim was to highlight the gulf between the true faith of Catholics and the heretical diversions of the Reformers. That emphasis ensured that Catholics, for generations after Trent tended to define themselves over and against those whom they knew to be wandering in the paths of error. Australian Catholics shared with their sisters and brothers in other parts of the world a sense of living within a faith that was certain, clear, and comprehensive.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the sense of certainty and finality that characterised the Tridentine settlement meant that Catholics tended to lack “a sense of history and a dynamic openness to change.”<sup>4</sup> Such features also were as much a part of Catholic life in Australia, causing O’Farrell to remark that in its religious life in the early 1960s the church seemed stable and undisturbed, its authority structures, conservatism and piety little changed since the 1920s, firmly anchored in a clear and unquestioning faith, content to be self-contained.<sup>5</sup>

The development and establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in Australia in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with the intensification of ultramontanist sentiments. Australia’s first Catholic bishop, John Bede Polding, was consecrated in London in 1834. He was an English Benedictine monk, but most of the bishops appointed to shepherd Australian dioceses in the remainder of the century came from Ireland. In *The Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church*, John Molony argues that their nationality is misleading. Influenced by

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<sup>2</sup> John O’Malley, *Trent and all That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 135.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Campion, *Australian Catholics* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1988), 93.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Braxton, *The Wisdom Community* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 28.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1992), 407.

Cardinal Paul Cullen, Archbishop of Dublin from 1852 to 1878, they were the “product of an Irish Church undergoing a thorough Romanisation at the hands of prelates trained in Rome, oriented toward Rome, and consciously seeking to shape the Church both in Ireland and Australia in the Roman mould.”<sup>6</sup> O’Farrell counters Molony’s thesis by pointing out that most of the bishops’ time in Rome was spent in the Irish College, and their subsequent relations with the Vatican reveal an ambivalence toward papal authority. It was useful when it bolstered their own position, and relatively easy to ignore when it did not. O’Farrell concludes: “the fact was that to most Australian Catholics, the papacy, its politics and pronouncements seemed remote and irrelevant.”<sup>7</sup>

Historically, it is interesting to consider whether the Australian bishops embraced a stereotype similar to that of their American counterparts. According to O’Toole<sup>8</sup> in almost every American diocese, the following pattern can be seen. A pioneering, missionary bishop, usually from Ireland, is followed by a number of successors who, with minimal central administration, struggle to build up the young diocese. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a native-born bishop emerges, a “consolidator who brings the local church to organizational maturity and superintends its expanding impact the community at large.”<sup>9</sup> The consolidator is a far greater centralizer than his predecessors, more firmly linked to the Pope and the Roman curia, and inclined, as his efforts bear fruit, to succumb to triumphalism. There are echoes of this stereotype in MacCarthy’s account of “James the Builder” O’Collins, and they become louder in Boland’s study of Duhig.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>John Molony, *Roman Mould of the Australian Catholic Church* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), 1.

<sup>7</sup>O’Farrell, *Catholic Church and Community*, 217-8.

<sup>8</sup>James O’Toole, "The Role of Bishops in American Catholic History: Myth and Reality in the Case of Cardinal William O’Connell," *Catholic Historical Review* 77 October (1991): 596. Cf. for Australian situation Anthony Cappello, "Rome or Ireland? The Religious Control of the Italian Community," *Australian Catholic Historical Society* 23 (2002).

<sup>9</sup>O’Toole, "American Catholic History," 597.

<sup>10</sup>Patrick O’Farrell, "James Duhig," *Australasian Catholic Record* 64(April) (1987): 215.

Molony acknowledges that Mannix was one bishop who did not get caught in the ultramontane currents in influence around the Church.<sup>11</sup> He seems to have been more influenced by the outspoken Irish nationalist bishop Thomas Croke of Cashel than the romanizing Cardinal Cullen.<sup>12</sup> Mannix assumed responsibility for the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1917, the same year the Code of Canon Law was promulgated. He ignored some of its provisions, such as the requirement that bishop regularly conduct visitations of their dioceses.<sup>13</sup> Santamaria claims that Mannix “unquestioningly accepted every decision clearly made personally by the Pope.... [but] this is not the same thing as saying that he accepted every piece of advice offered in the name of the Pope by Vatican diplomats.”<sup>14</sup> Duhig too broke free of an ultramontane mould, as Boland recounts: “in fact, his refusal to conform to stereotype was his most significant ecclesiastical contribution to the Australian Catholic Church. Yet, did he have to become so involved in politics, education, - all education, not just Catholic – the arts, business, agriculture, oil, mining, urban development, racial prejudice, several wars, journalism...his Church was the Incarnation extended in every time in every place in every person.”<sup>15</sup> Murphy rightly remarks that the bishop least influenced by Rome’s *modus operandi*, especially regarding controversial matters, was the Maynooth-trained Mannix.<sup>16</sup> He represented a more nationalistic and Gallicanist strand of Irish leadership – a new generation, but unfortunately his age and his association with anti-communism seemed to rule this out.

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<sup>11</sup> Molony, *Roman Mould*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix: Wit and Wisdom* (Melbourne: Freedom Publishing, 2004), 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> BA Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix: The Quality of Leadership* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984), 148.

<sup>14</sup> BA Santamaria, *Santamaria: A Memoir* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17.

<sup>15</sup> TP Boland, *The Ascent of Mount Tabor: Writing the Life of Archbishop Duhig* (Brisbane: Aquinas Library, 1986), 14.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey J Murphy, *The Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II* (Queensland: Griffith University, 2001), 17-18.

## **Part II: A study of the speeches and writings of John XXIII concerning the Second Vatican Council, with special reference to his perception of an epochal shift and his vision for the Church into the future.**

Trembling a little with emotion, but with humble firmness of purpose, We now tell you of a two [*three*] fold celebration: We propose to call a diocesan synod for Rome, and an ecumenical council for the Universal Church...[*and*] a desired and long awaited modernization of the Code of Canon Law.<sup>17</sup>

With these words, on January 25, 1959, less than 90 days after his election as the successor to Pius XII, Pope John XXIII announced his decision to convene a new council during a speech to a small group of cardinals gathered in the Roman basilica of St. Paul's outside the Walls for the concluding liturgy of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.<sup>18</sup> Pope John was a diplomat, a pastor, but also and more profoundly, a historian. He was able to relativize so many "traditions" that submerged "*the Tradition*" to which he wanted the Church to be faithful. He knew the relativity of certain theological perspectives and ecclesial practices which had taken on a kind of permanence and understood how to return to the great constants which the life of the Church discovers in mediating on the Gospel. These included ongoing reform, the meeting of Councils and its consequent implementation, the role of the Pope which did not contradict that of the bishops, and the importance of Scripture and of patristic history, including that of the East.<sup>19</sup>

However, there were some episodes which demonstrated how the Roman Curia, or at least some of it, was unaware of this news. For instance, the day after the official announcement, one who was a consultant to the Holy Office and worked rather frequently at the Curia, went over to that congregation. That evening when he returned he was utterly amazed and excited, saying that everyone at the congregation was agitated and could not understand how a Pope

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<sup>17</sup> X Francis; Cronin Murphy, F John & Smith, Ferrer, *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII* (Washington DC: TPS Press, 1964), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, *History of Vatican II. Vol 1 - Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II: Towards a New Era in Catholicism*, ed. Giuseppe & Joseph Komonchak Alberigo (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1995), 3. From now on Alberigo, *HVII*.

<sup>19</sup> Guy Bedouelle, *The History of the Church* (London: Continuum, 2003), 157.

could suddenly announce a council without first consulting the appropriate sections of the Curia and preparing for what was not at all an easy task. The moral of the story is that when Pope John announced Vatican Council II, not even the congregation of the Curia was aware of what was happening. In addition, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's semi-official newspaper, published only the press release from the Secretariat of State, and *La Civiltà Cattolica* - the Jesuits' authoritative biweekly magazine - completely ignored the announcement during the first quarter of 1959, apart from reproducing that same meager press release in its news summary. It was only at the end of April 1959 that Pope John formulated the fundamental aim of the Council: to increase Christians' commitment to their faith, "to make more room for charity . . . with clarity of thought and greatness of heart."<sup>20</sup> Having established that, he did not hesitate to characterize the upcoming Council in absolutely traditional terms. That is, it would be a free and responsible council of bishops, and thus it would be able to conduct effective deliberation - but it would do so with the *sui generis* participation of representatives from the non-Catholic Christian Churches.<sup>21</sup>

In the opening speech on 11 October 1962, John XXIII wanted the Church "up to date [*aggiornamento*] where required, and by the wise organization of mutual cooperation."<sup>22</sup> In addition, he pastorally stressed that:

The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.<sup>23</sup>

The above translation was based on Abbott's version which is perhaps the closest to the original version. Yet when the Latin version of the inaugural speech appeared in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the official collection of papal documents, the text had been tampered with and censored. The ideal of the substance of faith disappeared, and cautious qualifications were introduced. They are italicized as Hebblethwaite noticed:

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<sup>20</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, trans. Matthew Sherry (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> W Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II: Introductions and Commentaries by Catholic Bishops and Experts, Responses by Protestants & Orthodox Scholars*, ed. W Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 712.

<sup>23</sup> Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, 715.

For the...deposit of faith itself, or the truths which are contained in our venerable doctrine, is one thing, and the way in which they are expressed is another, retaining however the same sense and meaning.<sup>24</sup>

The last clause, not by chance, came from the anti-modernist oath of 1910 which also spoke of holding fast to *the absolute and immutable truth*.<sup>25</sup> This incident indicated that John XXIII did not have his way all worked out smoothly. Furthermore it demonstrates to us the value of cross-referencing sources to highlight discrepancies, themselves making their own historical point.

According to Vodola<sup>26</sup> the concept of *aggiornamento* has firm pastoral and intellectual foundations in the tradition of the Church and was incredibly formative in the life of Pope John himself. However, was the announcement of the Council “completely unexpected, like a flash of heavenly light, shedding sweetness in eyes and hearts”?<sup>27</sup> Certainly not. Vodola helpfully suggests that the Catholic Church had begun a very slow and subtle process of *aggiornamento* or epochal shift, particularly in the areas of liturgy, biblical scholarship and the lay apostolate, long before John XXIII called the Council.<sup>28</sup> The present controversies about the Council are fundamentally about John XXIII and the politics of change, its necessity, implementation and most importantly, the way change should be interpreted in the history of the Church. The pontificate of Pius X (1903-14) represented a fight against many changes that he considered to be ills besetting the Church, especially Modernism. However he was best and somewhat fondly remembered for lowering the age for First Communion and encouraging regular communion by the faithful. According to Chadwick, this perhaps, amounted to an epochal shift in the liturgical practice of worship:

Historians, in hindsight, if asked which act of which Pope did most to affect the Church since 1800, would put their finger on this change of 1905-6, the encouragement of frequent, even daily communion, and the receiving of it by children.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London: HarperCollins, 1984), 432.

<sup>25</sup> Hebblethwaite, *Pope of the Council*, 432.

<sup>26</sup> Max Vodola, *The Council in History: John XXIII & Vatican II – Lecture I* (Melbourne: CTC, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, 712.

<sup>28</sup> Vodola, *The Council in History: John XXIII & Vatican II – Lecture I*.

<sup>29</sup> Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes: 1830-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 362.

The pontificate of Pius XI (1922-39) was marked, encouragingly, with the expansion of Catholic Action which involved the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church. This development was the cornerstone of what Vatican II came to articulate as the unique and indispensable place of the laity in the life of the Church, the universal priesthood of all believers and the universal call to a life of holiness in the world. In Australia, Catholic Action began tentatively in 1931 with the formation of the Campion Society at Melbourne University. The suffering of the Depression sparked the beginnings of a new social and philosophical awareness among members of a small group of young Catholic intellectuals and university students. This group included men such as Denys Jackson, Frank Maher, Kevin Kelly and BA Santamaria. They established the highly successful Catholic Worker newspaper and were instrumental in the formation of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action.<sup>30</sup> The enhanced role of the laity continued to take shape during the long pontificate of Pius XII, who authorised a number of further significant developments in the life of the Church. These were relatively creative for their time and continued the process of epochal shift. *Mediator Dei* (1947) (On the Sacred Liturgy) addressed issues such as the vernacular in the liturgy and the active participation of the lay faithful.

Therefore, it is incorrect to say that John XXIII alone was responsible for the *aggiornamento* (a bringing up to date or epochal shift), which was so manifest in the Council. The *aggiornamento*, which was the Pope's great legacy to the Church, would have been inconceivable had the groundwork not been prepared by Pius XII with his liturgical and pastoral reforms.<sup>31</sup> John was always conscious of the efforts of his predecessors and he knew that the moment was coming for an ecumenical council in the Church, that it was the best way for bringing into sharp focus, and finding solutions for, the many new problems and needs which had been increasingly emerging.<sup>32</sup> A chronology of the life of John XXIII (1881-1963) has shed some striking light on the Pope who summoned the Council:

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<sup>30</sup> See Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Murphy, *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII*, 381.

<sup>32</sup> Murphy, *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII*, 381.

Table I: A Brief Chronology of John XXIII

Date	Event	Comment(s)
25/11/1881	Born – Angelo Guisepe Roncalli at Sotto il Monte, Italy, in the Diocese of Bergamo	His family worked as sharedcroppers
1901-1914	Seminarian at the Pontifical Roman Seminary.	Lectured in church history. Roncalli accompanied Tedeschi as he re-organised his diocese especially visiting the historical account of the pastoral visit of St. Charles Borromeo. Synod of Bergamo in 1910 brought local customs and laws into line with the needs of modern times and altered circumstances. <sup>33</sup>
	Ordained priest in 1904	
	Secretary to Bishop of Bergamo – Tedeschi 1905-1914	
	1910 – Synod of Diocese	
1925-1953	Diplomat posts including Bulgaria, Turkey, Greek and France.	Gained pastoral insight from the Orthodox and Islam and French.
1953-1958	Patriarch of Venice	Gained more pastoral leadership
1958-1963	Elected Pope 28/10/1958	Took the name John XXIII
	Solemn Coronation 4/11/1958	Feast of St. Charles Borromeo – Reformer (coronation unusually held on a weekday to match this feast)

From the above brief chronology, the influence of Borromeo was clearly evident when Roncalli convoked the diocesan synod of Venice in 1957, following an extensive round of pastoral visitation throughout the diocese. It was a year before his election to the papacy. In his pastoral letter to the priests and people of Venice, he wrote:

You've probably heard the word *aggiornamento* repeated so many times. Well, Holy Church who is ever youthful wants to be in a position to understand the diverse circumstances of life so that she can adapt, correct, improve and be filled with fervour. That in brief is the nature of the Synod, and that is its goal.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, two very typically communicated signs of Pope John's thoughts on liturgical renewal were his public praise of the ancient Ambrosian rite on the feast-day of St Charles Borromeo in November 1962 and his decision to add St Joseph's name to the list of saints in

<sup>33</sup> Angelo Roncalli, *My Bishop: A Portrait of Mgr Giacomo Maria Radini Tedeschi* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1969), 92.

<sup>34</sup> Hebblethwaite, *Pope of the Council*, 264.

the canon of the Mass in the same month.<sup>35</sup> The former indicated his support for liturgical diversity, the latter symbolised to arch-conservatives that not even the Mass was immutable.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, this part has indicated that the announcing of the Council was neither as completely unexpected in its origins nor as consistently farsighted in its provisions and an epochal shift.

John XXIII deeply reflected on the Council when approaching his death:

It is not that the gospel has changed; it is that we have begun to understand it better. Those who have lived as long as I have....were enabled to compare different cultures and traditions, and know that the moment has come to discern the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and to look far ahead.<sup>37</sup>

## **Part III: The Australian Hierarchy at Vatican II**

### ***The Local Church Reception: Of John XXIII and News of a Council***

As Catholics around the world were able to see their Vicar of Christ on TV for the first time, by leaving the Vatican, visiting prisoners and looking for all the world like a man who enjoyed life and people, John XXIII became loved in a way altogether different to the awe-struck respect afforded by the world to Pius XII – “executants, not collaborators.”<sup>38</sup> His portliness in a television age only increased the sense people had that here was a Pope who was human and simple. His announcement of a Council for the Universal Church was the clearest and least arguable demonstration of the Petrine ministry exercised in this century. Theologically, the announcement of the Council captured the attention of the local Church too; here the decision brought to bear locally something of the weight of the Universal Church. Local Catholics had to respond in a supportive and hopeful way, they had to *try to please* even if the consequences of a Council were largely matters for speculation between 1959 and 1962. Because the awesome charism of the papal primacy was exercised by *Good Pope John* rather than by a remote and ethereal figure, Catholics at a local level felt assured that their long-standing inclination toward obedience in this transitional phase of history was right for the times.<sup>39</sup>

John was Bishop of Rome but he was also *their* Supreme Pontiff. Here, according to Murphy,

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<sup>35</sup> Murphy, *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII*, 446.

<sup>36</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 452.

<sup>37</sup> Hebblethwaite, *Pope of the Council*, 295-6.

<sup>38</sup> The Good Pope!; [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com); Retrieved 20 July 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 40.

there rightly emerges an irony apposite and enduring for the study of Vatican II and the Church in Australia. The Council is seen today as:

the *Magna Charta* for a participative, at least inchoately democratic revolution; but the success and rapidly with which its reforms were implemented relied on a key of the older dispensation, namely, obedience to authority. Submitting to Church authority was, after all – like submitting to vaccination – not forfeiting intelligence but using it wisely.<sup>40</sup>

### ***The Ante/Preparatory Phase: 1960-1962***

Almost 2000 responses were sent to Rome in answer to Roman requests for advice on the agenda for the Council.<sup>41</sup> In a recent international study, Etienne Fouilloux finds that the majority tended to be cautious, conformist, and concerned with disciplines rather than doctrine.<sup>42</sup> It was clear that the initial responses to the announcement of Vatican II were not characterised by a profound appreciation of the intellectual movements that presaged the Council in Europe. Ryder reached a similar verdict with regard to the Australian bishops. He ended his 1988 article in the *Australasian Catholic Record* with the rather depressing comment: “Pope John’s call for renewal found here a small response on which to build.”<sup>43</sup> Undeterred, Murphy went over the Australian responses again and found out that 11/29 respondents were clearly in favour of some practical reforms to Church practice and procedure.<sup>44</sup> For instance, Bishop Lancelot Goody of Bunbury thought that the “overriding themes” of the Council could be the goal of promoting Christian unity. Another 11 did not contribute any suggestions, including James Gleeson, who offered instead his prayers for the Council, and James O’Collins of Ballarat, who observed that the Church was in such a healthy state in his diocese that “nothing came to mind.” Here is a snapshot of the Australian *vota* and Asian *vota*:<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 40-41.

<sup>41</sup> Alberigo, *HVII*. 79ff.

<sup>42</sup> Etienne Fouilloux, *The Antepreparatory Phase*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo et al, History of Vatican II Vol 1 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), 107-108.

<sup>43</sup> William Ryder, “The Australian Bishops’ Proposals for Vatican II,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 65 (Jan), no. (1988): 76.

<sup>44</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 102. See also Appendix I, 327-401.

<sup>45</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 327-401.. Cf. Jeffrey J Murphy, “Up To Jerusalem!: Australian Bishops’ Suggestions for the Agenda of Vatican II,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 78(1) (2001): 43.

Table II: *The Advice and Suggestions given by Bishops and Prelates in Asia and Oceania for the coming Ecumenical Council*

Local Church/Bps	Total No. of Bishops	Number of Bishops		Responses	
		Ordinary	Auxiliary	Ordinary	Auxiliary
Philippines	34	28	6	15(53%)	3(50%)
China	65	37	28	28(76%)	16(%)
East Asia	80	25	55	18(72%)	27(49%)
India	85	71	14	49(69%)	7(50%)
Oceania	60	27	33	12(44%)	17(48%)
Total	324	188	136	122(65%)	69(50%)

Thematically, topics that attracted bishops' attentions were: expounding the doctrine regarding the mystical body; condemnation of communism; sanctification of the clergy; powers of bishops over religious; restoration of the order of deacons; reform of the breviary; use of the vernacular language in the celebration of the Mass, in the recital of the breviary and in the administration of the sacraments.<sup>46</sup> Specifically the Australian *vota* was as follows: bishops (43%), ecumenism (36.5%), liturgy (34.7%), religious (33%), Mary (23%), laity (circa 20%), priests (16.5%), Scripture (10%), education (10%), social doctrine (3%), war (3%).<sup>47</sup> Generally these statistics indicate that the suggestions were related to the modern needs and exigencies of the missionary apostolate and often reflected problems and aspects proper to lands of mission.<sup>48</sup> Overall the synthesis report would have given some confidence to Pope John that there was amongst the world's bishops a very real desire for reform even if it remained to an insightful few to give this desire that ecclesiological dimension which could constitute renewal.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, Grootaers has spoken of the *ebbs and flows* that characterised the conciliar years, as local Churches added something of their own genius and insight and then received thereafter the synthetic conclusions and generalised orientations of the wider, universal Church.<sup>50</sup> In Australia's case, however, the flow surpassed the ebb: bishops and faithful here

<sup>46</sup> Murphy, "Up To Jerusalem," 42.

<sup>47</sup> Murphy, "Up To Jerusalem," 43.

<sup>48</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 386..

<sup>49</sup> Murphy, "Up To Jerusalem," 43.

<sup>50</sup> Alberigo, *HVII*, 515-564.

tended toward a minimalist view of the Council's aims and did not, in the end, submit enough responses to the preparatory commission, in enough detail, or with enough promptitude.<sup>51</sup> What seemed to ebb out of the Church in Australia was lacking in intellectual and theological profundity, something which distance only exacerbated.

By 1962, for bishops, if not others, the schemata and other official material being sent to Australia at that time also contributed to this positive development. The ante-preparatory and preparatory phases anticipated only the preference for the practical which would characterise Australian interests at Vatican II itself. Francis Rush was the only Australian bishop appointed in the preparatory years and one of the more modern in outlook. Bishop Goody and Archbishop Young responded to the forthcoming Council in much the same way. The *Romanism* of Gilroy and the advancing age of the nation's other metropolitans were the main reasons for the lack of official conciliar preparation. Co-operation and a greater sense of nationalism might have produced more assertive and worthwhile documents on such topics as Catholic Action, the lay apostolate as well as education. As it happened, Mannix's ecclesiological contribution in *De Ecclesia*<sup>52</sup> provided a foundation upon which nothing substantive was built in the preparatory phase. Finally, the study of the Church before the Council demonstrates that Australia did play a worthwhile role in the preparations for Vatican II in this sense: it moved, albeit tentatively, towards a more well-rounded understanding of the Church's capacity to initiate renewal and it educated itself - or *was* educated - about the Council's potential scope. Murphy nicely sums up the local Church in Australia regarding the preparatory phase:

*[they]*would refer to the Council as 'school' and their study of schemata as 'homework.' In the years immediately prior to the Council the bishops re-learned their ABCs. Like children, some of them knew all the letters, some repeated their favourite ones and some merely hummed the tune.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 120.

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey J Murphy, "The Lost (and Last) Animadversions of Daniel Mannix," *Australasian Catholic Record* 76(1) (1999), 55-56.

<sup>53</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 121.

## ***Of Pilgrims and Progressives: The First Session – 1962***

### **A Snapshot of Session I**

- 2500 bishops were present.
- Duration: 11 October 1962 – 8 December 1962.
- Initial documents, outlines, prepared and presented by the Curia and pre-preparatory commission.
- The newly formed commissions rejected all but one of the original schemata – Liturgy survived and was the first topic to be discussed.
- John XXIII intervened on two decisive matters: *Dei verbum* and *Lumen Gentium*.

It was true for some of the Australian bishops who went to the Council that they thought its purpose was to strengthen their faith in the wondrous universality and power of Holy Mother Church. However, this in no way implies that *pilgrim* should be regarded as a synonym for *conservative* in any more general discourse on modern Church history.<sup>54</sup> On a special note, Cardinal Gilroy of Sydney was chosen to be one of the 10 Council presidents, which was an honour for the Church in Australia, since John XXIII wanted its members to represent the most important local churches in the world. It was ironic that Gilroy was the one to preside at the very first conciliar discussion on the *schemata* of Liturgy, considering that in the previous three years he had either ignored the question of liturgical reform or had decidedly acted against it.<sup>55</sup> Also present was Guilford Young, who was one of the few Australian bishops familiar with the broader liturgical movement. There were 328 speeches during the debate on the liturgy; 88 fathers spoke on the first chapter alone.<sup>56</sup> Those who criticize the Australian bishops for not speaking more fail to take into account the sheer number of speeches and the amount of tedious repetition. Another problem was that Latin, under fire as the language of the liturgy, proved to be less than satisfactory as the language of the Council. By then the results for the vote on the liturgy schema, discussed by the Fathers continually between early October and 13 November, had been tallied and announced: 2,162 for, 46 against, 7 abstentions.<sup>57</sup> Gilroy's very adept speech was notable for three things: he attempted to be a conciliator between the curial and critical sides of the debate; he accepted that the Fathers

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<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey J Murphy, "Of Pilgrims and Progressives: Australian Bishops at Vatican II (The First Session: 1962)," *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(2) (2002): 189.

<sup>55</sup> Murphy, "Of Pilgrims and Progressive," 195.

<sup>56</sup> Alberigo, *HVII.*, 110-111.

<sup>57</sup> Murphy, "Of Pilgrims and Progressive," 204.

could indeed amend or reject the schema; and, finally, he still maintained the document was entirely worthy of discussion in its existing form.<sup>58</sup>

Regarding John XXIII, he did not attend the general congregations, a prudent choice, but followed the debates on television and engaged in some subtle and not-so-subtle morale building.<sup>59</sup> In his address at the close of the first session on 8 December, John XXIII stressed the sharply divergent views which had arisen illustrating the holy liberty that the children of God enjoy in the Church<sup>60</sup> however the Pope's assessment of the Council was overshadowed by the obvious fact that he was gravely ill. John XXIII died on 3 June 1963.

### ***Romanita Mark II: The Second Session – 1963***

#### **A Snapshot of Session II**

- **Pope Paul VI**, Cardinal Giovanni Montini, Archbishop of Milan, the Pope who succeeded John XXIII and decided to continue the Vatican II.
- Duration: 29 September to 4 December 1963.
- *Lumen Gentium*: chapter I – Mystery of the Church, chapter III – Hierarchy of the Church; the place of Mary as an inclusion not a separate document; chapter II – People of God.
- Other topics discussed: ecumenism, religious freedom, relation of the Church and the Jews and communications.

Whereas John XXIII had talked with charismatic vagueness of a new Pentecost, Paul VI clearly set out a plan for the Council. In his opening address on 19 September 1963 he spelt out that he wanted the Council Fathers to come to a deeper understanding of the nature of the Church, promote its inner renewal, encourage Christian unity, and engage in dialogue with the modern world. Molony defines *Romanita* as “unswerving loyalty to the office and affection for the person of the Pope, acceptance of Rome and what it stands for as the centre and heart of Christendom, subservience to the Roman curia...[and] a willing readiness to form and foster a local institutional Church according to Roman ideas.”<sup>61</sup> Murphy however argues that the

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<sup>58</sup> Murphy, "Of Pilgrims and Progressive," 204.

<sup>59</sup> Hebblethwaite, *Pope of the Council*. 450.

<sup>60</sup> Hebblethwaite, *Pope of the Council*. 464-465.

<sup>61</sup> Molony, *Roman Mould*, 168.

Australian bishops learnt a different kind of *Romanita* at Vatican II: loyalty to the Pope did not necessarily entail subservience to the curia.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Schema on The Church**

One of the first Australian bishops to make written observations on the *De Ecclesia* draft was Bishop Bernard Stewart of the Sandhurst diocese. Few bishops were as committed to the ultramontanist view of the Church's governance or were more uncompromising concerning theological minutiae.<sup>63</sup> Regarding relations between Church and State, he claimed that many Australians,

blindly led by false principles or relying rashly upon certain decisions of the supreme court of other nations, teach that efforts should be made for a full and total separation of state or civil government from the Church or from the order established by God.<sup>64</sup>

### **Debate on Collegiality**

Statistically, Bishop Thomas Muldoon made the most interventions, almost 20 in number.<sup>65</sup> Muldoon contributed strongly to the debate on collegiality. The special role of bishops to represent Christ as teacher, priest and shepherd was strongly affirmed. Supporters of collegiality saw this threefold office as the fullness of priesthood, conferred by consecration. In other words, bishops receive their authority directly from Christ not merely delegated by the Pope.

### **The Universal Call to Sanctity**

Again Muldoon made an intervention and as Murphy noticed Muldoon could not abide generic discussion and insisted the Fathers reduce the schematic proposals to chapter, verse, sentence or word.<sup>66</sup> In addition Gilroy made an intervention in which he supported the universal call to sanctity and emphasized priestly dignity and its central importance. He also stressed the need for collaboration between bishops and priests.

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<sup>62</sup> Jeffrey J Murphy, "Romanita Mark II: Australian Bishops at Vatican II (The Second Session: 1963)," *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(3) (2002): 344.

<sup>63</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 344.

<sup>64</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 345.

<sup>65</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 318.

<sup>66</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 349.

## **The place of Mary**

Murphy interestingly noticed that Australian bishops were able to speak in their own right.<sup>67</sup> Several Australian bishops had stipulated their opposition to an ecumenically damaging emphasis on Mariology in the schemata.

## **Ecumenism**

Goody's speech on ecumenism offset concessions to non-Catholic with a dogmatic bottom line and Cahill's intervention on bishops seemed to have been something of a compromise to satisfy Lyons and Carroll's views on the rights of auxiliaries.<sup>68</sup>

As the Council's sessions approached, Murphy discerned three main tendencies:<sup>69</sup> support for significant reforms, resistance to change and ambivalence. Enigmatic bishops like Farrelly, Prendiville and Toohey had not been mentioned in relation to any of the conciliar interventions. Conversely, a split occurred among the pilgrims between those like Jobst, O'Loughlin and Henschke who were supporting various ideas for reform, and Simonds, Stewart, Lyons, Fox, Brennan and McCabe, who tended towards either silence or an advocacy fairly characterised as resistance to change.

## ***On the threshold of modernity: The Third Session – 1964***

### **A Snapshot of Session III**

- Duration: 14 September to 21 November 1964.
- Agenda
- *Dei Verbum* – totally rewritten.
- *Gaudium et spes*.
- Declaration of Religious Liberty.
- Decree on Ecumenism.

The third session of the Council discussed chapters VII and VIII of *De Ecclesia*, religious liberty, ecumenism, collegiality, the declaration on the Jews, the revised text on revelation, the apostolate of the laity, priestly life and ministry, Eastern Churches, the Church in the modern world, marriage and birth control, missionary activity, religious, priestly formation

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<sup>67</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 353.

<sup>68</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 363.

<sup>69</sup> Murphy, "Romanita Mark II," 363.

and Christian education.<sup>70</sup> It was the lengthiest conciliar agenda since Trent. In contributing to these discussions, the Australian bishops were confronted with the full diversity of subjects about which the new theologians had been thinking and writing for the previous few decades. By discussing these matters in a *distant milieu* and formulating their contributions to the wider discussion, they were once and for all acquainted with Catholic modernity.<sup>71</sup>

One of the traditions, loyalty to Rome precisely as a means of buttressing the Church from modern (and modernist) thought, was challenged fundamentally in the second session and rendered strategically defunct in the third. Does this mean we would recognise all of the Australian interventions of 1964 as properly modernist? Perhaps in theological terms, not necessarily. Pope Paul VI himself tended to protect the immovable minority from the defeats actual and symbolic its principals might otherwise have suffered in this session. For this reason, perhaps, Gilroy made more interventions in 1964 than he did in 1963. His native conservatism was less impolitic vis-a-vis the Pope in this session than it had been in the first, when his presidential responsibilities were also more important than they were at this stage. While Gilroy's orientation towards the Council's reforms was conservative, he was not beholden to curial attitudes on the schemata or Council processes. He supported the first draft of *De Ecclesia* uncritically but he was not so docile with the Theological Commission's revised version. He wanted a doctrinal Council but he would make no demands for one with fellow cardinals. In this third session, he would do the same on the question of religious liberty and also stress the importance to the Church of the priesthood and the teaching brothers.<sup>72</sup> In addition, the Australian bishops contributed mainly in written submission rather than by adding to the tedious number of speeches.

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<sup>70</sup> Jeffrey J Murphy, "On the Threshold of Modernity: Australian Bishops at Vatican II (The Third Session: 1964)," *Australasian Catholic Record* 79(4) (2002). Also see Jeffrey J Murphy, "'Sane, Advanced Conservatism': Australian Bishops at Vatican II - The Third Session Continues: 1964," *Australasian Catholic Record* 80(2) (2003).

<sup>71</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 207.

<sup>72</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 220.

### **Schema on Ecumenism**

Out of 28 bishops who sided with Archbishop Beck (dealing with the ecclesiastical communities separated from Rome during the Reformation), 20 were Australians. Essentially this was an Australian document<sup>73</sup> which helped to give a more relaxed interpretation of the responsibility for the 16<sup>th</sup> century divisions.

### **Religious Liberty and Education**

It was interesting to see the Australian bishops through the Archbishop of Armagh sought successfully the official recognition of parental rights as a fundamental component of religious liberty.<sup>74</sup> As an amendment along these lines was added to the draft before its promulgation, it reasonably argued that the Australian bishops played an extremely influential role in enabling this development.<sup>75</sup> Regarding the schema on education, which was regarded as overly theoretical and Eurocentric, the Australian bishops raised their forthright interventions at a conference on Education.<sup>76</sup> On the holistic and realistic quality of Catholic education in Australia, the bishops defended their system strongly while stressing the cultural reality within which Australian schools had to operate.<sup>77</sup>

### **Division in the Australian Hierarchy on Religious Liberty**

The document which provoked the most heated debate was the one which affirmed that freedom in religious matters is an inherent human right.<sup>78</sup> A particular contentious paragraph acknowledged that other religious groups had a right to promote their beliefs and practices. Bishop Patrick Lyons of Sale stressed that "error has no rights". In a written submission he objected to the paragraph and called for a much stronger affirmation that the Catholic Church was the one, true Church.<sup>79</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, Guilford Young of Hobart argued that the Catholic Church could not claim religious freedom for itself without

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<sup>73</sup> Murphy, "On the Threshold of Modernity," 455-456.

<sup>74</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 239.

<sup>75</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 239.

<sup>76</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 237.

<sup>77</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 237.

<sup>78</sup> Murphy, "On the Threshold of Modernity," 448-454.

<sup>79</sup> Murphy, "On the Threshold of Modernity," 451.

conceding it to other groups, and this view eventually won out.<sup>80</sup> However, Gilroy thought that the paragraph in question should be quietly dropped.<sup>81</sup>

On 2 October 1964 *Time* magazine quoted an unmanned Australian bishop who said of Pope Paul VI: "Let's face it, he's weak."<sup>82</sup> Cardinal Gilroy called an emergency meeting of the Australian hierarchy. Everyone denied uttering such words, and a missive was speedily dispatched to assure Pope Paul that he had their loyalty and obedience. Why did Paul VI seem to favour the traditionalists at the Third Session? Bernard Pawley, one of the Anglican observers at the Council, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury that he thought that Paul had put a bit of weight on the conservative side to keep the balance and stop the boat rocking too much. Shortly afterwards, he had an audience with the Pope. Paul asked what he had reported, and agreed with his response: "As captain of the ship I have to keep her on a steady course...it is better for me to go ahead slowly and carry everyone with me than to hurry along and cause dissention."<sup>83</sup>

Overall, does the idea of a new *Romanita* mean the bishops were not so much converted to new ideas as merely obedient to the perceived will and preferences of Popes John and Paul? If that is so, there is really no new *Romanita* and no crossing of a threshold but only a submissiveness which Cardinal Moran would have recognised.<sup>84</sup> It should be reiterated, in answer to the question, that not all Australian bishops (including Gilroy and Muldoon) subscribed dutifully to official schemata or refrained from making requests and suggestions which, by their nature, tended to be critical not merely of schematic formulations but the way things had usually been done or thought about. Above all their awareness of diversity and complexity as well as their preparedness to form their own responses either liberal or conservative and be involved were more important criteria of modern thinking.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Murphy, "On the Threshold of Modernity," 452-454.

<sup>81</sup> Murphy, "On the Threshold of Modernity," 448-450.

<sup>82</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 245.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 404-406.

<sup>84</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 208-209.

<sup>85</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 209.

## **The Council Becomes part of Catholic Culture**

At the local churches the influence of the Council was felt. The responses to the Council in the world at large had modernized the Church to such extent that it was difficult to see how there could have been any turning back. In Australia, the Church had already been changed forever, of course.<sup>86</sup> Renewal, aggiornamento, ecumenism, laity participation or the spirit of Vatican II were just a few concepts and phrases that were central to the discussion of the Council. For instance, the stress had shifted from Catholic Action to action by Catholics.<sup>87</sup>

## ***The Far Milieu Called Home: The Fourth Session – 1965***

### **A Snapshot of Session IV**

- Duration: 14 September to 8 December 1965.
- Establishment of the Synod 15 September 1965.
- Paul VI – planned to go before the UN Assembly.
- Promulgated Constitutions, Decrees and Declarations.

### **Revisiting the Declaration of Religious Liberty**

There was still tension over the declaration on Religious Liberty, but Pope Paul intervened and ordered that it be put to the vote before he addressed the UN on 4 October 1965.<sup>88</sup> Almost 2000 Fathers voted in favour, only 224 against.

### ***Gaudium et spes***

As Pope John had wanted, the overall tone of *Gaudium et spes* was a positive rather than defensive. It affirmed that the Holy Spirit was not absent from modern developments, but it did offer some serious critiques which were not welcomed by all bishops. At almost the last minute an attempt to derail the schema was made by Archbishop Hannan of New Orleans.<sup>89</sup> He interpreted its condemnation of nuclear warfare as a slap in the face of the US because it did not acknowledge the deterrent value of nuclear weapons. He called on the Council Fathers to vote against the whole schema if the errors in the chapters were not corrected. Nine other bishops signed his submission, including Australia's Guilford Young.<sup>90</sup> This

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<sup>86</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 247.

<sup>87</sup> Murphy, "Sane, Advanced Conservatism," 247.

<sup>88</sup> Jeffrey J Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home: Australian Bishops at Vatican II - The Final Session: 1965," *Australasian Catholic Record* 80(3) (2003): 348.

<sup>89</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 362.

<sup>90</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 362.

reminds us of the Third Session where, besides Muldoon's treatment of nuclear weapons and just war, Australian bishops only subscribed to foreign interventions on this schema. In the end the schema was passed 2111 to 251.

### **The Closure of the Council**

On 8 December 1965, the Australian bishops attended the closing ceremony of the Council. One Australian bishop wrote in his diary: "the great Council has now entered history; in the aftermath we of our time will also enter history if we speedily and effectively put the decrees of the Council into operation. May God grant it."<sup>91</sup> This hardly seemed the response of someone ambivalent about the Council or resistant to the spirit of change. This confirms Murphy's conclusion that even those bishops who attended the Council in an indifferent or enigmatic frame of mind were much more accepting of the Council's direction by the end of 1965.<sup>92</sup> While Murphy concedes that in some cases the acceptance may have been somewhat grudging, this was certainly true for some bishops.<sup>93</sup> Overall, most of the Australian bishops brought home the openness they displayed during the Council, which proved invaluable for at least the first phase of the process of reception as Murphy has remarked:

The excesses that have befallen some national Churches have been avoided [*in Australia*], as has the tendency towards an ultramontanist (and culturally-infantilising) over-emphasis on the ordinary jurisdiction of the papacy. This middle-way was a tradition modernised (but safeguarded) by the Australian Council Fathers and is probably their greatest cultural bequest to the contemporary Church, however unglamorous.<sup>94</sup>

### **Part IV: Assessment of the Historical Importance of Vatican II**

Murphy noticed in his thesis a number of technical problems regarding the Australian hierarchy at Vatican II.<sup>95</sup> First, it was not easy to obtain the interventions made by Australian bishops and they were in Latin. That was why Murphy always acknowledged the contribution of Dr. Russell Davies who translated these texts for him. Second, some bishops made suggestions for amendments too trivial or brief to form part of the analysis of this

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<sup>91</sup> Matthew Beovich, "Personal Diary," (1965).

<sup>92</sup> Beovich, "Personal Diary," 320.

<sup>93</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 320.

<sup>94</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 366.

<sup>95</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 318.

thesis. Technically, such suggestions may have been interventions but the gist of their subject-matter was usually brought out with greater clarity in lengthier submissions.

Third, the records in the *Acta Synodalia* relating to commission lists and other procedural matters cannot be categorised as interventions per se. Nor can Cardinal Gilroy's usually brief statements at Central Preparatory Commission meetings during the preparatory phase. Finally, a few bishops submitted more than one written intervention on the same topic or submitted what was essentially the text of an already delivered speech. Having acknowledged these qualifications, it is reasonable to regard the following preliminary analysis as strongly indicative of the extent of Australian involvement.

*Table IV: Interventions and Speeches of Australian Fathers at Vatican II*

Session	Australian Interventions	Foreign Interventions signed by Australians	Speeches
I	8	1	11 speeches by Australians: Young, Muldoon (4), Gilroy (3), Cahill, Goody, Carroll compared unfavourably with the Italian (171), French (137), Spanish (113), American (88) and German (70) contributions. <sup>96</sup>
II	16	5	
III	29	9	
IV	11	10	

Based on the study of Part III, I totally agree with Murphy's conclusion that

the Australian hierarchy participated in the debates and processes of Vatican II to a degree *more than* commensurate with their age, education, health, ingrained (and almost irremovable) prejudices, ecclesiastical influence and geographical isolation.<sup>97</sup>

This contradicts the assessment of almost every historian who has had occasion to discuss their role at Vatican II during the past 30 or so years. It would of course be an exaggeration - one assiduously avoided in this work - to claim the Australian bishops achieved an intellectual status comparable to those Council Fathers from Europe who so brilliantly planned and directed affairs.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 318.

<sup>97</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 366.

<sup>98</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 319.

In addition, Murphy indicated that Australian bishops contributed significantly to improve at least three conciliar documents: ecumenism, through the intervention of Archbishop Beck, they helped to ensure a more liberal interpretation of responsibility for the divisions of the sixteenth century; on religious liberty, they were the key influence in encouraging the Archbishop of Armagh to plead successfully for the recognition of parental rights in relation to parochial schooling; finally, their forthright intervention as a Conference on education brought a much needed degree of realism to a discussion hopelessly theoretical and Eurocentric.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore their openness at least to participation and occasionally to reform was portended in the ante-preparatory phase when most attempted to offer Rome fitting suggestions for conciliar examination.<sup>100</sup>

It also been argued that it was a new *Romanita* that led the pilgrims and progressives of the Australian Conference over the *threshold of modernity* towards a different vision of the Church and a renewed insight into their own responsibilities at home.<sup>101</sup> However was the new *Romanita*, a *therapy of distance*? Perhaps the first development overturned the hierarchy's loyalty towards Popes John and Paul and an expectation of Roman stasis. This encouraged an acceptance (sometimes grudging to be sure) of the Council's direction and schemata.<sup>102</sup> Living at a distance from Rome allowed the bishops to immerse themselves in all of the little councils of Vatican II and be actuated by the new papal-hierarchical paradigm to participate quite positively and thoughtfully in conciliar processes. Perhaps just as lay-Catholics later obeyed the Council's directives out of a reverence for episcopal authority, so too did the Australian bishops accept the orientation of the Council because of their unswerving loyalty to the office and person of Pope John XXIII. By establishing so firmly his credentials for caution, Paul VI also won their respect; this time in a way that drew to an end their pilgrimage and had definite consequences.

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<sup>99</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 319.

<sup>100</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 367.

<sup>101</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 320.

<sup>102</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 368.

On the local scene, experimentations in liturgical gestures, texts and other aspects of divine worship had become *alarming* by 1966 - many priests believing erroneously, according to Rome, that it was necessary to put into effect as quickly as possible the orientation given by the Council.<sup>103</sup> Questioning Rome's authority to make decisions regarding liturgy was also unacceptable: local Church theology and awareness must not weaken the no less necessary awareness of the universal church. The Australian bishops tended to agree with Pope Paul's caution, however liberally inclined they may have been. However, having completely ignored or, at best, bowdlerised the role of the Australian hierarchy at Vatican II, they had yet to prove that the Council's emphasis on the importance of the *local Church* had permeated their own *historical* thinking.<sup>104</sup>

As Stirling remarks, the Australian hierarchy's quiet and effective contribution was exemplified 20 years after the conclusion of the Council.<sup>105</sup> At the 1985 Synod of Bishops which assessed how well the Council had been implemented throughout the world, Archbishop Rush, as president of the Australian Episcopal Conference, made a plea before Pope John Paul II and the bishops for greater practical adherence to what the Council had taught regarding collegiality and the relationship of the local Church to the universal Church.<sup>106</sup> Most importantly, however, was to clarify still further the role of the Church in a modern world where even baptised Catholics were drifting away from Christian faith.<sup>107</sup> What the Archbishop came to believe about the importance of the Council for the Church was just as applicable to its effect on the Catholic hierarchy of Australia: "Some people say the Council was responsible for all the ills faced by the Church; God help us if there had not been a Council."<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 322.

<sup>104</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 368.

<sup>105</sup> Alfred Stirling, *A Distant View of the Vatican* (Melbourne: Harthown Press, 1975), 267.

<sup>106</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 368.

<sup>107</sup> Murphy, *Australian Hierarchy and Vatican II*, 326.

<sup>108</sup> Murphy, "The Far Milieu Called Home," 369.

Ormond Rush helpfully suggests that we must continue to engage in the reception of Vatican II.<sup>109</sup> Reception is neither a one-dimensional process of logical deduction nor the assertion of particular preferences. In fact, reception is an ongoing and open-ended activity that cannot be independent of our continued conversion and growth in discipleship. This is so because, to draw on Ormond Rush's fine analysis, reception requires:

The creative involvement of human beings in the decisions of history and in the creative interpretation of "what God would want" the church of the future to be...the human receivers of revelation are to be portrayed as active participants in discerning the way forward, co-deciders with God's Spirit, assuring continuity through creative discontinuity...What has been given as the ultimate criterion, the *regula fidei* is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which must be received over and over in the power of that Spirit who "will guide you into all truth" (Jn 16:13).<sup>110</sup>

In the light of Rush's outline of reception, it is evident that Vatican II was itself an event of reception, particularly through its *ressourcement*. This reception, however, was not a neat and seamless process. In fact, the documents of the Council were the product of debate, disagreement, conciliation, and compromise.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps, then, reception is a multi-layered, even messy, process. This suggests that our reception of Vatican II's documents can be authentic only if we remain willing to engage in a similarly multi-layered process.<sup>112</sup>

On a personal note, I have enjoyed studying the Australian hierarchy's involvement at Vatican II. It has certainly enriched my priestly formation as I am preparing for ministerial priesthood for the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

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<sup>109</sup> Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York: Paulist, 2004), 76.

<sup>110</sup> Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 76.

<sup>111</sup> Joseph Komonchak, "Is Christ Divided?: Dealing with Diversity and Disagreement," *Origins* 33 (17 July 2003) (2003): 146.

<sup>112</sup> 'Still relevant? Vatican II Forty Years On ', <http://compassreview.org/spring05/2.html>; Retrieved 30 July 2007.

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