

**Ireland and Vatican II:
Aspects of episcopal engagement with and
reception of a Church Council, 1959-1977**

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DECLARATION

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Abbreviations

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> , Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 18 November 1965.
AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> .
AD	<i>Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando, Series I, Vol. II, Pars III: Europe, (Hibernia)</i> . Ante-Preparatory submissions.
AS	<i>Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II</i>
CD	<i>Christus Dominus</i> , Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 28 October 1965.
CDA	Clogher Diocesan Archives, Monaghan.
COFLA	Cardinal O'Fiaich Library & Archives, Armagh.
DDA	Dublin Diocesan Archives, Clonliffe, Dublin.
DH	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> , Declaration on Religious Freedom, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965.
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i> , Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 18 November 1965.
GDA	Galway Diocesan Archives, Galway.
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> , Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 7 December 1965.
ICD	<i>Irish Catholic Directory</i> (various years), (Dublin: James Duffy & Co. Ltd - from 1977 onwards by <i>The Universe</i>).
IM	<i>Inter Mirifica</i> , Decree on the means of Social Communication, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 4 December 1963.
KDA	Kilmore Diocesan Archives
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> , Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 21 November 1964.
NAI	National Archives of Ireland.
NDT	<i>New Dictionary of Theology</i>
PC	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i> , Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 28 October 1965.
PRONI	Public Records Office of Northern Ireland.
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> , Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 4 December 1963.
UCD	University College Dublin
UR	<i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> , Decree of Ecumenism, promulgated by the Second Vatican Council, 21 November 1964.

The version of the Second Vatican Council documents used throughout this thesis, unless otherwise stated, is that in the edition by Norman Tanner SJ., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Vol. II, Trent – Vatican II*, ed. by Norman Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990).

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Abstract

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65), also referred to as Vatican II, was the most momentous event in the life of the Roman Catholic Church during the twentieth century and it brought to a close what some commentators have described as ‘the long nineteenth century’, a timeline stretching from the period of the French revolution to the 1960s. The council was a call to renewal, or *aggiornamento*, whereby the church returned to its sources in order to strengthen and deepen its capacity to engage with modern society.

This thesis assesses the degree to which Vatican II was received in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland under the headings of collegiality and *communio*, the modernisation of Irish society, ecumenism and liturgy. In advance of that, it will examine the historiography of church councils together with various understandings of reception.

While the reception of a church council is an ongoing process, the thesis is primarily concentrated on the period from the announcement of Vatican II by Pope John XXIII in January 1959 to the death of Cardinal William Conway in April 1977.

The reception of Vatican II in Ireland was, on the one hand, aided by a model of church more accustomed to loyally receiving change by directives from above. On the other hand, it was hampered by a lack of theological and intellectual preparedness among clergy and laity. This affected the capacity of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland to fully realise the renewal which the council sought to achieve. Ireland’s deep-rooted identification with an institutional-based traditional and devotional form of Catholicism, the divided nature of the communities in Northern Ireland, the homogenous nature of Irish society in the Republic of Ireland, and the beginnings of economic and social change within that society, all impacted upon the capacity of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland to receive fully the council from the beginning.

Introduction

On 8 December 1965, the tenth and final public session of Vatican II took place in St Peter's Square in Rome, when the council was brought to a conclusion by Pope Paul VI (1963-78). Almost seven years earlier, on 25 January 1959, Paul's predecessor, Pope John XXIII (1958-63), had announced his intention to call an ecumenical council. Ecumenical councils are formal gatherings of all the bishops of the universal church, called together by the Pope as Bishop of Rome. Vatican II was the twenty-first such council in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. In calling the council, Pope John had taken the church, especially its Rome-based officials - the curia - by surprise. The intervening period witnessed one of the most intensive and decisive periods in the history of the church.

Vatican II was held over four sessions, each held in the autumn of each year from 1962 until 1965. Over two and half thousand bishops and heads of male religious orders, all known as council fathers, travelled to Rome to participate in each session. Many of these, together with other theological experts (known as *periti*) worked on the various commissions both before and during the council. Furthermore, the council was attended by more than one hundred observers from other Christian churches and by a number of lay observers. The council debates were conducted in Latin, which makes their accessibility somewhat more challenging. Vatican II produced sixteen documents: four constitutions, nine decrees and three declarations. The four constitutions would be central to the council's reception, acting as pillars around which all the conciliar decrees would inter-relate. The constitutions, in particular, brought into focus the church's renewed self-understanding, especially the bible-inspired image of the church as the people of God.

Vatican II was different from previous councils in that it did not issue condemnations of errors in the church. At its opening on 11 October 1962, Pope John set the pastoral tone for its deliberations and its wide-ranging outcomes which would re-shape the church and open it up to dialogue with other Christians, other faiths and with modern society in general. His opening address called for an updating of the church – *aggiornamento*. This, he stated, did not mean a diminution of the church's 'sacred heritage of truth which she has received from those who went before' but, rather 'she must look at the present times which have introduced new

conditions and new forms of life, and have opened new avenues for the Catholic apostolate.’¹ Pope John outlined what he expected of the council, namely the presentation of Catholic doctrine in a positive and modern way:

But our task is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity; eagerly and without fear, we must devote ourselves to the task our age demands, pursuing the path which the Church has followed for twenty centuries.²

The *aggiornamento* sought by Vatican II was therefore not just about updating or modernisation. It was not just about moving forward; it was about the recovery of tradition; the return to sources of the church’s faith – to scripture, the writings of the church fathers (patristics), the liturgy and the quest for Christian unity. These were to be the guiding lights for updating. The pathway upon which Pope John directed the council was one which was under construction for several decades by those involved in movements in these fields of theology. Sometimes described as *nouvelle théologie* or, more appropriately, *ressourcement*, they were primarily centred in France, Belgium and Germany.³ To these key concepts we will turn in subsequent chapters.

The sixteen documents produced by the council, coupled with the myriad of other documents and directives issued in its aftermath, provided the basis for reforms to be implemented. The reception of the council must be viewed in a wider context. It must be seen not just in terms of the event itself, important though that was, but also in terms of the reforms it unleashed and the ongoing history of their reception. What informed the reforms, particularly in terms of the return to sources, is also important when studying the reception of the council. In addition, given the breadth of the areas of church life dealt with by the council, the reception of Vatican II required time if the depth, meaning and potential of its words and vision were to be understood and formed into the lived experience of the local churches throughout the world.⁴ This will be especially apt in the study of Vatican II reception in Ireland.

¹ Pope John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Opening Address to the Second Vatican Council, 11 October 1962, 5,

<https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/la/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html>; English trans. by Joseph A. Komonchak on <<https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>> [accessed 30 Nov 2018]

² Ibid.

³ See Yves Congar, *The Meaning of Tradition*, trans. by A.N. Woodrow (San Francisco, 2004); Gabriel Flynn, & Paul D. Murray (eds), *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology* (Oxford, 2012).

⁴ In addition to the areas covered in the conciliar documents, several other questions were removed from the council agenda by direction of Pope Paul VI, namely birth control, priestly celibacy and the reform of the Roman Curia.

The formal procedure for the implementation of Vatican II reforms is also a factor in its reception. Following the conclusion of the council, in addition to a *consilium* on liturgy already in place, five further commissions and a central co-ordinating commission were established by virtue of a *Motu Proprio* of Pope Paul VI. Their purpose was to co-ordinate post-conciliar activity and to draw up directives to aid the interpretation of the conciliar documents. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that, in comparison with other councils such as the Council of Trent (1545-63), Vatican II, in its openness to collegiality, placed unprecedented responsibilities for its reception upon local episcopal conferences or hierarchies. Episcopal conferences at national levels were required to compile responses with regard to how the directives from Rome would be implemented locally and these would be submitted to the relevant Roman authority for approval. Such an approach was understandable in the aftermath of a council of such vast importance as Vatican II, and especially in view of the debates on some of the subjects, a number of which would be based on the church's renewed self-understanding.

Ireland

Following the final public session of the council, the Catholic bishops of Ireland in attendance issued a 'Message to the People of Ireland'. In it, they referred to the activities of the council - its study of the 'heritage of divine truth which the church has received from God' - and pointed out that 'the fruit of this meditation is now embodied in a great series of Constitutions and Decrees'.⁵ They saw the council as having set forth Catholic truth on a wide range of subjects in addition to laying the 'foundation lines of an important and far-reaching adaptation of her own laws and institutions to the conditions of a dramatically changed world.'⁶ They pointed out that the warm welcome given by the Irish people to the liturgical changes that had already been introduced was 'in itself a very healthy sign of our Catholic life' and they were hopeful that such a positive outlook would continue.⁷

In 1966, in a Christmas Day broadcast from Telifís Éireann, Cardinal William Conway (1913-1977), the Primate of All-Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh, said that the Irish bishops were determined to do all in their power to ensure that the seed which had been sown at the

⁵ *Irish Catholic Directory*, (hereafter *ICD*), 1967, p. 702.

⁶ *ICD* 1967, p. 702.

⁷ The celebration of Mass in the vernacular was a feature of church life in Ireland from the First Sunday of Lent, 1965.

Second Vatican Council would bear a rich harvest in Ireland.⁸ Some weeks later, Bishop Donal Herlihy of Ferns spoke of changes in the liturgy and in the regulations concerning fasting and abstinence and noted that since the introduction of the Mass in the vernacular ‘there had been a definite falling-off in attendance at High Masses’. He continued: ‘That, in itself point[s] to the fact that the ordinary Catholic had taken to the new form.’⁹ In his lenten pastoral of 1966, Bishop Daniel Moynihan of Kerry foresaw many changes in the external life of the Church. However, he issued a clear caveat, stating,

...it would be a great mistake to regard these changes as the full implementation of the Council’s work. New external forms must be accompanied by a full understanding of their meaning and purpose and by a deepening of our own spiritual life.¹⁰

The effects on the spiritual lives of Irish Catholics is a matter which concerned many bishops in Ireland at the time. Quite often, when the words Vatican II and Ireland are mentioned, the phrase used by the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid (1895-1973) on the occasion of his arrival home from the council is quoted. Addressing a congregation in Dublin’s Pro-Cathedral McQuaid famously declared:

You may, in the last four years, have been disturbed at times by reports about the Council... You may have been worried by much talk of changes to come. Allow me to reassure you. No change will worry the tranquillity of your Christian lives... As the months will pass, gradually the Holy Father will instruct us how to put into effect the enactments of the council. With complete loyalty, as children of the one, true church, we fully accept each and every decree of the Vatican Council.¹¹

The words, ‘no change’ invariably became the phrase by which commentators would recall McQuaid’s assertion. However, as F.X. Carty points out in his study of McQuaid and Vatican II in Dublin, the headline of ‘no change’ which emerged in the media ‘was misleading and it misled.’¹² The Irish historian Diarmaid Ferriter contends that ‘there was stubbornness, denial and delusion at the heart of [McQuaid’s] assertion; in truth, Irish Catholicism could not and did not remain immune from international debates about the status of religion and growing secularism’.¹³ McQuaid was trying to hold back the inevitable, as this thesis will confirm. But his approach was delusional.

⁸ *ICD 1967*, p. 711.

⁹ *Irish Catholic*, 6 January 1966.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 February 1966.

¹¹ ‘Diocesan Press Office, January-February 1966’ (Dublin Diocesan Archives, (hereafter DDA) John Charles McQuaid papers, AB8/B/XXVI/c/33).

¹² F.X. Carty, *Hold Firm: John Charles McQuaid and The Second Vatican Council* (Dublin, 2007), p. 96.

¹³ Diarmaid Ferriter, *Ambiguous Republic: Ireland in the 1970s* (London, 2013), p. 620.

Ferriter's contention is further borne out when we examine the manner and extent to which theology informed and underpinned the leaders of the church in Ireland, such as McQuaid and his fellow bishops. To help put the significant changes that occurred following Vatican II into context, it is necessary to understand the theological formation of priests and bishops in Ireland during the decades prior to the council and how that affected their capacity to negotiate the new understandings that the conciliar documents would evoke. The vast majority of diocesan priests in Ireland had been trained at St Patrick's College, Maynooth. Founded in 1795, it also houses Ireland's only pontifical university. There were other seminaries for the training of diocesan priests in Dublin (Clonliffe), Belfast, Carlow, Kilkenny and Thurles.

The theological approach in Irish seminaries was scholastic. Put simply, it involved learning from manuals that were purposefully prepared. There was no space for questioning. The mentality was legalistic and minimalist. It was designed to deal with the breaking of rules rather than a proclamation of the bible-inspired love of God and neighbour. The seminary discipline ensured that there was no regard for the outside world. Nor was there room for thinking. The historian Louise Fuller notes that

the impression given by the manuals was that knowledge was static and finite...students were not encouraged to respond to, react to or question the knowledge – they were required simply to absorb it and reproduce it at examination time.¹⁴

This was the system of theological training and formation that had been in place at Maynooth since the 1860s. Such a system was not designed or envisaged to cope with new developments that were occurring on the continent in the areas of pastoral and dogmatic theology, bible studies, liturgical renewal and ecumenism – the areas that would shape Vatican II and the church renewal flowing from it (and which will be featured in subsequent chapters). As Denis O'Callaghan, a professor at Maynooth from 1958, reflects:

Maynooth had stayed with its solid Scholastic textbook past rather than orienting itself to what had been happening at its doorstep on the Continent. Latin was still the *lingua franca* of our theology. For our teachers at the time writings in the continental languages would have been closed books. Scripture, which should have been central for the pastoral work of the priest was sorely neglected. Maynooth's cautious attitude to Scriptural studies reached back almost a century earlier to the days of the First Vatican Council.¹⁵

This lack of preparedness (and willingness) to engage with theological investigation and debate hampered the Irish bishops and the wider church in Ireland in terms of participation in the council itself and the authentic reception of it afterwards. As a result, there was a lack of questioning and therefore a deficit when it came to dialogue with a changing church and a

¹⁴ Louise Fuller, *Irish Catholicism since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture* (Dublin, 2004), p. 84.

¹⁵ Denis O'Callaghan, 'The Challenge for Irish Catholicism', *The Furrow*, 65, no. 10 (October 2014), pp 493-94.

changing society. It meant that the church in Ireland was impoverished and not resourced adequately to face the challenges *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Irish theologian Vincent Twomey contends that ‘Irish clerics generally saw theology then, as now: as a waste of time.’ He recounts a story of an Irish bishop who, when asked about his experience of Vatican II, replied: “Ach, it was all a bit of a waste of time. They talked of nothing but theology.”¹⁶ Whatever about the veracity of such claims, there were important developments afoot in Ireland from the early 1950s onwards, developments which would offset, in part at least, the theological and intellectual deficit. This was the inception or re-appearance of several journals and periodicals across a range of theological areas, particularly around liturgy, pastoral theology and practice. They had wide circulation and they inspired priests and a significant body of laypeople to pursue theology further, particularly during the years immediately following the council. These will be treated of in chapter two and subsequent chapters.

In 1968, a US journalist, Donald Connery, recognised the impact of Pope John XXIII as one of the factors which ‘converged to revitalise Ireland.’¹⁷ Other factors included economic growth, the arrival of television and other outside influences. Mary Daly argues that, while these factors were important, the degree of change can be overstated.¹⁸ The 1960s was a period when Ireland began to reach out to a changing world. It was a turning point in a number of ways for the island as a whole - socially, economically, demographically and politically. Cultural changes, including television and a new emphasis on mass youth culture, prompted discussions around new questions about Irish society. As the 1960s progressed into the 1970s, there was a greater readiness to discuss topics that were previously off-limits. At a political level, the sixties was a time for looking outside traditional boundaries, and one of the ways this was reflected in Ireland was a greater emphasis on potential membership of the European Economic Community, which became a reality in January 1973. Within the island of Ireland, the two political states which had developed separately since the 1920s began to have some fragile points of contact. A younger generation of Catholics in Northern Ireland was not content to accept continuing discrimination based on religious difference, and a civil rights campaign in the late 1960s would be overtaken by violent political strife which would last for thirty years.

¹⁶ Vincent Twomey, ‘The Second Vatican Council: An Irish Perspective’, *Studies*, 101, no. 404 (Winter 2012), p. 411.

¹⁷ Donald Connery, *The Irish* (London, 1969), p. 37.

¹⁸ Mary E. Daly, *Sixties Ireland: Reshaping the Economy, State and Society, 1957-1973* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 4.

The population of the Republic grew from 2,818,341 to 2,978,248 between 1961 and 1971.¹⁹ The population of the entire island of Ireland grew from, 4,243,300 to 4,514,200 in the same period, the rate of population growth in Northern Ireland being somewhat stronger than that in the south.²⁰ In the south, however, the 1960s ‘brought a new optimism about the Irish economy ... modest economic growth even became a matter of national pride.’²¹ In short, there was a greater willingness to accept change.

The Scope of this Thesis

This is a historical thesis, informed by key theological concepts. Much of the thesis is drawn from archival research in a number of Irish dioceses. The papers of the Irish hierarchy (the Irish Episcopal Conference) were not accessible. The archives drawn from include Armagh, Dublin (McQuaid papers only), Galway, Clogher and, to a lesser extent, Kilmore. The thesis also draws from the papers concerning Vatican II made available at the Vatican Secret Archives in Rome. These were chosen on the basis of the availability and accessibility of papers. Where access was gained, there were no restrictions imposed. Archbishop McQuaid and, to a lesser extent, Bishop Michael Browne of Galway feature in the thesis on the basis of the volume of papers that they left and the part both played at the council and in its aftermath. The papers of Cardinal Conway are only partially available to researchers at the time of writing. Access to other dioceses was not possible as the papers for the period were not in order. The archives of the Diocese of Down and Connor were undergoing refurbishment for much of the period of study. In addition to the above, some material from newspapers and other repositories are cited, and secondary sources are utilised, where appropriate. The research and analysis covers the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, mainly in the dioceses researched, but also in a number of others. It does not deal with the role played by Irish missionaries abroad in the reception of Vatican II. The religious orders, which experienced considerable reform in the aftermath of the council are not included as this would require a dedicated study. Similarly, changes in seminary life following the council are not covered.

¹⁹ Central Statistics Office, Census 1971, vol. I

< http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1971results/volume1/A_C_1_1971_V1.pdf > (accessed 18 January 2018).

²⁰ Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1920-1973* (Madison, 2006), p. 329. The population of the north grew by 7.7% in the period, whereas the southern area population grew by 5.7% in the same period.

²¹ Ibid. p. 222.

The period under review begins with the announcement of the council in 1959 and ends with the death of Conway in 1977. References are made, however, to some key events slightly outside this period and also, occasionally, to some ongoing relevant questions in Ireland and globally that resonate with Vatican II. While the thesis draws much of its material from ecclesiastical sources, it is not solely concerned with the internal reception of Vatican II, but also considers the effect of the council's reception on wider society in the modern era.

Chapter One of the thesis seeks to provide an overview of the history of the reception of Vatican II. This chapter considers the history of the council and seeks to place the entire thesis within the historiography of Vatican II and also to explain its relationship to the concept of reception. It attempts to construct a framework within which the entire thesis is placed and thus help to provide some understanding of how the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland contributed and responded to Vatican II. The chapter also provides an overview of the history of church councils generally, with some references to Irish participation.

Chapter Two considers the preparation by the Irish bishops for participation at Vatican II. It also examines the landscape of the church in Ireland in the decades preceding the council before discussing the theological movements in Europe and their relationship to the Irish ecclesial situation. It asks how the theological trends in Europe during the decades preceding the council were reflected in the *réalité* of Irish church life.

Chapter Three is concerned with governance aspects of the church in Ireland, at national, diocesan and parish levels. Having reviewed the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, and some relevant commentaries, it examines historically the application in Ireland of key theological concepts such as collegiality and *communio* and assesses their reception at various levels. It asks how the application in Ireland of key conciliar documents in this area reflected the vision of the council.

Chapter Four focusses on the Republic of Ireland and is devoted to the modernisation of Irish society in that part of the island during the period concerned, with particular reference to the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*. It surveys that document before providing an overview of the changes in Irish society at the time. The chapter then examines the response of the church in Ireland to the document in terms of various initiatives at local, national and international levels. It also assesses whether and how the greater degree of openness in the church after Vatican II made a contribution to the modernisation of Irish society, amidst change and continuity.

Chapter Five addresses ecumenism and its critical challenge for the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, with particular reference to Northern Ireland. In addition to archival research, this chapter draws from scholarly work already undertaken in this area. It examines the myriad of definitions of ecumenism and the development of the ecumenical movement internationally during the decades preceding the council before assessing the changes brought about by Vatican II. The reception of the ecumenical dimension of the council in Ireland is treated under several key headings, including mixed-marriages, joint prayer and inter-church dialogue.

Chapter Six concentrates on the key area of liturgy and the reception of the constitution on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. It reviews how this document gave new expression to the liturgy in the life of the church, with particular reference to *ressourcement*, before analysing the key reforms that emerged following the council. It assesses the reception of some of the main changes and consequent outcomes for worshipping communities in Ireland and asks if the reception of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in the church enabled people to realise the council's vision of communion.

Finally, the Conclusion will attempt to draw together the findings of the thesis and put forward an analysis of the main outcomes and how they enhance our knowledge and understanding of the degree to which the council was received in Ireland. It offers some reflections concerning the ongoing reception of the council.

Vatican II was the most important event in the life of the Roman Catholic Church during the twentieth-century and was a significant global moment. Its impact on the church in Ireland was swift in some areas, particularly in liturgy. Some of its other impacts have been less well known and less visible. For many people today, Vatican II was just a moment in history, with nothing to offer to the present situation facing the church in Ireland. It is hoped that this thesis will make a contribution to the study of this important event and the history of its ongoing reception in Ireland, thus enabling the influence of Vatican II and its return to the sources to become better known and understood by diverse audiences, theologians and historians, those engaged in the ongoing process of reception and those interested by intellectual curiosity. By deepening our understanding of the Irish case, this thesis further aims to contribute to the global field of Vatican II studies

Chapter One

History of Vatican II and its Reception

Vatican II was a ‘*seminal*’ council probably more so than any other in history’, the roots of which lay in decades of reflection, renewal, and reform, while its effects resonated through the various movements that contributed to its reception and which we will analyse in this chapter.¹ At a theological level, the reception of a council is multifaceted; Vatican II may be analysed through the lens of various concepts such as *ressourcement* and *communio*, as well as the liturgical renewal, and the ecumenical movement. In all of these, the call to history and the place of councils in the life of the church are critical.

As this is a historical thesis informed by key theological concepts, the present chapter will consider the history of the council, seeking to place the entire thesis within the historiography of Vatican II and to explain its relationship to the concept of reception. In so doing, this chapter does not seek to answer specific questions. Rather, it attempts to construct a framework within which the entire thesis is placed and thus help to provide some understanding of how the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland contributed and responded to Vatican II.

This chapter is divided into two parts. **Part One** provides a historical overview of church councils, with particular reference to the significance of Vatican II. It considers the historical context of the council and traces the treatment of its historiography, including some discussion on its interpretation, but without engaging in the debate on hermeneutics.² **Part Two** will examine the definition of reception and its various elements together with an overview of some of the contributors to the debates. It will also examine the reception of Vatican II in an international and the Irish context. Finally, it will briefly consider non-reception.

¹ See Ladislav Šrámek, *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville, 2009), p. 4.

² For more on the debate on hermeneutics, see, for example, the following: Pope Benedict XVI, ‘A Proper Hermeneutic for the Second Vatican Council’ in Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (eds), *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition* (Oxford, 2008), pp ix-xv; Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York, 2012); Joseph A. Komonchak, ‘Interpreting the Council and its Consequence: Concluding Reflections’ in James L. Heft (ed.) with John O’Malley, *After Vatican II: Trajectories and Hermeneutics*, (Grand Rapids, 2012), pp 164-72; Dermot A. Lane and Brendan Leahy (eds), ‘Introduction’ in *Vatican II Facing the 21st Century: Historical and Theological Perspectives*, (Dublin, 2006), pp 9-12; Gerald O’Collins, *Living Vatican II: The 21st Council for the 21st Century* (New York, 2006); Gerald O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning* (Collegeville, 2014).

Part One: Vatican II through the Lens of History

Church Councils in History

A church council, sometimes referred to as an ecumenical council (as a council of the whole world) is an assembly of church leaders (almost always bishops) gathered together for a specific purpose concerning the life of the church. Vatican II was the twenty-first such gathering, the first being the Council of Nicaea, held in 325AD to deal with the Arian crisis. It was from that council that the Nicene creed emerged. Through history, there have also been many local or regional councils. The first such recorded local council was held in Jerusalem c. 50AD and is mentioned in Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15, 1-35). Not all of these councils are reckoned in the listings. Today, within the Roman Catholic Church, a council is called by the pope, as Bishop of Rome, and is presided over by him or legates appointed by him. A council's validity depends on its recognition by the pope. Over the centuries the practice and convention has evolved that church councils make authoritative decisions that are binding on the whole church. It was not always so. The first seven ecumenical councils were summoned by Roman Emperors and the conciliar decisions were enforced by them. The recognition and reception of these councils need not detain us here.³ Suffice to say that the role and place of councils in the life of the church, historically and theologically, have been a subject of debate and not inconsiderable controversy, particularly after the ending of the Great Western Schism in the fifteenth century.⁴

Features of councils that impinge upon the historical record and their treatment include the style of the debates and the language used, the profile of the participants (known as council fathers), the documents they produce, as well as the acceptance or otherwise of the decisions over a period of time. As we will see in relation to Vatican II, the scope of the work of the councils has a bearing on the degree to which their decisions are received and affects the speed at which these are absorbed into the lived experience and practice of the faithful.

³ The first seven councils were Nicaea (325), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (680-1) and Nicaea II (787). In general, these are regarded as ecumenical councils. Councils after the First Lateran Council of 1123, were attended almost exclusively by bishops (and sometimes laity) from the West.

⁴ For further reading on church councils see, Hubert Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils in the Catholic Church: An Historical Outline* (Edinburgh, 1960); Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church : A History* (Collegeville, 2009); Philip Hughes, *The Church in Crisis: The Twenty Great Councils* (London, 1961); Michael J. Walsh, 'Councils in Christian History' in Adrian Hastings (ed.), *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (London, 1991), pp 14-19; Norman Tanner, *The Church in Council: Conciliar Movements, Religious Practice and the Papacy from Nicaea to Vatican II* (London, 2011).

The decisions of earlier councils continue to govern belief and practice to the present day. For example, the Third Lateran Council in 1179 decreed *inter alia* that a two-thirds majority was necessary for a valid election of a pope. This council was attended by seven Irish bishops, led by Laurence O'Toole, Archbishop of Dublin.⁵ On occasions, councils were used by bishops as a venue, with access to the pope, for resolving problems between themselves. This occurred at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 when eighteen Irish bishops attended and used the opportunity to secure papal backing concerning territorial disputes between dioceses. While such moves were not exclusive to Ireland, it was an early example of the insular tendencies of the church in Ireland. It has been noted that the Irish bishops 'had no further interest than the rights of their diocese or province and...[they] saw no further than these limited horizons.'⁶ One notable council was the Council of Constance (1414-1418) which brought the Great Western Schism to an end by deposing or accepting the resignation of papal claimants and facilitating the election of Pope Martin V (1417-1431) in a unique conclave that included both cardinals and delegates to the council itself. Ireland had one bishop present for most of the Council of Constance, Patrick Foxe the Bishop of Cork.⁷ Following Constance there was a period of tension over what historians have dubbed 'conciliarism' – the view that councils should be held regularly and be superior to the pope. This led to a reluctance by popes to summon councils. The Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517), was an ill-fated attempt to deal with abuses in the church. Among those participating was the Franciscan scholar Muiris Ó Fithcheallaigh, who was appointed Archbishop of Tuam.⁸

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was a landmark council in that it responded to the crisis that was accentuated by the Reformation; its decisions and style shaped Catholicism in virtually every form until the time of Vatican II. Indeed, some commentators sharply contrast the two councils, even pitting them against each other - the former representing fidelity to tradition, the latter representing change and renewal.⁹ In total, approximately two hundred

⁵ See Desmond Forristal, *The Man in the Middle: St Laurence O'Toole, Patron Saint of Dublin* (Dublin, 2013).

⁶ Patrick J Dunning 'Irish Representatives and Irish Ecclesiastical Affairs at the Fourth Lateran Council' in J.A. Watt, J.B. Morrall & F.X. Martin (eds), *Medieval Studies: presented to Aubrey Gwynn SJ* (Dublin, 1961), p. 109. The disputes were between Waterford the neighbouring diocese of Lismore in addition to Dublin's ambition to suppress Glendalough and the recognition of Tuam as a metropolitan see.

⁷ See Aubrey Gwynn, 'Ireland and the English Nation at the Council of Constance', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, 45 (1939/1940), pp 183-233.

⁸ See C.N. Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland, 1430-1534: From Reform to Reformation* (Dublin, 2002).

⁹ See Christopher M. Belitto, 'Councils and Reform: Challenging the Misconceptions', paper presented to the American Catholic Historical Association, Scranton University, March 2003, cited in Raymond F. Bulman & Frederick J. Parrella (eds), *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations* (Oxford, 2006), p. 3.

bishops attended the Council of Trent, most of whom were Italian. When it opened on 13 December 1545 there were just thirty-four council fathers present, one of whom was the Archbishop of Armagh, Robert Wauchope (d. 1551).¹⁰

Trent responded to the Protestant Reformation by not just condemning errors but by introducing a series of major reforms within the Catholic Church, including the control of seminaries for the training of priests, the obligation of bishops to reside in their dioceses, a new catechism, a new missal and breviary, together with a plethora of regulations which steered Catholicism on a juridical path for centuries. Michael J. Walsh regards Trent as a great reforming council, arguing that ‘Tridentine’ has become an unfair term of abuse in terms of the treatment of its historical influence on the church. However, he admits that ‘its very success was its undoing. Nobody for a very long time afterwards felt the need to change things. The church ossified.’¹¹ No further church council was convened for over three hundred years.

By the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church in Europe was dealing with the fallout from the age of enlightenment and the French Revolution. It had experienced oppression in France, the effects of which even reached Rome when in 1798 Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) was taken prisoner by Napoleon Bonaparte. But the decades following the election of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878) saw an intensification in pastoral, institutional and missionary activity. This renewal movement was called ultramontanism – a viewpoint which was Rome-centred and Rome-dominated in terms of theory and practice. This movement ‘placed strong emphasis on the authority of the papacy in matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical government’.¹² Strong advocates of ultramontanism were to be found in France, Germany and England while Ireland was also to experience it through a period of intensive religious renewal from 1850.

Vatican I (1869-70), called by Pope Pius IX, represented the climax of the ultramontanist movement because it enabled the proclamation of the dogma of papal

¹⁰ John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 75. Three other Irish bishops attended Trent at various stages of its progress – Thomas O'Herlihy of Ross, Daniel Magonigle of Raphoe and Eugene O'Hart of Achonry. According to Patrick Comerford, all three are recognised in the succession lists of both Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions. See, <<http://www.patrickcomerford.com/2013/02/church-history-full-time-91-trent-and.html>> (accessed 18 January 2018). For an account of the episcopacy of O'Hart (Eoghan Ó hAirt) and his contributions to the Council of Trent, see, Liam Swords, *A People's Church: The Diocese of Achonry: From the Sixth to the Seventeenth Century* (Dublin, 2013), pp 112-33. Ó hAirt's contributions ranged over many areas of church life, from the question of allowing the laity to receive communion under both species (a question he felt should be reserved to the Pope), to the question of the origin of the authority of bishops (where he stated his view that such authority, under God, was mediated through the Pope). These were among the questions to confront Vatican II also.

¹¹ Walsh, ‘Councils in Church History’, p. 18.

¹² Frederick J. Cwiekowski, ‘Ultramontanism’, in Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot A. Lane (eds), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (hereafter *NDT*) (Dublin, 1987), pp 1064-5.

infallibility and papal supremacy in the church. Vatican I opened on 8 December 1869 and lasted until the following July. In terms of numbers, Vatican I surpassed all previous councils until then, with 774 taking part, drawn from all continents but with Europe very much dominant. Although six documents came before the council, only two were promulgated, the best known being *Pastor Aeternus*, defining papal infallibility and primacy.¹³ One of the most significant contributions to this document and to the council generally was from the Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal Paul Cullen (1803-1878).

There are three aspects of Vatican I which are important to note in the context of its direct relationship with Vatican II. First, *Pastor Aeternus* emerged from discussions on a much wider document on the church itself, but, due to the suspension of the council because of the occupation of Rome, the wider document was set aside. It was from here that Vatican II took up the debate on the nature of the church and the relationship of bishops and pope, in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. Secondly, the other decree of Vatican I, *Dei Filius*, looked at the relation of faith and reason, scripture and tradition. It did so in a manner which would be built on by Vatican II in the Constitution *Dei Verbum*. Thirdly, Vatican I was followed by a crisis. While not immediate, this ‘modernist’ crisis came to a head in the pontificate of Pius X (1903-1914). Adrian Hastings argues that the aftermath of Vatican I differed significantly from Vatican II in that it was ‘self-consciously anti-accommodationist, anti-*aggiornamento*’ and in contrast to the ‘discontents, “conservative” and “progressive” of the post-Vatican II years’.¹⁴ On the other hand, it must be borne in the mind that various movements for renewal had been in gestation on questions such as biblical studies, liturgy and even tentative ecumenical conversations, particularly in northern Europe. Hastings agrees that while the modernist purge of the early twentieth century set the renewal cause back a generation, ‘it could not stop it re-emerging, especially in the most advanced areas of Catholic culture’ and that traditional defence systems such the Index of forbidden books had ceased effectively to function.¹⁵ Another matter which merits consideration is that before the final vote (on papal infallibility) at Vatican I, up to a quarter of the attendance had left Rome rather than vote against the pope. These included two Irish bishops – McHale of Tuam and Moriarty of Kerry.¹⁶ Fifty-five of the

¹³ This was due to the decision to focus on papal primacy and infallibility as a separate issue and also the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War which necessitated the withdrawal of French protection from Rome and the adjournment of the council.

¹⁴ Adrian Hastings, ‘Catholic History from Vatican I to John Paul II’ in Hastings (ed.), *Vatican II*, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁶ For more on the Irish at Vatican I see, Peadar MacSuibhne, ‘Ireland at the Vatican Council - I’, *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, xciii, no. 1108 (April 1960), pp 209-22; and ‘Ireland at the Vatican Council - II’, *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, xciii, no. 1109, (April 1960), pp 295-307.

absentees wrote a joint-letter to the pope to explain their position.¹⁷ The desire for a more collegial church, engaged with the modern world, was evident embryonically at Vatican I, thus giving it another important link to Vatican II. From an Irish perspective, as Norman Tanner notes, Cullen's support for and input to the document defining papal infallibility 'allowed for the refinement and broadening of papal authority that came a century later with the Second Vatican Council decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.'¹⁸

The reception of earlier councils

In Ireland, the reception of reforms emanating from councils has been mixed. Indeed, to link directly with some reforms with conciliar decisions, particularly those of earlier councils, is rather difficult. For example, there was no known Irish presence at the First or Second Lateran Councils, so the transmission of the decrees was haphazard. Nonetheless, there was sufficient interaction between Rome and the leading political families and church leaders, particularly in Munster, to start introducing reforms from the beginning of the early twelfth-century, evidenced by the holding of a synod in Cashel in 1101 and that at Rathbreasail in 1111. These, together with the synod held at Kells-Mellifont in 1152, began the process of establishing diocesan boundaries, which have lasted to the present. This process led to the introduction of Roman law into the Irish church, thanks to the efforts of St Malachy of Armagh and the influence of Bernard of Clairvaux from the first half of the twelfth-century onwards.¹⁹ Thus was the manner in which the reforms of the period, and which were embodied in the work of the first four Lateran councils, were received in Ireland.²⁰

Perhaps the best place to analyse the reception in Ireland of earlier councils is the Council of Trent. The Tridentine reforms were centred on the authority of the local bishop in his diocese, with its seminary for the training of those aspiring to be priests and on the parish and its church being the centre of the prayer and liturgical life of the people. Discipline was crucial too in all of this. Due to the political situation in Ireland at the time, it was very difficult

¹⁷ Jedin, *Ecumenical Councils*, pp 221-2. On the final vote on the document in public session on 18 July 1870, 533 voted for and 2 against. Those who voted against were an Italian bishop and Bishop Edward Fitzgerald (1833-1907) of Little Rock, Arkansas, a native of Limerick.

¹⁸ Norman Tanner, 'Paul Cullen and the declaration of papal infallibility', in Dáire Keogh & Albert McDonnell (eds), *Cardinal Paul Cullen and his World* (Dublin, 2011), p. 355.

¹⁹ John J. Ó Riordáin, *Irish Catholics: Tradition & Transition* (Dublin, 1980), pp 29-32.

²⁰ For an example of papal correspondence with Ireland in relation to church matters generally and reforms in particular during this period, see, Patrick J. Dunning, 'Letters of Pope Innocent III to Ireland: A Calendar Supplementary to That of Calendar of Papal Registers I (Ed. W. H. Bliss)', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 13, (1947), pp 27-44.

for Rome to have bishops appointed. As the distinguished Irish historian Patrick Corish points out, whoever was in charge ‘faced great problems in establishing the Tridentine pattern of good priests in charge of parishes.’²¹ The proper training of priests was virtually impossible in Ireland and this led to the establishment of Irish colleges on the continent of Europe; the first at Salamanca in Spain opened in 1592. A national seminary in Ireland was not opened until 1795.

A synod of the Armagh province was held in Clogher in 1587 to promulgate the decrees of Trent. It was attended by six Ulster bishops and one from Connacht.²² A further synod was held in Drogheda in 1614 which, according to Oliver P. Rafferty, saw itself ‘to be confirming and furthering the process which Clogher had begun.’ He argues that the Drogheda synod ‘was under the impression that if Ireland was to be saved for Catholicism it must conform itself to the reformed and updated Church of post-Tridentine Europe’.²³ But this was, as in the case of Vatican II, simply a case of conforming and implementing, not receiving the council.

Rafferty makes it clear that the Synod of Drogheda statutes show a great tension in the Irish Catholic community at the time:

The power blocks within the community came under very different influences. The Old English...along with the Jesuits and the Capuchin Franciscans, looked to French and English Catholics for support and guidance. The Old Irish and thus Ulster looked to an alliance with Spain in conjunction with the unreformed Franciscans and the Dominicans for a model of church-state relations.

These tensions influenced the response of the church in Ireland to Trent until well into the eighteenth century. Especially in Ulster, the appointment of bishops was fraught difficulties surrounding family claims and the loyalty of local parishes to friars. This was a particular problem that Oliver Plunket has to deal with upon his appointment to Armagh in 1669.²⁴ Further evidence of the problems associated with the reception of the conciliar decrees is obtained from a survey of the application of the one relating to marriage. While that decree, *Tametsi*,²⁵ was adopted for the Armagh province at the 1587 synod and in the Tuam province soon after, it would be almost two centuries later before it was adopted in Cashel (1775) and in Dublin (1779).²⁶ The decree, aimed primarily at countering clandestine marriages, could not be implemented fully in Ireland due to the broken church system and a compromise was

²¹ Patrick Corish, *The Irish Catholic Experience: a historical survey* (Dublin, 1985), p. 92.

²² Ibid.

²³ Oliver P. Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster 1603-1983: An Interpretative History* (London, 1983), pp 14-15.

²⁴ See Tomás Ó Fiaich, *Oliver Plunkett: Ireland's new saint* (Dublin, 1975), pp 48-51.

²⁵ See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, II*, pp 753-59.

²⁶ Raymond M. Lee, ‘Intermarriage, Conflict and Social Control in Ireland: the Decree *ne temere*’, *Economic and Social Review*, 17, no. 1 (October 1985), pp 13-14.

reached whereby couples could get married before a priest and two witnesses, though not necessarily in the parish church.²⁷

Popular piety in the form of household religion, distinct from the parish, was something frowned on by Trent. Yet, in Ireland this is where popular piety found its strength in the decades following that council. Salvador Ryan states that ‘it was in the households of pious and learned recusants that the opportunities for the implementation of Tridentine norms such as frequent reception of the sacraments and satisfactory catechesis was most possible.’²⁸ Ryan also argues that most of the post-Tridentine priests, even those educated on the continent, ‘possessed a traditional underbelly’ of pre-Tridentine devotionism. He sees this as part of a continuum, one which stretches into the reforms of the nineteenth century and even to the present era.²⁹ Thus, such pious practices became a feature of the reception process. Corish sees this ‘traditional Irish Catholicism’ as having its roots in the Tridentine reformation. He adds that the fact that Trent could not be fully implemented in Ireland was ‘not altogether a disadvantage’ as ‘it allowed some good features of the old “household” observance to survive.’³⁰

The relationship between councils

Throughout history, councils have been held for various reasons relevant to the time. They form an important part of the church’s lived experience, enabling the human and the divine to converge in order to discern what is best. They are independent of each other, and do not have an unbroken succession like parliaments. But they relate to each other because they draw from the church’s tradition and give witness to the continuance of that tradition. For example, in the documents of Vatican II there are twenty-four mentions of Vatican I, twenty-one of the Council of Trent, and thirty-eight of all the other councils combined. Indeed, Vatican II interrupted its business on 3 December 1963 to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of the closing of Trent.

Each council has a different emphasis – Trent was on reform, Vatican I was concerned with the consolidation of the centre and the protection of papal primacy while Vatican II worked for renewal by finding new ways to express the message of the gospel in a changed

²⁷ Corish, *Irish Catholic Experience*, p. 107.

²⁸ Salvador Ryan, ‘Popular Piety Today’, *The Furrow*, 56, no. 3 (March 2005), p. 133.

²⁹ Ryan, ‘Popular Piety Today’, p. 134.

³⁰ Corish, *Irish Catholic Experience*, p. 255.

and changing environment, both *ad extra* and *ad intra*.³¹ In doing so, Vatican II put in place a different model of council and church, based on the times in which it was held, ‘a model largely based on persuasion and invitation.’³² In this regard, the era in which Vatican II was held is important and to this we now turn.

Vatican II: Historical Context and Memory

Vatican II occurred at a time of great change in the world, especially in Europe. Two wars had ravaged Europe in particular and the world generally, and a Cold War had begun between east and west. The decades following World War Two saw the emergence of Christian democracy in a number of European countries that were recently under the control of dictatorships, while Europe was also still coming to terms with the horrific impacts of the holocaust. Following World War II, two new superpowers, with opposing ideologies and a growing arsenal of nuclear weapons, emerged on the world scene. In the days following the opening of the council on 11 October 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis threatened the world. The growth of atheistic communism and its spread to countries in Eastern Europe, including Catholic strongholds such as Poland, was a significant challenge to the church. The founding of the European Free Trade Area and the European Economic Community in the 1950s signalled a different approach to politics and a more communitarian direction for European democracies. Nonetheless, Europe was no longer the mighty world power it once was. In addition to the emergence of two power-blocs, this was a period of increasing de-colonisation as more and more, particularly African, countries achieved independence from European powers, thereby enabling them to assert their own cultural identities within a global framework. Taken together with other changes at the council, this had an effect on how the church embraced missionary activity. The spread of industrialisation and increased urbanisation in countries such as Spain, Mexico and Italy brought a ‘more dynamic, often restless’ mentality which was ‘more open to innovation’.³³ This background gives us some of the historical world backdrop to the council. This was the world to which Pope John XXIII sought to bring the gospel message to a new generation.

Where, therefore, should the history of Vatican II be situated in terms of *locus*, memory and interpretation? In terms of *locus*, O’Malley refers to the period prior to the council as being

³¹ See Oliver P. Rafferty, ‘Vatican II: a retrospective’, *Studies*, 99, no. 394, (Summer 2010), p. 156.

³² John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 11.

³³ Giacomo Martina, ‘The Historical Context in Which the Idea of a New Ecumenical Council was Born’ in René Latourelle (ed.), *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives*, i (New York, 1988-9), pp 10, 13.

‘the long nineteenth century’, a period stretching from the French Revolution to the council’s commencement.³⁴ The council was also viewed as the end of the counter-reformation, bringing to an end a period where the role and place of history in the development of theology was diminished. The eminent French Dominican theologian and council *peritus*, Yves Congar (1904-1995) was one of the foremost pioneers of the movement which sought the return to sources as a way to reform the theology of the church. Central to this thinking was that timelessness must yield to history. In assessing Congar’s vision of ecclesiology, the American theologian Thomas F. O’Meara remarks:

Renewing the church in the twentieth century meant contemplating the forward, irrevocable movement of history. Eventually the church would leave behind the reduction of the Body of Christ to a juridical administration... leave behind the centralisation made visible in Baroque architecture and intensified later in the administrative control of the Pius popes... Was it possible to pass beyond a church whose condition was that of a static monism and whose organisation was a ‘hierarchology’? To accomplish this, there had to be something different but not necessarily something utterly new. History and even the past itself would bring liberation.³⁵

It is clear, therefore, that Congar and others saw Vatican II as an opportunity to use history as a source for renewal within the church. Congar saw the council as ‘the end of the Counter-Reformation. Accomplished by men formed in scholastic heritage, it spoke the language of the history of salvation and of the kerygma. It was open to ecumenism and to a pluralist world’.³⁶

In 1979, the German theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984) offered a theological assessment of the council that impinges on its historical treatment. He saw the council as the church’s first self-realisation as a world church rather than a European church exporting itself to other parts of the world, like ‘a commodity it did not want to change’. He views this process as one of the ‘three great epochs in church history’; the others being the period of Jewish-Christianity in the first century and the Hellenistic and European culture up to Vatican II when the church became connected to the whole world. Rahner sees the traumas following the council in a way comparable to those which took place in the transition from Jewish-Christianity to Hellenistic-Christianity.³⁷ Rahner’s views were not dissimilar to those expressed in 1975 by Cardinal William Conway (1913-1977), who spoke of humanity as ‘going

³⁴ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?*, pp 53-92.

³⁵ Thomas F. O’Meara, ‘Reflections on Yves Congar and Theology in the United States’, *US Catholic Historian*, 17, no. 2, (Spring 1999), p. 97; see Yves Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (Paris, 1953), p. 68ff.

³⁶ Yves Congar, ‘Martin Luther sa foi, sa réforme: études de théologie historique’, *Cogitatio Fidei*, 119 (Paris, 1983), p. 79. See Congar, ‘A Last Look at the Council’ in Alberic Stacpoole (ed.), *Vatican II: by those who were there* (London, 1986), p. 343; cited in Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in a World of Unbelief*, (Aldershot, 2004), p. 65.

³⁷ Karl Rahner, ‘Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council’, *Theological Investigations*, 20, (New York, 1981), pp 77-89.

through the birthpangs of a new civilisation and [that] this trauma will last into the next century'. It was reported that it was 'against this background that he views the developments in the church and society generally'.³⁸

Writing in 2006, Stephen Schloesser, an American Jesuit and historian, argued that the council should be situated anew as part of the events of the mid-twentieth century. Further, he asserts that its changes represent a rupture with past '*mentalités*' rather than with any fundamental beliefs. To illustrate this, he positions Vatican II between two events, the 1956 uprising in Budapest and the 1968 popular uprising by the people of Prague, both of which were put down by Soviet troops. Vatican II was lived and experienced at a time when the world had to endure its deepest anxieties, made manifest by the missile crisis, and that none of the players could have foreseen the sudden downfall of communism a quarter of century later. This, he believes, gave added impetus to the desire to return to the sources of the faith and that those who oppose the council have selective memories. He contends that with passing of time, it is important to remember that the council's call for the church to be a humanising force and the new age it inaugurated, seemed morally necessary because of the decades of bloodshed and war that preceded it.³⁹

In 2014, Schloesser put forward the argument that, on the one hand, the council 'accommodated itself to several centuries of change preceding it' while, on the other, 'it seems to have been woefully inadequate to the most important epistemic shift of the twentieth century: biopolitics and biopower'.⁴⁰ Further, he argued that while Vatican II responded to the political issues of the early to mid-twentieth century through a series of reforms such as the introduction of the vernacular, the acknowledgement of conscience, religious liberty and its considerations of non-Christian religions, it 'seems to have been incognizant of, unprepared for, and inadequate to another set of issues that lay directly ahead...'.⁴¹ These included companionate marriage, the nuclear family as an emotional and not an economic unit, the extension of equality to women, the complexity of sexual identities and relationships. He cites the production of the first commercially produced birth-control pill in May 1960, the publication of Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, coupled with the period of cultural change and generational turmoil known as 'The Sixties'. The council, he says, was informed

³⁸ *Sunday Independent*, 27 July 1975.

³⁹ Stephen Schloesser, 'Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II', *Theological Studies*, 67, (2006), pp 275-319.

⁴⁰ Idem, 'Dancing on the Edge of the Volcano: Biopolitics and What Happened after Vatican II' in Paul Crowley (ed.), *From Vatican II to Pope Francis: Charting a Catholic Future* (Maryknoll, 2014), p. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

by politics rather than biopolitics which he sees as a term embracing questions that ‘unify issues surrounding human interactions with “life” – “*bios*” – on the planetary as well as individual levels.’⁴² Such a view, Schloesser contends, helps to explain why the council ‘can seem exhilarating in style and even prophetic at some moments while being unprepared and even oblivious at others.’⁴³ He concludes that ‘the council appears to have concluded an armistice with modernity’ while being ‘caught off guard, struggling to keep up with rapid currents outstripping its capacity to make sense’ because ‘biopolitical issues in 1965 had taken over the recently vacated spaces once occupied by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political issues.’⁴⁴

The contention put forward by Schloesser sets Vatican II in a time perspective that is largely western in outlook. Marriage and family were discussed at the council and featured in the council documents, notably *Gaudium et Spes*, even though ‘hot button’ topics such as birth-control and priestly celibacy were removed from the agenda. In terms of the more rapid growth and relevance of what he terms ‘biopolitical’ issues in the decades following the council, it must be recalled that Vatican II could not have foreseen the depth of the social and cultural changes ahead. Vatican II was the primary mover in re-shaping a kinder, more positive face of the church, as Congar and others had sought. Shortly after his election as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis (2013 –) spoke of Vatican II as a movement of renewal:

Vatican II was a re-reading of the Gospel in light of contemporary culture... Vatican II produced a renewal movement that simply comes from the same Gospel. Its fruits are enormous... the dynamic of reading the Gospel, actualising its message for today – which was typical of Vatican II – is absolutely irreversible.⁴⁵

The case for keeping the memory of the council alive in terms of keeping the principles of reform enunciated by it is well made by the Irish theologian Dermot A. Lane. He sees the council as ‘a point of departure for reform in the present... through a process of analysis, interpretation and application’. Lane cautions that for younger Catholics ‘the council is simply an event in a misty past which seems to have divided people into a majority and minority, “progressives” and “conservatives”, bringing polarisation rather than unity.’⁴⁶ For those who lived through the period of Vatican II, their view of the council will be conditioned by memory.

⁴² Ibid., p. 4.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Cited in Crowley, ‘Beyond Vatican II’, p. xv.

⁴⁶ Dermot A. Lane, ‘Keeping the Memory Alive: Vatican II as an Enduring Legacy for Reform of the Church’ in Dermot A. Lane (ed.), *Vatican II in Ireland, Fifty Years On: Essays in Honour of Pádraic Conway* (Oxford, 2015), p. 30.

Some will look on the council as having been a moment of renewal, perhaps a renewal that was not fully realised. Others look upon the council as a moment when something was lost; they view it as a mistake and as something which damaged the church. In both cases, such views recognise the theology underpinning the council, which will be detailed in the chapters of this thesis. It was not a political event but a significant and ongoing moment of theological and spiritual discernment.

Lane agrees that ‘something significant’ happened at the council which was more foundational and fundamental than many historians and theologians have acknowledged. Further, Lane argues that the competing narratives are best understood in light of a gradual dawning of a new encounter between the church and modernity leading to ‘a slow and at times reluctant but nonetheless real embrace of the modern world’. This gradualism and incremental realisation is, he believes, rooted in three words that flow from the council: *aggiornamento*, *ressourcement* and dialogue.⁴⁷

A key element of the historical memory of Vatican II concerns the view of it as an event. Ladislav M. Ůrsy describes it as ‘an event of conversion’, that it was a turning point in church history. He suggests this ‘conversion took place in the minds and hearts of the participants slowly and painfully over the seasons of four years.’⁴⁸ When Pope John XXIII announced his intention to call an ecumenical council in January 1959 he took the church by surprise. Since Vatican I, councils seemed redundant as the pope could declare on questions of dogma without reference to anyone. A reminder of this apparent irrelevance of councils was the proclamation in 1950 of the dogma of the assumption of Mary into heaven. However, it is now known that the holding of another council, to complete the work of Vatican I, had been under consideration by both Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) and his successor Pope Pius XII (1939-1958). Some cardinals were in favour of a council so as to deal with, and condemn, new strains of thought on matters of doctrine, morality and biblical interpretation which were emerging from the *ressourcement* movement, branded by some as *nouvelle théologie*.⁴⁹

Vatican II was the largest of the twenty-one councils in the history of the church. It was the most significant not just in terms of numbers, but also in terms of its composition, showing the face of the universal or international church at a time of immense political and cultural

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁸ Ůrsy, *Receiving the Council*, pp 83-4.

⁴⁹ These trends will be dealt with in more detail in chapter three. For more on the work undertaken for a council by Popes Pius XI and Pius XII see, O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, p. 110; Rafferty, ‘Vatican II: a retrospective’, p. 154.

change. It was also noteworthy in that many non-Catholic observers were present and made an important impact on some of the documents. The presence of lay auditors, male and female, was also a new departure. In total, some 2,860 council fathers attended all or part of the four sessions of the council. They came from one hundred and sixteen countries, with roughly thirty-six percent coming from Europe, thirty-four percent from the Americas, twenty percent from Asia and Oceania, and ten percent from Africa. The bishops from China, North Korea and North Vietnam were banned from attending by their communist governments. Many of the bishops were accompanied by theologians or experts (*periti*). All of the meetings were held in the central nave of St Peter's basilica. There were two kinds of meetings of the council: public sessions where documents were voted on finally and then promulgated, and working sessions, known as general congregations. There were one hundred and sixty-eight such general congregations over the four periods of the council. Each of these began with Mass, often celebrated in rites other than the Roman rite, thus providing bishops with an education in liturgy. A key component of the conciliar process was the ongoing meetings of the various commissions at which many of the key battles were fought. The final sixteen documents come to a total of just over three hundred pages (in Latin), more than twice that of Trent.⁵⁰ Administratively, it was a mammoth undertaking and, as an event, it cost almost £3.5m (in 1960s terms) to organise and hold. This is equivalent to £65.1m in 2017 terms.⁵¹ Following a nationwide collection, the Roman Catholic people of Ireland contributed £116,000 (£2.2m in 2017 terms) towards defraying the costs.⁵² Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin wrote a pastoral letter in advance of the collection, stating that such an initiative would 'stimulate the faithful of the diocese to show by their generosity their loyal devotedness and their appreciation of the unending labour of the present Vicar of Christ, Pope Paul VI.'⁵³ Just like his response at the council's conclusion, this was typical of McQuaid - always demonstrating his loyalty to Rome, irrespective of what he privately thought of the council.

The post-conciliar phase of any council is inevitably part of its story and recounts the history of its reception. It has been argued that the periods that follow councils can be read as

⁵⁰ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, pp 21-5.

⁵¹ per <<http://inflation.stephenmorley.org/>> (accessed 18 January 2018). O'Malley argues that the total cost is not clear. See, O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, p. 24. The source for the cost here is a newspaper clipping (quoting the Dutch News Agency KIPA) in the Galway Diocesan Archives (hereafter GDA), 'Vatican II – material relating to the council including correspondence, newspaper cuttings, notes and publications, 1959-1966' (GDA, Browne papers, B/9/A/1).

⁵² Press Statement, 6 May 1966 (Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library and Archives (hereafter COFLA), William Conway papers, file 18/8).

⁵³ DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box 2, VC 32b.

forming part of the councils themselves. Cardinal John H. Newman once remarked that ‘it is rare for a council not to be followed by great confusion’.⁵⁴ Unlike Trent, commentaries on Vatican II were not banned. Many theologians who acted as consultants during the council wrote commentaries. In fact, as Massimo Faggioli, a historian at Villanova University, points out ‘some of the authors of these commentaries became the main characters of the debate about Vatican II from the 1970s on’.⁵⁵ These were produced for a wider readership, thus informing the reception of the council. In the early years following the council there was enthusiasm for its outcomes. While differences did emerge in terms of how to interpret the council, its hermeneutic in terms of continuation or rupture was not a prime concern in the initial period of reception.

Faggioli traces at least three stages in the historical treatment of Vatican II. First, it was acknowledged, received or refused in the period from 1965 to 1980. In terms of study, this period was concerned with commentaries on the council documents and the series of ‘Instructions’ which flowed from Rome during the late 1960s and 1970s. This period also witnessed the establishment at Leuven in Belgium of the Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council. Founded by two theology professors, Mauritis Sabbe and Jan Grootaers, its aim initially was the collection of source material and documentation as well as advancing research on the subject of Vatican II. More recently, the study of past events which helped to shape the council has been added to the focus of the centre, thus aiding the study of the council’s reception.

Secondly, between 1980 and 1990 the centre of analysis moved from academia to the doctrinal policy of the Holy See, influenced largely by Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) and by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (1927-) who was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 1981 until his election as Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013). Both of these were participants at the council as either a council father or expert. During this period, the council was interpreted in doctrinal and legalistic ways, most notably in the revised *Code of Canon Law* which was published in 1983. In 1985, Pope John Paul II convened an extraordinary

⁵⁴ John Henry Newman and Charles Stephen Dessain. *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Cardinal Newman: Vol. XXV: The Vatican Council, January 1870 to December 1871*, 25 (New York, 1973), p. 175; Newman was writing just after Vatican I at a time when he had doubts about the wisdom of proclaiming papal infallibility in isolation to the infallibility of the wider church and without reference to the relationship of the papacy with the wider episcopacy. He believed that the church would ‘move on to the perfect truth by various successive declarations, alternately in different directions and thus perfecting, completing, supplying each other’. The Oxford theologian Ian Kerr sees this as both a prediction of a future council and also a warning to various parties following one. See Ian Ker, ‘Newman, the Councils and Vatican II’, *Communio*, 28 (Winter 2001), p. 717.

⁵⁵ Faggioli, *Vatican II*, p. 7.

assembly of the Synod of Bishops, itself a creation of the council period, to reflect on the council and to bring about consensus on its interpretation. The synod was clear that Vatican II was ‘a legitimate and valid expression and interpretation of the deposit of faith as it is found in Sacred Scripture and in the living tradition of the church’. The synod was determined ‘to progress further along the path indicated to us by the council’. It declared that ‘it is not to be doubted, therefore, that the council has been received with a great assent of spirit’. It also noted that ‘defects and difficulties’ had occurred in its reception. In its closing declaration, the synod assessed the post-conciliar period as follows:

In this post-conciliar time certainly there were dark moments which came partially from a defect in understanding and applying the council and partly from other causes. In no way, however, can all those things which came after the council be thought of as coming about because of the Council.⁵⁶

The synod was somewhat overshadowed by the publication of a book interview by Cardinal Ratzinger (*The Ratzinger Report*) in which he painted a dark picture of the state of the church and misrepresentations of the council. While he did not blame Vatican II for the crisis in the church, he referred to ‘a perverse spirit’ which was subverting Catholicism from within. He called for a ‘restoration’ of authority, not a reversal of history, which, he said would be impossible and contrary to the historical nature of the church.⁵⁷ However, the 1985 synod did not side with any one interpretation of the council. Instead, it called for a renewal of the church as *communio*, adding that the council must be understood in continuity with the great tradition of the church ... the church is one and the same throughout all councils’.⁵⁸ This renewed emphasis went to the heart of the council and will be discussed further with reference to Ireland in Chapter Three.

The third stage in the historical treatment of Vatican II, following Faggioli’s scheme, from 1990 to the present, is outside the period under consideration in this thesis but should not be ignored, especially in view of the vast corpus of historical writing that now exists on the subject. It is in this period that the opposing positions of ‘continuity’ and ‘rupture’ come into

⁵⁶ *New York Times*, 8 December 1985, ‘Text of Final Report Adopted by the Synod of Bishops in Rome’ <<http://www.nytimes.com/1985/12/08/world/text-of-final-report-adopted-by-synod-of-bishops-in-rome.html?pagewanted=all&mcubz=0>> (Accessed 8 January 2018).

⁵⁷ Seán O’Riordan, ‘The Synod of Bishops, 1985’, *The Furrow*, 37, no. 3 (March 1986), pp 139-58.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, 8 December 1985.

sharper focus. The hermeneutic of ‘reform’ introduced by Pope Benedict XVI in December 2005 is another factor in this debate.⁵⁹

The most important studies into the history of Vatican II began in the late 1980s, particularly following an international conference in Paris in 1988. This initiative concluded in 2001 with the production of a five-volume history of Vatican II which was subsequently published in many languages.⁶⁰ This drew from primary sources contained in key collections known as *Acta et Documenta* and *Acta Synodalia*. These were the collection of drafts, submissions and other key texts and a verbatim official record of the council proceedings.⁶¹ It was an international exercise headed by Giuseppe Alberigo at the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies in Bologna which aimed at a scholarly reconstruction of the council as a historic event. The multidisciplinary composition of the team brought forward new questions and issues. Among the key hermeneutical principles that guided the project was the idea of the council as an event with *aggiornamento* as its main goal.⁶²

Alberigo’s work was, of course, not the only history of the council. From the time the council began, a series of books appeared, from texts of the documents to commentaries, to accounts of the conciliar proceedings, and its aftermath. Among the English translations and commentaries was one by an Irish Dominican, Austin Flannery, which first appeared in 1975. In terms of accounts of the council, another Irish priest, Xavier Murphy deserves mention. A Redemptorist priest, he wrote under the pseudonym of Xavier Rynne as he was, strictly speaking, in contravention of council rules of secrecy. His accounts of the council were published in the American weekly *The New Yorker* and the expanded version of his reports was published in book form at the end of each period.⁶³ Tanner argues that while newspaper accounts carried regular reports, Rynne’s reports attracted most attention due to their accuracy.⁶⁴ Another account of the council was by Michael Novak, an American author. His account of the second session gave the world an insight into the competing approaches of the

⁵⁹ See Pope Benedict XVI, ‘A Proper Hermeneutic for the Second Vatican Council’, in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, pp ix-xv. This was from an address delivered by Pope Benedict to the Roman Curia on 22 December 2005.

⁶⁰ Giuseppe Alberigo & Joseph A. Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, (5 vols., Louvain & Maryknoll, 1995-2006).

⁶¹ *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando. Series I – Antepreparatoria* (Vatican City, 1960-61); *Series II – Praeparatoria* (Vatican City, 1964-94); *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican City, 1970-99).

⁶² See Faggioli, *Vatican II*, pp 15-16.

⁶³ Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City, The First Session, The Second Session, The Third Session, The Fourth Session* (London and New York, 1962-66); Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (Maryknoll, 1999).

⁶⁴ Tanner, *Church in Council*, p. 156.

different schools as the council came to terms with its own self-understanding.⁶⁵ The Irish journalist, Desmond Fisher, who was attached the *Catholic Herald* in England at the time of the council, also wrote a short account of the council, showing how the church contrasted before and after it.⁶⁶ In 2005, Alberigo also produced a very user-friendly short history of the council.⁶⁷ His analysis and that of his team came in for criticism from those who took a different perspective of the council. In 2010, the Italian historian Agostino Marchetto's book offered a counterpoint to Alberigo's analysis and was particularly critical of the manner in which he had portrayed Pope John XXIII favourably to the detriment of his successor over the handling of sensitive conciliar issues at key moments in the debate. He was also critical of theologians such as Congar and others. The book was seen as an attempt by those classified as 'conservative' to put forward their interpretation of the history of the council.⁶⁸ In 2015, to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the close of Vatican II, the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies at Bologna, this time under the direction of the church historian Alberto Melloni, produced an account of the council, one which sought to bring the experience of the council to all readers, regardless of belief or place.⁶⁹ This publication contains a complete list of the council fathers and observers, together with much new data, including a calendar of each of the congregations or meetings of the council.

The history of Vatican II, either in part or in whole, has been addressed in some countries. These range from books to a variety of articles. In Ireland, apart from articles and essays in journals, there have been some significant contributions thus far which have reflected on the council. To mark the fortieth anniversary, a series of lectures was organised by the Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin City University, and the papers were subsequently published as an edited collection.⁷⁰ One of the contributors to that series was Michael Smith, the Bishop of Meath, who has published a contemporary account of life at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome during the council. As a student, Smith was a stenographer at all of the council sessions.⁷¹ Shortly following the council a Dublin-based journalist Louis McRedmond published his reflection on the council, in which he bemoaned the lack of preparedness of the church in

⁶⁵ Michael Novak, *The Open Church: Vatican II, Act II* (London, 1964).

⁶⁶ Desmond Fisher, *The Church in Transition* (Notre Dame, 1967).

⁶⁷ Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, 2006).

⁶⁸ Agostino Marchetto, *The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: A counterpoint for the history of the council* (Scranton, 2010).

⁶⁹ Alberto Melloni, *Vatican II: The Complete History* (New York, 2015).

⁷⁰ Leahy & Lane (eds), *Vatican II: Facing the 21st Century*.

⁷¹ Michael Smith, 'Life at the Irish College during the Second Vatican Council' in Dáire Keogh and Albert McDonnell (eds), *The Irish College, Rome and its World* (Dublin, 2008), pp 258-66.

Ireland for the reforms, stating that clergy and laity in Ireland were being ‘asked to contribute their prayers, not their understanding’.⁷² Two works of note in relation to not only Vatican II but the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland during the twentieth-century are Louise Fuller’s study of Irish Catholicism since 1950, first published in 2002. This comprehensive study sets the church’s role in its historical perspective before considering its place in Irish society from the 1950s, taking into account the many changes in Irish society. Societal change and sociology and the relationship with religion and the Roman Catholic Church in particular is the focus of the numerous works by Tom Inglis. His 1987 book on the monopoly of power that the church held in Ireland explains how the church came to hold such power.⁷³ Many of the standard historical surveys of twentieth-century Ireland have given attention to Vatican II, particularly from the viewpoint of the modernisation of Irish society in the 1960s and the subsequent challenges to the Roman Catholic Church. These studies are, in the main, from a secular perspective.⁷⁴ Daithí Ó Corráin provides an insightful account of Irish Vatican II history from the perspective of ecumenism and the relationship between churches and the two states on the island of Ireland from 1949 until 1973.⁷⁵ In 2015, Dermot A. Lane edited a collection of essays on Vatican II and Ireland fifty years following the council. A further volume is a collection of essays on a range of theological, pastoral and educational areas, also released to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the council, edited by Niall Coll.⁷⁶ Many of the essays in these volumes will feature in the course of this thesis.

A recent review of Lane’s publication relating to Ireland made the point that ‘the academic world is slowly yet steadily reaching the awareness that the historical exegesis of the council has reached its limit.’⁷⁷ It noted that a recent *Bibliographie du concile Vatican II* by the Canadian scholar Philippe Roy lists over four thousand titles since 1965 and that little can be added to this. This thesis is, nonetheless, an attempt to do precisely that. Indeed, as more material of the council fathers becomes available, this will impact on the historical treatment of the reception of the council as an event and as an ongoing process. Indeed, such was the

⁷² Louis McRedmond, *The Council reconsidered* (Dublin, 1966), p. 186.

⁷³ Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly: Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 1998).

⁷⁴ J.J. Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989); Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth-Century Ireland: Revolution and State Building* (Dublin, 1994); Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000* (London, 2005); Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge, 2010).

⁷⁵ Daithí Ó Corráin, *Rendering to God and Caesar: The Irish churches and the two states in Ireland, 1949-73* (Manchester, 2006).

⁷⁶ Niall Coll (ed.), *Ireland and Vatican II: Essays Theological, Pastoral and Educational* (Dublin, 2015).

⁷⁷ Karim Schelkens, ‘Dermot A. Lane (ed.), Vatican II in Ireland, Fifty Years On, A Review’, *Revue D’Histoire Ecclésiastique*, iii, no. 3-4 (2016), pp 467-9.

epochal nature of Vatican II, coming as it did after two world wars and at a time of cultural change, its place in terms of exegesis and memory is secure.

This thesis will add to the existing works in that it is based on archival research in several Irish dioceses, thereby getting first-hand access to the thinking and actions of some of the Irish bishops at the time of Vatican II. This thesis, while historical, is also theological. It examines the key theological concepts that influenced and flowed from the council and it tests these against the reality of the church in Ireland. Other works on Vatican II and Ireland have not approached this subject in such an informed theological way. In particular, the thesis is focussed on reception, which is in itself a relatively new theological concept in another new theological field, that of historical theology. Therefore, this thesis brings a new perspective from the point of view of both research, theological concepts, combined with the interest, knowledge and ecclesial experience of the writer.

The Second Vatican Council was more than just an event; its effects and influence have been and continue to be much wider than the contours of its preparation and assembly. Indeed, arguably, its effects go beyond even the documents of the council and the norms that followed it. Clearly, therefore, the treatment of its history and reception is different. Yet, the history of a council cannot be isolated from the history of its reception. If, as O'Malley has observed, the council 'continues to be a reality very much alive in the church today', the question may be asked how is that reflected in its reception?⁷⁸ We begin by considering, what is reception?

Part Two: The Reception of Vatican II

What is Reception?

Reception concerns the process by which a faith community receives changes to beliefs, practices, norms, and laws. It may be defined as 'the process through which an ecclesiastical community incorporates into its own life a particular decision, teaching or practice.'⁷⁹ It involves the whole Church. In *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II emphasised that all the baptised, as members of a Christian community, share in Christ's prophetic office and, as the people of God; they 'have an anointing that comes from the holy one ... shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole people, when...they manifest a universal

⁷⁸ O'Malley, 'Introduction: Trajectories and Hermeneutics' in Heft (ed.), *After Vatican II*, p. xxii.

⁷⁹ Thomas P. Rausch, 'Reception', *NDT*, p. 828.

consent in matters of faith and morals.’⁸⁰ The ‘*sensus fidei*’, understood as making sense of the faith and giving assent to it, goes to the origin of the church and how believers, as a faith community, share and practice their beliefs. Ormond Rush refers to the ‘corporate ecclesial sense as the *sensus fidei fidelium*, the sense of the faith of the faithful’.⁸¹ This gives rise to the question, what is a receiving community?

According to Órsy, a receiving community ‘is the principal agent in the process of learning and receiving.’⁸² Such a community must be of one mind and one heart. Further, the act of receiving cannot be undertaken exclusively by the ecclesiastical authorities or their representatives. It must involve the whole people, with at least a significant majority being in favour of it. Órsy sets out four criteria for authentic reception by a faith community. The following is a *précis* of his position:

- The receiving community must look inwards and be well established in a position of humility; it must believe in its own limitations and incompetence, otherwise it cannot conceive a desire for enrichment;
- The receiving community must look outwards; it must be alert to and observe the other communities with the eyes of faith. It must believe that they too are sustained by the gifts of the Spirit. Further, it must consider the insights and practices of others with sympathy;
- The community intending to receive must discover in the life of another communion an advanced insight into the evangelical message of a Christ-like practice that could enrich the receivers;
- The receiving community must become a creative agent: it must develop the inspiration it received all over again, out of its own resources. It must progress in the intelligence of faith; it must achieve a more dedicated service in love.⁸³

Who are the Receivers?

⁸⁰ *LG*, 12.

⁸¹ Ormond Rush, *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful & the Church's Reception of Revelation* (Washington DC, 2009), p. 5.

⁸² Ladislav Órsy, ‘Authentic Learning and Receiving – A Search for Criteria’, in Paul D. Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford, 2008), p. 44.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp 45-4.

Lumen Gentium points out that the whole people of God (laity, priests, religious and bishops) are the primary receivers of revelation, so too, in the interpretation of the council, the same theological truth applies.⁸⁴ In the church, the shift from what Rahner described as ‘eurocentric’ to the notion of a world-church, means that the question of multiple *loci* of reception is also relevant.⁸⁵

Reception is a learning process referred to as ‘receptive learning’, as the Durham theologian Paul D. Murray has amply demonstrated in his writings. Ecumenism is a primary area of activity where ‘receptive learning’ can be utilised effectively, a core concern at the heart of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. Murray defines ‘receptive ecumenism’ as follows:

Receptive Ecumenism is concerned to place at the forefront of the Christian ecumenical agenda the self-critical question, ‘What, in any given situation, can one’s own tradition appropriately learn with integrity from other traditions?’ and, moreover, to ask this question without insisting, although certainly hoping, that these other traditions are also asking themselves the same question.⁸⁶

‘Receptive learning’ encapsulates a wide range of topics of common concern to Christians. In the years following Vatican II, many encounters took place at various levels in Ireland between Catholics and members of other Christian churches. Some of these went beyond the initial practices of meeting together for prayer and worship and extended into more controversial areas, including the vexed question of mixed marriages and political violence in Northern Ireland. The process of ‘receptive learning’ is ongoing, with questions concerning collegiality, structure and accountability to the forefront. In the Irish context, one commentator argues that openness by Christians to the process of ‘receptive learning’ offers positive possibilities.⁸⁷

Reception: The International Context

In the twentieth century, the distinguished French theologian, Jean-Marie Tillard described reception as ‘one of the most important theological re-discoveries of our century.’⁸⁸ With the emergence in the 1940s and 1950s of what was termed by some as *nouvelle theologie*, contemporary theology was able to recover the more dynamic ecclesiology of the early church, such as seeing and understanding the church as *communio*. This phenomenon, also referred to

⁸⁴ See Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (New York, 2004), p. 53.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁸⁶ Paul D. Murray, ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning – Establishing the Agenda’ in Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism*, p. 12.

⁸⁷ Gabriel Flynn, ‘Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning – Reflections in Dialogue with Yves Congar and B. C. Butler’ in Murray (ed.), *Receptive Ecumenism*, pp 406-407.

⁸⁸ J.M.R. Tillard, ‘Reception – Communion’, *One in Christ*, no.28 (1992), p. 307.

as *ressourcement* or ‘return to sources’ – biblical, patristic and liturgical – was to have a profound effect on many of the bishops at Vatican II.⁸⁹ Among the contributors to the debate on reception were the leading *ressourcement* theologians Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) and Karl Rahner, as well as such commentators as Christoph Theobald, Gerald O’Collins, Hermann J. Pottmeyer, Giuseppe Alberigo, Michael G. Lawler, Ormond Rush, Gilles Routhier, and Richard Lennan.

Turning, first, to Congar he points out that reception is part of the following historical developments: the evolution of the canon of scripture; the response of the local churches to the decisions of the early councils was another form of reception, although the degrees of such reception were often mixed and prolonged. Examples of the reception of certain liturgical forms by local churches may also be cited; these include the right of Roman Church to canonize saints from the time of Pope Gregory IX in 1234. The latter derived from the reception of the new norm by the local churches, which previously had that right. The celebration and adoption of liturgical feasts, especially the adoption by Rome of feasts associated with the Eastern church, is another historical case, referred to by Congar. The acceptance of Roman law into the corpus of what became church law and its application to the local churches is yet another example.⁹⁰

Henri de Lubac, like Congar, was one of the foremost pioneers of the *ressourcement* movement for the renewal of theology and a key figure at the council. He was critical of ways in which aspects of the council were received. In common with Congar, he firmly believed that Vatican II was not the cause of the crisis in the post-conciliar church but that Western society was in crisis which in turn had a profound effect on the church. De Lubac saw ‘a spiritual decline’ and a failure in society to recognise any transcendent dimension; a ‘global repugnance’ to admitting the idea of divine revelation or to allow for a transcendent order of truth.⁹¹ Christopher Walsh, the British ecclesiastical historian, concludes that de Lubac never abandoned his commitment to ‘renewal and discovery of the tradition’, which was at the core of what he saw as the two-fold purpose of the Council.⁹²

⁸⁹ See Gabriel Flynn, ‘Introduction’ in Flynn & Murray (eds), *Ressourcement*, p. 7.

⁹⁰ See Yves Congar, ‘Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality: Election and Consensus in the Church’, *Concilium*, 7, no. 8 (1972), pp 54-7.

⁹¹ Christopher J. Walsh, ‘De Lubac’s critique of the postconciliar Church’, *Concilium*, 19, (Fall 1992), pp 405-6; Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church*, trans. by Paul Philibert (Collegeville, 2011), p. 341. Writing in 1968, Congar stated: ‘The council was not responsible for either the current problems or the new attitudes. It is unjust and even stupid to attribute to the council the difficulties that we are having today, or even the disquiet or pain about matters of the faith’.

⁹² Walsh, ‘De Lubac’s critique of the postconciliar Church’, p. 429.

Reception is a complex area in terms of theological enquiry and analysis. It is noteworthy in the case of Vatican II that ‘receiving the council was more than a straightforward execution of some mandates or a mere repetition of the council’s teaching.’⁹³ The Australian theologian, Gerald O’Collins points to the ‘creative reception’ of the council by Pope John Paul II in terms ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and social teaching. He argues the case for creative fidelity as follows:

The long history of Catholic Christianity shows repeatedly that it takes creative fidelity to effect a rejuvenating reception and promote true development. Both fidelity and creativity have been regularly involved: a fidelity that does not decline into rigidity and a creativity that does not lose its roots in the mainstream tradition.⁹⁴

The French theologian Christoph Theobald, in his significant volume *La réception du Vatican II*, published by Éditions du Cerf in the Unam Sanctam (New Series), presents a thorough analysis of the theory and history of the reception of Vatican II.⁹⁵ After an indepth historical and theological discourse, he seeks to define the key concept of his work. In this regard, he states explicitly his dependance on two leading articles by A. Grillmeier and Y. Congar.⁹⁶ Grillmeier insists that ‘a true reception is only in the sense of a recognition of a particular church synod by the universal church or, better still, the acceptance of a council of the universal church by a separated church.’⁹⁷ Theobald notes the criticism of Grillmeier’s understanding of reception by Congar and, after him, by Routhier, as ‘too narrow’. Theobald has also written of what he describes as the criteriology of reception.⁹⁸ In this regard, Theobald points to the distinctive role and place of history in the reception of Vatican II, due principally, he argues, to its different style and more decidedly pastoral tone, when compared to previous councils. Seeing Vatican II in terms of continuity with ‘the great tradition’, Theobald contends that the ‘newness’ of the council and its location within the history of modernity means that history itself

⁹³ O’Collins, *Living Vatican II*, p. 47.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Christoph Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II, I: Accéder à la source*, Unam Sanctam, Nouvelle série (Paris, 2009). For Theobald’s treatment of reception, see his Chapter One ‘The Debate on Reception: the role of communities, the magisterium and of ecclesiastical historians’, pp 495-546.

⁹⁶ Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II*, p. 496; A Grillmeier, ‘Konzil und Rezeption: Methodische Bemerkungen zu einem Thema der ökumenischen Diskussion der Gegenwart’ in *Theologie et Philosophie*, no. 45 (1970), pp 321-52; Gilles Routhier, *La réception d’un concile* (Paris, 1993), p. 48.

⁹⁷ ‘Grillmeier ne reconnaît une réception véritable que dans le cas d’une reconnaissance d’un synode particulier par l’Église universelle ou mieux encore, dans l’acceptation d’une concile de l’Église universelle de la part d’une Église séparée.’ See Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II*, p. 497.

⁹⁸ Christoph Theobald, ‘The Reception of the Second Vatican Council: Drawing up a Criteriology’, in Lieven Boeve, Mathijs Lamberigts, Terrence Merrigan (eds), *The Contested Legacy of Vatican II: Lessons and Prospects*, Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs 43 (Leuven, 2005), pp 65-104.

must not only intervene in the interpretation of the Council as corpus and event in order to bring out the principal of pastorality; it is also indispensable for revealing the “resources” of the Council as part of a creative reception in keeping with what is happening today in our societies.⁹⁹

The writings of O’Collins and Theobald have a particular relevance to the reception of the council in Ireland. As this thesis will show, its reception was its implementation and yet its implementation was not quite its authentic reception. Yet, its treatment through historical research, such as this, will show the deeply pastoral potential of its outcome, especially in liturgy but also in terms of ecumenism and greater efforts to have a sense of collegiality and synodality in the longer term.

The work of Canadian theologian Gilles Routhier, *La réception d’un concile*, cannot be passed over without comment. His book opens to researchers interested in the council, the future of the church as ‘a new field of investigation’ which is of interest also to ecumenical colleagues. In this tripartite work, Routhier considers the history of reception, the reception of the council in the contemporary church, and ‘the process of reception.’¹⁰⁰

In a challenging treatment of reception, the German theologian Hermann Pottmeyer argues that Vatican II was a ‘transitional council’ and a challenge to those who seek to interpret it. He states that the council texts ‘lack the conceptual precision, the unambiguous definition of positions, the technical form and the unity of literary genre’ to which Trent and Vatican I had accustomed the Catholic world.¹⁰¹ This, together with the complexity of the renewal set in motion by Vatican II ‘requires time: time for rethinking, time for conversion, time for developing a new understanding’.¹⁰² Similarly, Giuseppe Alberigo points out that any discussion of the reception of Vatican II, from the time of the council to the present period, is too short for a proper assessment of such a significant conciliar event.¹⁰³ Although Vatican II was complex in terms of the vast range of questions it dealt with, its reception must always be faithful to tradition. As Karl Rahner points out:

For the church cannot change into something or other at will, arbitrarily, but only into a new presence of its old reality, into the present and future of its past, of the Gospel, of the grace and truth of God.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Theobald, ‘The Reception of the Second Vatican Council: Drawing up a Criteriology’, p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ See Gilles Routhier, *La réception d’un concile* (Paris, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Hermann J. Pottmeyer, ‘A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II: Twenty Years of Interpretation of the Council’, in Giuseppe Alberigo, Jean-Pierre Jossua and Joseph A. Komonchak (eds), *The Reception of Vatican II* (Tunbridge Wells, 1987), p. 27.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp 28-9.

¹⁰³ Giuseppe Alberigo, ‘The Christian Situation after Vatican II’ in ibid, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Karl Rahner, ‘*The Changing Church*’, *The Christian of the Future* (London, 1967), p. 36.

In a similar vein, Michael G. Lawler issues a note of caution that ‘the act of reception cannot and does not receive the tradition of the past unchanged; the past is always re-appropriated or re-received in the present’.¹⁰⁵

Ormond Rush, in an advancement of the understanding of reception, sees it as being so fundamental that it can ‘be legitimately employed as an “architectonic principle” with which all themes of theology can be approached’.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, he views reception as a ‘root metaphor’ which captures many dimensions of human engagement, such as relationships, communications, interaction and learning. There is also, he argues, spiritual reception, juridical reception and theological reception to be considered, as different teachings, norms, and propositions are incorporated into the life of the believer and the believing community. Further, he refers to what he calls ‘approbative reception’ by which he means ‘the process of evaluation by the whole church in judging whether particular spiritual, juridical or theological receptions are faithful to revelation’.¹⁰⁷ This is especially relevant to the dynamic between the individual and the institution, when the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* come into relationship.

Peter C. Phan, a theologian at Georgetown University, offers an assessment of reception of the council in Asia in which he states that reception is not to be understood simply ‘as a juridical ratification by the community’ of a particular teaching or practice but, rather, ‘an act whereby the community affirms and attests that such teaching or practice really contributes to the building up of the community’s understanding and life of faith’.¹⁰⁸

The American historian, John W. O’Malley proffers a view of reception in terms of a trajectory of movement. He uses this term as a synonym for theological development or ‘for shifts or changes that have taken place that probably would not have done so except for the council but that cannot easily be traced to a specific provision of the council.’¹⁰⁹ Over against this position, Lamb and Levering caution that the term ‘trajectory’ lacks control in that it may digress from the course and negate ‘the true unfolding of the revealed mystery’, that is, the faith.¹¹⁰ Thus, as Congar argues, reception itself ‘does not confer validity, but affirms,

¹⁰⁵ Michael G. Lawler, ‘Faith, Praxis and Practical Theology: At the interface of Sociology and Theology’, in Ronald A. Simkins & Gail S. Risch (eds), *Religion and the Family* (California, 2006), p. 265.

¹⁰⁶ Rush, *Eyes of Faith*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ Peter C. Phan, ‘Reception of and Trajectories for Vatican II in Asia’, in David G. Schultenover (ed.), *50 Year On: Probing the Riches of Vatican II* (Collegeville, 2015), p. 295.

¹⁰⁹ O’Malley, ‘Introduction: Trajectories and Hermeneutics’, p. xii.

¹¹⁰ Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, ‘Introduction’ in Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering (eds), *The Reception of Vatican II* (Oxford, 2017), p. 14.

acknowledges and attests that this matter is for the good of the church: because it concerns a decision (dogma, canons, ethical rules) that should ensure the good of the church.’¹¹¹

Richard Lennan, an expert in the thought of Karl Rahner, points to the fact that the reception of Vatican II poses unique challenges because of the volume of material and the breadth of themes that emanated from the Council.¹¹² For some, according to Lennan, the enthusiasm which the *aggiornamento* of the council set forth did lead to new theological developments. One such example was liberation theology, whose promoters looked to Vatican II for theoretical justification in terms of progress. Many of these promoters went beyond what the council envisaged. In the area of liturgy, the call of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* for ‘full and active participation’ in the Eucharist, gave way, in the interpretation of some, to novelties in the liturgical field, which were not envisaged in the renewal of the liturgy.¹¹³ The lack of theological development and the church’s concern with institutional dominance, following the period of the counter-reformation, meant that Catholics generally were not skilled at receiving the vast complex of ideas from Vatican II, and certainly not at the speed at which the changes were implemented. As Lennan remarks:

Since descending models of authority had been so prominent, there was little awareness of either the theory or the practice needed to nurture a communion of faith, including dealing with differences’.¹¹⁴

Such a model of authority, in turn, led to tensions over renewal or a breaking down of the old order of stability. Changes in liturgical practice and popular piety were often ‘haphazard’ at local level, and often divisive.¹¹⁵ Such problems may have arisen from a dearth in the understanding of the relationship between the universal church, expressed in terms of eschatological mystery, and how that is received in the local churches as they celebrate the Word of God and the Eucharist.¹¹⁶ We turn now to the reception of Vatican II in local churches.

Reception at Local Level

Writing in 1987, Joseph A. Komonchak noted that the texts of the council ‘were to prove remarkably fruitful when the various churches throughout the world undertook the task

¹¹¹ Yves Congar, ‘Reception as an Ecclesiological Reality’, p. 66.

¹¹² Richard Lennan, ‘Roman Catholic Ecclesiology’, in Gerard Mannion & Lewis S. Mudge (eds), *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church* (Oxford, 2007), p. 242.

¹¹³ *SC*, no. 14.

¹¹⁴ Lennan, ‘Roman Catholic Ecclesiology’, p. 243.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ See, Derek Sawoski, *The Ecclesiological Reality of Reception Considered as a Solution to the Debate over the Ontological Priority of the Universal Church*, *Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia* 204 (Rome, 2014).

of receiving and appropriating the council within their various cultural contexts'.¹¹⁷ This was evident early on through the commentaries, the liturgical reforms and the new roles given to bishops' conferences. There have been studies on the reception of the council in some local situations at national or regional level. Routhier, for example, has edited a collection of papers in French on the reception of the council in the churches of India, the Netherlands, Poland, and Italy.¹¹⁸ Routhier, together with Michael Attridge and Catherine E. Clifford, has also edited a collection of essays on the Canadian experience of Vatican II which provides an analysis of the council through the lens of the Canadian press, other Christian churches and a variety of theologians. A section of the collection also deals with reception in terms of liturgy, religious life, laity and ecumenism.¹¹⁹ In another publication by Routhier, he presents an examination of the reception of the council through the practice of synodality in Quebec during the years 1982 to 1987.¹²⁰

The reception of the council in the United States is the subject of a study by Joseph P. Chinnici, focussing on what he terms 'a *ressourcement* of Vatican II' and a pastoral renewal to overcome polarisation within the American church, a situation exacerbated by grave sexual abuse scandals.¹²¹ Teodoro C. Bacani charts the course of the council's reception in the Philippines, initially implemented by the liturgical reforms but given a new lease of life by a plenary council of the local church in 1991 which opted to project a new image for the local church, one of a church for the poor. As Bacani opines, having discerned what was happening to the church in Latin America, 'there was enough in Vatican II to inspire the Church in the Philippines also towards being a new way of being church.'¹²² Abonkhanmeghe E. Orobator, in a study of reception in Africa, argues that while the input of African bishops at the council was marginal, the council provided an impetus for growth and renewal as well as reform of

¹¹⁷ Joseph A. Komonchak, 'The Local Realization of the Church', in Alberigo, Jossua & Komonchak (eds), *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 77.

¹¹⁸ *Réceptions de Vatican II: le concile au risque de l'histoire et des espaces humains*, in Gilles Routhier (ed.), *Instrumenta Theologica*, 27, (Leuven, 2004).

¹¹⁹ Michael Attridge, Catherine E Clifford & Gilles Routhier (eds), *Vatican II: Expériences Canadiennes/ Canadian Experiences* (Ottawa, 2011).

¹²⁰ Gilles Routhier, 'La Reception De Vatican II Dans Une Église Locale: L'exemple De La Pratique Synodale Dans L'Eglise De Quebec, 1982-1987' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Paris IV- Sorbonne, 1991), <<http://www.theses.fr/1991PA040082#>>

¹²¹ Joseph P. Chinnici, 'Reception of Vatican II in the United States', *Theological Studies*, 64 (2003), pp 461-94.

¹²² Teodoro C. Bacani, 'Church of the Poor: The Church in the Philippines' Reception of Vatican II' in *40 Years of Vatican II and the Churches of Asia and the Pacific*, *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 42, no. 1/2 (2005), p. 157.

inculturation, interreligious dialogue and theological reflection. This was set against the backdrop of the end of colonialism and the emergence of new states.¹²³

Reception in Ireland

There is a paucity of material on the reception of the council in Ireland with the exception of more general studies on the position and challenges of the church. As we have already noted in this chapter, two studies on Ireland and Vatican II were published in 2015 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the council. In one of these, Jim Corkery reviews the reception of the council over the period and, as in the United States, against the backdrop of the sexual abuse crisis. Corkery reflects on some of the commentaries on reception before going on to analyse the impact of the council in terms of liturgy, the role of the laity, ecumenism, the church's relationship with the modern world and the church's self-understanding in the light of *Lumen Gentium*. He also looks ahead to the potential landscape in the aftermath of the apostolic visitation of 2010 and what he describes as the 'inter-contextual receivings of the council'.¹²⁴ In the same publication, Jacinta Prunty reviews the reception of the council's call for renewal of religious life, with particular reference to the Irish Federation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity.¹²⁵

Other studies on Vatican II and its reception in Ireland have included works by Dermot A. Lane and Peter Connolly.¹²⁶ Lane argues that the teachings of Vatican II must be contextualised, meaning that the history of the council, the language used and the style of the documents must be analysed before coming to a determination on its reception. He points to dramatic shifts in the documents presented to the council to those actually promulgated at its conclusion, a shift from anathema to dialogue, from the church being a sub-culture to solidarity with the world. Further, Lane argues, quite correctly, that the reception of the council in Ireland was so narrow that the 'primary concern of the bishops in implementing Vatican II was to bring about the changes of the Council without, however, disturbing the faith of the people.'¹²⁷ It was

¹²³ Abonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, 'After All, Africa Is Largely a Nonliterate Continent: The Reception of Vatican II in Africa', in *50 Year On: Probing the Riches of Vatican II*, pp 273-312; see Patrick A. Kalilombe, 'The Effect of the Council on World Catholicism: Africa', in Hastings (ed.), *Vatican II*, pp 310-18.

¹²⁴ Jim Corkery, 'The Reception of Vatican II in Ireland Over Fifty Years', in Lane (ed.), *Vatican II in Ireland*, p. 117.

¹²⁵ Jacinta Prunty, 'Reception of the Call of Vatican II for Renewal of Religious Life: Case Study of the Irish Federation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity', in *ibid.*, pp 121-49.

¹²⁶ Dermot A. Lane, 'Vatican II: The Irish Experience', *The Furrow*, 55, no. 2 (Feb 2004), pp 67-81; Peter R. Connolly, 'The Church in Ireland since Vatican II', *The Furrow*, 30, no. 12 (Dec 1979), pp 755-66.

¹²⁷ Lane, 'Vatican II: The Irish Experience', p. 70.

a case of implementation rather than reception. Lane cites the observation of John Horgan, who reported the council for the *Irish Times*:

Conway saw himself as the manager of change *par excellence*, prodding his often reluctant brother bishops (His Grace of Dublin excepted) out of their immobilism and at the same time restraining the enthusiasm of the younger clergy and the laity who wanted it all and wanted it now.¹²⁸

Nonetheless, Lane presents a positive assessment of the practical response of the church in Ireland in the wake of Vatican II, noting especially the establishment of new commissions and educational institutes, describing them as ‘a mixture of genuine innovation... and at the same time, in some instances, centres of control on developments issuing from the Council.’¹²⁹

Peter Connolly, sometime Professor of English at Maynooth University, considers the entire church in Ireland in the period from the council to the end of the 1970s. He does not measure developments against the council *per se* but examines trends in Irish culture, including increasing materialism and religious indifferentism, and the consequent, albeit slowly emerging, impact on the church in terms of religious practice, church-state relations, legislation affecting moral questions like contraception, abortion and divorce and also the growing political violence in Northern Ireland. Like Lane, he is critical of the failure of the bishops particularly to embrace the role of the laity to which Vatican II gave expression.

Among other studies by Irish authors, while not strictly on the topic of reception *per se*, the following are noteworthy. One is a short booklet based on a series of public lectures that took place in Manresa Retreat Centre in Dublin in 2012 entitled, *Reaping the Harvest*. It examines the implications of the teachings of the council for the church and wider society today.¹³⁰ A further publication by Bishop Donal Murray, is a personal reflection on a number of themes that were central to the council, such as the church as a community, laity, the church in society and the question of belief in a changing world, all of these in the context of their implications for the future.¹³¹ Other publications which focus on aspects of the evolving situation of the contemporary church in Ireland will feature in later chapters.

¹²⁸ Ibid.; John Horgan, ‘Remembering How Once We Were’ (A Review-article of Louise Fuller’s book, *Doctrine and Life*, 53, no. 4 (April 2003), p. 241. Horgan recounts how Conway would draw the analogy between church reform and the space shuttle. ‘If the shuttle re-entered the atmosphere at the wrong angle, it would either burn up or bounce back into space: the angle- i.e. the speed of reform – had to be just right.’ See, Horgan, p. 242.

¹²⁹ Lane, ‘Vatican II: The Irish Experience’, pp 71-2.

¹³⁰ Suzanne Mulligan (ed.), *Reaping the Harvest: Fifty Years after Vatican II* (Dublin, 2012).

¹³¹ Donal Murray, *Keeping Open the Door of Faith: The Legacy of Vatican II* (Dublin, 2011).

Vatican II: Non-Reception

From the time of Vatican II, there have been individuals and groupings who have expressed varying degrees of opposition to the changes that emanated from it. Most notable has been the French Archbishop, Marcel Lefebvre, who opposed the changes at the council itself, particularly in relation to liturgy, religious freedom, ecumenism, and collegiality. He wrote of his opposition in several volumes.¹³² In 1970, he founded the Society of St Pius X for the training of traditionalist priests and a body devoted to the retention of the Tridentine rite in liturgy. In 1976, he was suspended from ministry by Pope Paul VI for having ordained priests without authority. In 1988, he and five others were excommunicated as a result of the ordination of four bishops in Switzerland, again without authority. The Holy See has engaged with the Society of St Pius X on a number of occasions since 1988 in an effort to seek re-union. The Commission *Ecclesia Dei* was established by Pope John Paul II in 1988 as a forum for communications and pastoral care of those followers of the Society of St Pius X who broke away from it, following Lefebvre's schismatic actions. However, the history of these negotiations show that even within those opposed to the council there are varying degrees of reception and non-reception. There are groupings in communion with the Holy See who are opposed to the teachings of the council and who want to return to the church of the period of Pope Pius XII. These include organisations such as *Una Voce*, *Opus Sacerdotale* and *Silenziosi della Chiesa*.¹³³ Daniele Menozzi makes the point that even among the majority position, in favour of the *aggiornamento* which the council projected, there has not been 'a homogeneous interpretation of it.'¹³⁴ There was a fear among these groups that the council would lead to a secularisation of the church. Their position is not dissimilar to the views expressed by Henri de Lubac, referred to earlier in this chapter.

Those who were dissatisfied with the self-understanding of the church projected by Vatican II, projected in terms of its relationship with the world, saw more surrender than dialogue. According to Lennan, the self-understanding of the church set forth in *Lumen Gentium* in terms of the people of God and the role of all the baptised, was blamed for the decision of many priests to leave the priesthood in the late 1960s and 1970s and the radical

¹³² Marcel Lefebvre, *I Accuse the Council* (2nd ed., Kansas City, 1998); Lefebvre, *Against The Heresies: Comments on the Papal Encyclicals condemning Modern Errors Infecting the Church and Society* (Kansas City, 1997).

¹³³ Daniele Menozzi, 'Opposition to the Council 1966-84' in Alberigo, Jossua & Komonchak (eds), *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 326.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

reduction in the numbers of seminarians.¹³⁵ These changes were viewed by many of the discontents as a form of vandalism brought on by the council in its quest for renewal. Their response highlights the lack of theological dialogue and development in the church in the decades preceding the council. As Pottmeyer points out, Vatican II made no dogmatic pronouncements and that Trent and Vatican I were effectively still valid. Thus, in the reception of Vatican II, the church must be attentive to the ecclesial self-understanding that pertained in the period before the council.¹³⁶ Such an analysis is further added to by a definition agreed by the council itself with regard to how its documents and acts were to be interpreted. This definition was agreed by the council on 16 November 1964, just before the final vote on *Lumen Gentium*. The definition reads:

Taking conciliar custom into consideration and also the pastoral purpose of the present Council, the sacred Council defines as binding on the Church only those things in matters of faith and morals which it shall openly declare to be binding. The rest of the things which the sacred Council sets forth, inasmuch as they are the teaching of the Church's supreme magisterium, ought to be accepted and embraced by each and every one of Christ's faithful according to the mind of the sacred Council. The mind of the Council becomes known either from the matter treated or from its manner of speaking, in accordance with the norms of theological interpretation.¹³⁷

Thus, the council in clarifying its pastoral role left open to theological interpretation the meaning of its pronouncements, deferring instead to 'the mind of the Council' and 'its manner of speaking'. Hence, we see here another of the ambiguities that are inherent in many of the council's texts, thus adding to the 'great confusion' spoken of, historically, by Newman.

Conclusion

This chapter has located the history and ideas regarding the reception of the Second Vatican Council in order to provide a framework for the overall thesis – one rooted in history and informed by key theological concepts. We have examined Vatican II in terms of its relationship with other councils in the history of the Roman Catholic Church. We have put forward the thesis that Vatican II was different in that it was the first truly global gathering of

¹³⁵ It is worth noting that the Extraordinary Synod of the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 1985 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Council makes little mention of the term 'People of God', instead focussing on the 'Church as mystery', the 'bride of Christ' and 'temple of the Holy Spirit' etc. In this way, the Synod was reacting to the reception and interpretation of conciliar themes and was, in the words of Avery Dulles, moving 'beyond the Council, at least in what it chose to emphasise'. See, Avery Dulles, 'The Reception of Vatican II at the Extraordinary Synod of 1985', in Alberigo, Jossua & Komonchak (eds), *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 351.

¹³⁶ Pottmeyer, 'A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II', p. 33.

¹³⁷ AS, III/8, p. 10; cited in Luis Antonio Tagle, 'The "Black Week" of Vatican II (November 14-21 1964)' in Alberigo and Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, vol. iv, p. 389.

the church and that it projected forward a vision for a world church, rather than one located in Europe alone. We have also noted that Vatican II was a pastoral council held at a pivotal juncture in world history and that this reality has impacted both its historical treatment and its reception. We have surveyed the key historical works on the council. We have examined many facets of reception and provided a survey of the thinking on this subject as offered by several key commentators. Finally, we have reviewed briefly the topic of non-reception and the difficulties which arose therefrom. With regard to Ireland, we have provided a brief review of the literature available on Vatican II to date.

Vatican II was more than just a council that produced documents, it was a global ecclesial event, a moment of theological reflection where questions were asked in terms of how the church understood itself as the people of God, how it celebrated its liturgy and how it related to other Christians and to the world. Vatican II was a movement in which the church brought forth a new vision, one rooted in the return to the sources - *ressourcement*. This was no parliament or no mere assembly. Understanding it and coming to terms with its magnitude required a readiness to participate and to question. According to Pottmeyer, the council first had to be experienced, then understood and received.¹³⁸ From it came a conciliar movement which led to new structures at universal, national, diocesan and parish levels. As we will see in subsequent chapters, these new practices, rooted in tradition and *communio*, began to emerge more clearly within both at the juridical and pastoral levels of church life during the period covered by this thesis. But, what the thesis will explore is whether or not the council was embraced by the bishops of Ireland in a way that would renew the church by opening it up to theological enquiry and fuller participation, not just in terms of governance or liturgy but in terms of understanding the church as mystery and as a leaven in society, just as Pope John XXIII envisioned.

The *aggiornamento* of Vatican II was centred on a return to the sources that produced something new. The documents of the council presented the church to a new age. In his opening address to the council, Pope John XXIII declared that ‘the Deposit of Faith is one thing ... the way it is expressed is another.’¹³⁹ Writing in 1994, Pope John Paul II spoke of the council’s striking tone, using the ‘language of the Gospel, the language of the Sermon on the Mount and

¹³⁸ Pottmeyer, ‘A New Phase in the Reception of Vatican II’, p. 30.

¹³⁹ Cited in Andrea Riccardi, ‘The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council’ in *History of Vatican II*, vol. ii, p. 17.

the Beatitudes’ and of its presentation ensuring ‘the authentic autonomy of earthly realities.’¹⁴⁰ Theobald tells us that the treatment of reception from within this perspective must start from our own historical awareness and ‘from a diagnosis of the present moment’.¹⁴¹

How Vatican II emerged as an event and a movement in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and to what degree its outcomes were informed locally by and grounded in the theology that underpinned the council’s vision, will be the task of each of the following chapters. Critical also to the history of the reception of Vatican II in Ireland will be the condition of the church in Ireland and the landscape in which it carried on its mission before, during and following the council. How such historic and contemporary realities informed the reception of the council will be the subject of Chapter Two, the Irish bishops at the Second Vatican Council.

¹⁴⁰ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, no. 18, (10 November 1994) <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19941110_tertio-millennio-adveniente.html> Massimo Faggioli also picks up this theme in a review of the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) in which, he says, Francis ‘presents himself as a pope who tries to recapture Vatican II not only in its letter but also in its spirit, being both letter and spirit necessary for the reception of the council’ See, Massimo Faggioli, ‘Evangelii Gaudium as an Act of Reception of Vatican II’ in Gerard Mannion (ed.), *Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism: Evangelii Gaudium and the Papal Agenda* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 38.

¹⁴¹ Theobald, ‘The Reception of the Second Vatican Council: Drawing up a Criteriology’, p. 94.

Chapter Two

The Irish Bishops at Vatican II: Preparation for and Participation in a Church Council

Introduction

Vatican II was a council of reform for a world church. The council changed the way in which the Roman Catholic Church perceived itself and how it celebrated its major rituals. Officially, the emphasis had shifted from institution to the people of God, from the hierarchical and judicial to communion with Christ through the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, a communion with others, rooted in the baptismal vocation of all believers. Flowing from these momentous changes were reforms of liturgy and governance which involved new ways of prayer, practice and thinking. At the council, Irish bishops were propelled into a world church in which they were forced to come to terms with new theological terms and ideas. *Ressourcement*, *aggiornamento* and development – these would plunge them into the dynamics of the council and, moreover, compel them to do things differently in a rapidly changing landscape.

This chapter is divided into two parts. **Part One** will examine briefly the landscape of the church in Ireland during the decades before the council. It will then discuss the theological movements and trends that were current in Europe and examine how these were reflected in the *réalité* of the church in Ireland. It will look in particular at liturgy, ecumenism and the workings of the hierarchy generally. **Part Two** will consider both the Irish preparations for the council and the participation of the Irish bishops at the council itself.

Part One – The Church in Ireland Before Vatican II

A Peripheral Church

Ireland was partitioned in 1920 through the Government of Ireland Act, a measure which established two parliaments, north and south. In December 1921, the southern twenty-six counties achieved a degree of independence in the form of an Irish Free State. The new state was born out of a decade of revolution that saw a predominantly Catholic nation supplant the

British state in Ireland, with the help of the ‘considerable political dexterity and moral and theological ambiguity’ on the part of the Catholic bishops.¹ The Catholic bishops played an important role in securing support for the new state as Catholicism became the badge of Irish identity. As Colin Barr and Daithí Ó Corráin point out, the new government, bankrupt from years of strife, ‘was content to see the church consolidate and extend its institutional presence in the realms of education, health and welfare with minimal interference – a pattern which continued until the 1960s.’² This resulted in the Roman Catholic Church occupying a secure, influential, and even deferential place in the life of the new state. From the 1930s, that new state experienced a self-imposed, ideologically-driven political and economic isolation which manifested itself internally through protectionism, neutrality and non-participation in post-war western initiatives such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), citing partition as the main reason. Overall, the isolation of the fledgling Republic of Ireland began to lift in the 1960s as the country began to look outwards towards Europe and the rest of the world, aided by moderate economic growth and a new model for forward planning.

Between 1961 and 1971 the population of the Republic of Ireland rose from 2,818,314 to 2,978,248, representing the highest recorded figure since the foundation of the State in 1922.³ A particular feature of this was a twenty per cent increase in the number of young people; that is those aged fourteen to twenty-four years.⁴ Given the religious composition of the country at the time, this cohort would form an important part of the Vatican II reception generation. They would be part of a modernising Ireland and a church undergoing a process of *aggiornamento*.

Northern Ireland was part of the British and Allied war effort and benefited from the various economic stimuli that followed. In particular, it had the benefits of a national health service from the mid-1940s, which, coupled with free education, placed Catholics there at an advantage compared to their southern counterparts. Nonetheless, sectarian divisions, aided by political, social and economic discrimination, placed Catholics in that part of Ireland on a collision course with a political establishment that was, for the most part, alien to them.

¹ Colin Barr & Daithí Ó Corráin, ‘Catholic Ireland, 1740-2016’ in Eugenio Biagini & Mary E. Daly (eds), *The Cambridge Social History of Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 76.

² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³ Central Statistics Office, *Census 1971*, vol. I

http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1971results/volume1/A_C_1_1971_V1.pdf. (accessed 18 January 2018).

⁴ Carole Holohan, ‘Challenges to social order and Irish Identity? Youth culture in the sixties’, *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 15 (May 2013), p. 390.

Catholic bishops there tended to be defensive of their flock and, arguably, less dogmatic in the face of a Protestant majority. The council would have important meanings for the Northern Ireland communities in terms of ecumenical encounter, amidst religious and political turmoil.

Throughout the period under review there were twenty-six dioceses in Ireland. The country is divided into four ecclesiastical provinces with metropolitan sees – Armagh, Dublin, Cashel and Tuam. In terms of geography, the largest diocese is that of the primatial see, the Archdiocese of Armagh, stretching from the River Boyne at Drogheda to the River Moyola north of Magerafelt in Co. Derry. The most populous diocese is undoubtedly the Archdiocese of Dublin, including all of the city of Dublin, nearly all of Co. Wicklow and portions of Kildare, Carlow, Wexford and Laois. By 1982, it was estimated that 30% of the Catholic population of the whole island was based in the Dublin diocese.⁵

While the figure of the Archbishop of Dublin for most of this time, John Charles McQuaid, looms large due to his phenomenal work rate and influence, the growth of Dublin at this time cannot be ignored. Between McQuaid's appointment to Dublin in 1940 and his retirement in 1972, the Catholic population of the diocese had grown from 580,000 to almost 875,000, due in large measure to the construction of new suburbs and the population drift from rural Ireland to the capital. In 1941, Dublin had eighty-one parishes, by 1972 it had one hundred and fifteen and by 1982 this figure had grown to one hundred and eighty-four. All of this involved considerable capital and financial outlay. It also demanded new schools. These grew in number from three hundred and eighty-six in 1946 to five hundred and eighteen in 1972 and to five hundred and fifty in 1982.⁶ The number of Catholic secondary schools increased from sixty-two to 150 between 1946 and 1972.⁷ During the same period, the number of priests in the diocese increased from 318 to 567. In addition, Dublin was also responsible for several institutions in the fields of health and education. It also had a very active Catholic Social Services Conference which delivered a range of welfare supports. Overall, in terms of numbers, the Archdiocese of Dublin was a very significant *locus* for interacting with a sizeable proportion of Irish Catholics, and, even apart from the figure of McQuaid himself, or his successor Dermot Ryan (1924-85), the reception of the Vatican II here would be of importance. That does not mean to say that Dublin dominated the reception of Vatican II. As subsequent

⁵ 'Quinquennial Report for the Archdiocese of Dublin 1982' (hereafter 'Dublin Quinquennial Report 1982'), by Dermot Ryan, Archbishop of Dublin, October 1982, p. 3.

⁶ See Deirdre McMahon, 'John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin, 1940-72' in James Kelly and Dáire Keogh (eds), *History of the Catholic Diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), pp 353-4; 'Dublin Quinquennial Report 1982', pp 23, 34-5.

⁷ McMahon, 'McQuaid', p. 354.

chapters will show, Dublin was somewhat behind the rest of the country in the reception of the council, especially in matters pertaining to liturgy. In other respects, such as the establishment of the Mater Dei Institute of Education, it acted independently. Much of this was to do with McQuaid's personality.

Catholicism was therefore a central feature of life in Ireland. The special position of the church as an institution and its place in Irish life manifested itself visibly at the International Eucharistic Congress in 1932 and was recognised symbolically in article forty-four of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, the 1937 Constitution of the Irish state. While the Roman Catholic Church was not the officially established religion of the Republic of Ireland (as was the case in Spain for example) there was a close relationship between church and state that was played out in the close relationship between members of the hierarchy and government ministers, augmenting the bishops' sense of confidence and control. As Louise Fuller points out:

Political support for the Catholic ethos was one of the central distinctive features of Irish life since independence. Some of the other distinctive features of Irish Catholicism were the power wielded by bishops – they adopted a very dogmatic approach, demanding and expecting conformity whether in their dealings with ordinary Catholics or political figures...⁸

By the 1950s, therefore, one commentator thought it reasonable to describe Ireland as 'the most Catholic country in the world...the only integral Catholic State in the world; a Catholic culture as it existed in the Middle Ages.'⁹ While the early 1960s witnessed the beginnings of economic development and increased industrialisation, leading to greater urbanisation, Irish society was still a rural, agricultural economy, with a tendency towards insularity. Such a conservatism tended to run counter to the reception of change. But the need to embrace modernity was an aspect that was reflected on by commentators, particularly in the light of the government's decision to apply for membership of the European Common Market in January 1962. These included one bishop, William Philbin (1907-1991) who saw change in terms of patriotism and a recovery of its human dimension, where it could be 'viewed reasonably and critically'.¹⁰ In the presence of the Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, whose lead on such questions is universally acknowledged, Philbin reflected on the urgency of an openness to change:

⁸ Louise Fuller, 'New Ireland and the Undoing of the Catholic legacy: Looking back to the Future' in Louise Fuller, John Littleton and Eamon Maher (eds), *Irish and Catholic? Towards an understanding of identity* (Dublin, 2006), p. 71.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72; see James Devane, *The Irish Rosary*, December 1952.

¹⁰ William J. Philbin, *Patriotism* (Dublin, 1957), p. 6; This pamphlet gives the text of an address to the Irish Social Conference, August 1957.

Unless Irish people in our present circumstances of combined opportunity and peril accept the responsibilities that the character of modern society is imposing upon us, unless we are prepared to be a nation in the twentieth century sense, we had better forget our European ambitions and settle for a more primitive way of life.¹¹

In some respects, Catholic life in Ireland was not dissimilar to that of other Catholic countries. But in those countries, such as France and Belgium, new currents of theological thought, shaped by studies and scholarship that had been emerging from the beginning of the twentieth century, occupied the interest of church leaders in the years following World War II. The winds of theological change, impacting on liturgical and pastoral life and a renewed engagement with modernity, were not as keenly felt in Ireland. As we shall see, even though Ireland was not without its own initiatives prior to the council, the lack of any widespread, rigorous intellectual engagement with new theological and pastoral trends directly impacted the capacity of the church in Ireland, through its leaders, to receive comprehensively the broader vision set out by the council not only through its documents but through the reception of the reform it inspired.

The Challenge of Theological Change

A whole series of changes, particularly in the area of liturgy, had emerged in the local churches of Europe, notably in France, Germany and Belgium, from the early decades of the century. These included a movement for liturgical reform, another which sought to promote Christian unity and a deeper ecumenical approach to relations between Christian churches, while a third called for biblical renewal and greater usage of history in seeking an understanding of scripture and the total ecclesiology of the church.¹²

Ressourcement, the return to sources of Christian tradition (scripture, the church fathers and liturgy), played a central part at Vatican II.¹³ Sometimes referred to as ‘*nouvelle théologie*’, *Ressourcement* challenged the dominant theological method of the pre-conciliar era which was

¹¹ ICD 1963, p. 683. This refers to an address by Bishop Philbin at the inaugural meeting of the Management Students of the Catholic Workers' College, Dublin, 30 January 1962; see, *Irish Times*, 31 January 1962, p. 1.

¹² See Roger Aubert, *La Théologie Catholique au milieu du XX^e siècle* (Tournai, 1954).

¹³ See Joseph Famerée, *L'Ecclésiologie d'Yves Congar avant Vatican II: Histoire et Église*, (Louvain, 1992); Rosino Gibellini, *Panorama de la théologie au XX^e siècle* (Paris, 2004), pp 173-289; George Lindbeck, 'Ecumenical Theology' in David F. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ii (Oxford, 1989), pp 255-73; Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie – New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor to Vatican II* (London, 2010); Aidan Nichols, 'Thomism and the Nouvelle Théologie', *The Thomist*, 64 (2000), pp 1-19; Gerald O'Collins, 'Ressourcement and Vatican II', in Flynn & Murray (eds), *Ressourcement*, pp 372-91.

manualist and neo-scholastic. The ideas of *ressourcement* theologians dominated much of French theological thought during the period 1930 until the 1960s. A movement for biblical renewal had started in Germany during the inter-war years and a liturgical renewal movement began in Belgium somewhat earlier. The liturgical renewal flourished in Germany during the years before World War II when the church was forced to move away from social action and focus instead on the celebration of the divine mysteries. A series of new initiatives came onto the scene in the church in France during and following the war, including a liturgical reform movement and the formation of the *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique* in Paris. In addition, the renewed emphasis on biblical and patristic sources led to the establishment of the *Sources Chrétiennes* series and a renewed study of ecclesiology and the church's missionary task. Those most associated with the genesis and promotion of *ressourcement* were French Dominicans and Jesuits of the faculties of Le Saulchoir in Paris and Lyon-Fourvière, including Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Henri-Marie Féret, Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou and Hans Urs von Balthasar.¹⁴ Karl Rahner and, arguably, Joseph Ratzinger can also be added to the list of *ressourcement* theologians.

Another factor that should not be forgotten is that many of the promoters of *ressourcement* were strongly opposed to Nazism and had suffered for their opposition. Most notable in this regard was Congar who, following resistance combat, was taken prisoner and held in Colditz and Lubeck during the war. He was an implacable enemy of national socialism and considered his time in detention as a moment of grace, enabling him to reflect further on the necessity for ecumenical dialogue as an essential part of the return to the sources.¹⁵ Similarly, de Lubac was a strident opponent of anti-Semitism during the Nazi occupation of France.

Ressourcement is also about knowing the tradition to which the church gives witness rather than of repetition of something traditional from the recent past. As Gabriel Flynn points out, 'the view of tradition proposed by the *nouvelle théologie*, far from being traditionalist, in the sense of a repetition of the recent past, was concerned rather with the unity of the everliving tradition.'¹⁶ The success of the *ressourcement* theologians may be found in their capacity to evoke a 'rejection of a long-since arid neo-scholasticism' coupled with their 'concern to engage

¹⁴ See Yves M.J. Congar, *Dialogue between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism* (London, 1966), p. 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 29-30.

¹⁶ Flynn, 'Introduction' in Flynn & Murray (eds), *Ressourcement*, p. 5.

with the contemporary world and to ensure the essential unity of theology'.¹⁷ Such an approach was moving beyond the juridical model of faith that the Council of Trent (1545-63) put forward, with a strong emphasis on orthodoxy and certainty. This was the model for teaching theology in seminaries and Catholic universities; it was rigid and, for the most part, without reference to the primary sources. This became known as 'baroque theology' referring to the period following Trent.

The *Ressourcement* movement engendered considerable controversy and was targeted by some who were opposed to what they termed the *nouvelle théologie*. As Gerard Loughlin points out, the promoters of *ressourcement* challenged the reigning theology of the day and 'attracted the hostility of others whose careers were invested in the certainties that were being challenged.'¹⁸ This opposition, led principally by Roman figures Réginald Marie Garrigou-Lagrange and Pietro Parente, led to the promoters of *ressourcement* such as Congar and de Lubac, among others, being marginalised in the aftermath of the publication of the encyclical *Humani Generis* in 1950. These scholars spent long years in the theological and academic wilderness before being restored 'to grace' as *periti* by Pope John XXIII before and during the council. *Ressourcement*, like the council it influenced, was a reform movement. Nonetheless, for Congar, *ressourcement* was the standard for church reform, a call to move from 'a less profound to a more profound tradition; a discovery of the most profound resources.'¹⁹

Ressourcement and Ireland: the contribution of C.B. Daly

There were some in Ireland who, through their engagement with wider society, were *au fait* with theological developments on the continent. Cahal B. Daly (1917-2009), who studied in Paris during the 1940s. There he attended lectures given by Congar at Le Saulchoir and by Daniélou and Louis Bouyer in the *Institut Catholique*. Of the experience, he wrote that 'to meet these men, to sit at their feet in college rooms or lecture halls, to read their books or articles straight from the printing presses, was the privilege of a lifetime', as followed with keen interest 'the many-sided revival which was in progress in the Church in France', adding that 'France was then leading the whole Church in terms of theology, liturgical renewal, pastoral innovation

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸ Gerard Loughlin, 'Nouvelle Théologie: A Return to Modernism?' in Flynn & Murray (eds), *Ressourcement*, p. 36.

¹⁹ See Yves Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise*, Unam Sanctam 20 (Paris, 1950), pp 601-2; Flynn, 'Introduction', Flynn & Murray (eds), *Ressourcement*, p. 4.

and evangelisation’ and the place where, in the words of Pope Paul VI, ‘the intellectual bread of the Church is baked’.²⁰

Daly attended Vatican II as a *peritus* or expert. He was on friendly terms with Henri de Lubac, who described him in his diary as ‘an intelligent, modest man, very open to the sciences, and of sound doctrine.’²¹ In his memoirs, Daly contended that a Maynooth priest of his generation was by no means unprepared for Vatican II and could trace the continuity between the council’s teaching and what he had learned in his college days. In this regard, he stressed the importance of situating the definitions of the great councils of the church in the history of their time and in the context of the theological debates out of which they grew. As a result, he saw his study of theology as helping him in advance ‘to see the documents of the council when they came as a development, not a rupture, and to find in them a return to deeper sources of the faith.’²² Daly’s direct involvement in the establishment of an innovative social doctrine group *Rex Christi* in Ireland in the late 1940s provided another backdrop to his contribution towards the reception of the council.

Despite the exposure of Daly and a limited number of other Irish Catholics to the kind of ideas being received on the continent, the *ressourcement* movement did not gain major traction in Ireland in the period leading up to the council. Furthermore, despite Daly’s assertion, which appears to be based more on wishful thinking than reality, there is no reference in the *Calendarium* of the national seminary to any significant *ressourcement*-related topic either before or indeed for many years after the council.²³ However, one Maynooth theologian (and future archbishop of Dublin) who was conversant with *ressourcement* was Kevin McNamara (1926-87). A native of Co Clare, he wrote articles, in various journals, on the subject, highlighting especially its potential to provide people with an understanding of theology.²⁴ New possibilities for sharing such an understanding were becoming available in Ireland.

²⁰ Cahal B. Daly, *Steps on my Pilgrim Journey: Memories and Reflections* (Dublin, 1998), p. 104. Daly was appointed Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise (1967-82), then Bishop of Down and Connor (1982-1990) before being appointed Archbishop of Armagh (1990-96). He was made a cardinal in 1991.

²¹ Henri Cardinal De Lubac, *Vatican Council Notebooks*, Introduced and annotated by Loïc Figoureux, trans. by Andrew Stefanelli and Anne Englund Nash (2 vols., San Francisco, 2015), ii, p. 304. De Lubac was made a cardinal on the same day as Daly in 1991.

²² Daly, *Pilgrim Journey*, p. 91.

²³ See Gabriel Flynn, ‘*Ressourcement* and Vatican II: Reform and Renewal’, in Lane (ed.), *Vatican II in Ireland*, p. 75.

²⁴ Kevin McNamara, ‘Catholic Theology Today: A Recent Survey’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 21, no. 3 (July 1954), pp 243-58. Some of the wide range of other articles by McNamara include: ‘An Anglican View of Primacy’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 26, no. 1 (January 1959), pp 73-81; ‘The Theology of Christian Unity’,

Theological developments in Ireland

In the Introduction we noted the approach to theological formation in Ireland historically. By the early 1950s there were those who were prepared to tap into the new currents that were clearly emerging on the continent and to provide an outlet for discussion here in Ireland. In her analysis of modern Irish Catholicism, Fuller, cites the founding of the pastorally-focussed journal, *The Furrow*, in 1949 as representing the beginning of a more questioning mood. The driving force behind the new venture was Dr J. G. McGarry (1904-77), a member of the academic staff at St Patrick's College, Maynooth.²⁵ Other important developments in theology at this time were the launching of *Doctrine and Life* founded in 1951 and a rejuvenation of the *Irish Theological Quarterly* (ITQ), which had fallen into abeyance for several decades.

A quick survey of these theological journals, particularly the new ones, shows to what degree the changes in theological reflection were being studied in Ireland. *The Furrow*, for example, while devoted to pastoral theology, had a strong practical emphasis and this, together with the personality and ecclesial dexterity of its principal founder and his knowledge of its readership, was the basis of its success and longevity.²⁶ While it was an independent publication, its first issue pledged that the journal would be 'guided by the mind and spirit of the Church.'²⁷ Fuller argues that in pledging loyalty to the bishops, McGarry as editor had a more 'catholic understanding of loyalty. It was loyalty to the church in the broadest sense and not just to the Church in the narrow sense in which it was construed at that time...'.²⁸ The Dominican journal, *Doctrine and Life*, while becoming one of the foremost theological journals of its time, was more prudent at first in terms of its coverage of the new theological trends. Yet, its opening editorial placed it as 'the Irish counterpart of the French Dominican publication *La Vie Spirituelle*' which was one of those journals that provided a forum for theological insights in the years before the council.²⁹ In time, *Doctrine and Life* was to be at the forefront in explaining and debating the impact of the conciliar decisions and vision.

Irish Theological Quarterly, 28, no. 4 (December 1962), pp 255-78; 'The Church and the Council', *The Furrow*, 14, no. 5 (May 1963), pp 289-302.

²⁵ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 82.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 83-4.

²⁷ 'Foreword', *The Furrow*, 1, no. 1 (February 1950), p. 5.

²⁸ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 86.

²⁹ Finbar Ryan, 'Doctrine and Life', *Doctrine and Life* 1, no. 1, (February 1951), p. 4.

On the other hand, the *Irish Theological Quarterly* (ITQ), founded in 1906 by St Patrick's College, Maynooth and published until 1922, re-appeared in 1951. Its stance was more traditional and conformist. However, as Fuller states,

it did provide an insight into the battle of ideas that was being played out at that time, between those theologians pressing for a "new" theology which would be more relevant to the contemporary person and those who felt that any modifications of existing theology would endanger objective truth.³⁰

This was expressed in its foreword in 1951 when the editor said that the journal would be 'devoted to the elucidation and defence of Catholic truth. This defensive stance was reflected in some of the articles published in the journal during the decade preceding Vatican II. Kevin McNamara, in his 1954 survey of the theological scene voiced his concerns about existentialism and how it 'had impinged on various departments of Catholic theology' and criticised those Catholics who promoted 'situation ethics' instead of the main principals of Catholic moral theology.³¹ However, he saw value in *ressourcement*, noting that the revival of scripture and patristics had shown that 'traditional Catholic theology can... fully provide for the religious needs of the human heart.'³² But, as noted above, he also saw the potential for the new theological ideas in terms of a renewal of theology among the wider church in a world that was in desolation:

Continental theologians are fully conscious of the intense intellectual activity and the widespread desolation of spirit which form the mental and emotional climate in which they live, and which call for their own special and immediate response from Catholic theology. Such a response Catholic theology can certainly give, but if it is to be heard and accepted, it must be presented in a language our contemporaries understand and must speak to them directly of values they particularly prize.³³

At the same time, McNamara's reference to 'the mental and emotional climate in which they live' and 'their own special and immediate response' points to an awareness of the European situation but, at the same time, an Irish detachment from it. The fact that Ireland did not have direct experience of World War II would have been a factor in the chasm of ideas here, thus adding to the peripheral outlook of the Irish church leaders.

In another article, published in *ITQ* in 1955, the future Cardinal William Conway, then professor of moral theology and canon law at Maynooth, criticised the new trends in the science of moral theology, especially those who argued that morality 'gets its force from inner love

³⁰ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 102.

³¹ McNamara, 'Catholic Theology Today', pp 250-1.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

rather than the external obligation’³⁴ Conway was also a contributor to the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (*IER*), especially to its ‘Notes and Queries’ section where he would provide interpretation and clarity on rulings contained in church teachings or in the manuals used by priests for giving guidance in the confessional. The *IER* was founded by Cardinal Cullen in 1861. Like its founder, its tone and style was formal and didactic. The journal ceased publication in 1968. Fuller argues that while the articles in journals such as *Irish Theological Quarterly* at this time provide an insight into intellectual debates at a global level, insofar as Ireland was concerned they also shed a light ‘into Irish theologians’ attitudes towards the simmering changes’. She states, and what is at the core of this thesis, that they ‘stood aloof from the debate. To the extent that they did not get involved, their approach was defensive, apologetic.’³⁵

Contributors to the two new Irish journals concentrated on a range of topical questions. Early issues of *Doctrine and Life* included articles on holiness, liturgy, the ancient rite of baptism, and the priesthood of the faithful.³⁶ Whereas *The Furrow* concentrated on the pastoral and practical, *Doctrine and Life*, in the main, focussed on the theological dimension. By the end of the 1960s, the Dominican journal was also focussing on the problems facing the church in Ireland, especially the role of lay people in an increasingly secular world. One example of this was an article in 1960 by Peter Birch, professor of education in Maynooth (and a future bishop of Ossory). He highlighted the increasing value being placed on scientific advances and the status of scientists in society as a result, especially among younger people. He was critical of the way in which Catholic values and beliefs were being openly challenged. Calling for the establishment of study groups, he saw much of this problem as one which the lay people had to solve. He argued that

The layman knows the secular subject already, and he has the right to be given accurate theological knowledge commensurate with this secular knowledge of his which he will combine with it to form the view of a Catholic scientist or teacher or social organiser or writer.³⁷

³⁴ William Conway, ‘The Science of Moral Theology: New Trends’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, xxii, no. 1, (1955), p. 155.

³⁵ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 104.

³⁶ See A. M. Moynihan, ‘The Precept of Holiness’, *Doctrine and Life*, 1, no. 1, (February 1951), pp 16-20; Joseph Moran, ‘An Appeal for the Liturgy’, *Doctrine and Life*, 1, no. 1 (February 1951), pp 28-34; F. Well, ‘The ancient rite of Baptism’, *Doctrine and Life*, 2, no. 3, (May 1952), pp 69-74; Dominic Devas, ‘Outside the Church, No Salvation’, *Doctrine and Life*, 3, no. 1, (February 1953), pp 11-14; Colman O’Neill, ‘The Priesthood of the Faithful’, *Doctrine and Life*, 6, no. 1 (February-March 1956), pp 3-10; Conleth Kearns, ‘Our Lord in the Scriptures’, *Doctrine and Life*, 9, no. 1 (February-March 1959), pp 4-14.

³⁷ Peter Birch ‘Doctrine in Ireland’, *Doctrine and Life*, 10, no. 3, (June-July 1960) pp 133-38 (p. 135). Another article of note by Birch is ‘Theology for Leaders’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 21, no. 3 (July 1954), pp 239-43.

In an article in May 1962, the writer Desmond Fennell (1929 -) penned an article for *Doctrine and Life* in which he put the question: will Ireland remain Christian? For him, the failure of the Christian leaders to understand the new developments' such as greater prosperity, literacy and urbanisation, and 'to make Christian deductions from them and to convey these in a living manner to the believers' was the cause of the problem. Ireland could not be immune from such a scenario, he argued.³⁸

The Furrow published a number of articles on aspects of the liturgical reform, some of which will be cited later in this chapter and in chapter six. Among the articles of note was one published in 1956 on baptism and the community by Mary Purcell, in which she compare the impoverished privatised celebration of the sacrament in Ireland with the communal celebration of it in Spain, as experienced by her. Coming as it did around the time of the changes to the liturgies of Holy Week, it was an attempt to highlight for the readership the potential and possibilities of the reform.³⁹ Articles in *The Furrow* ranged across varied topics such as the church in the New Testament, the sacraments, church architecture, the Sunday instruction and television.⁴⁰ While both *Doctrine and Life* and *The Furrow* sought to keep readers up to date with developments in the church, the latter was not afraid to broach contentious subjects such as censorship, emigration or Christian unity.⁴¹ Both journals printed articles authored abroad, giving Irish readership a flavour of outside thoughts. *The Furrow* also published articles on Catholic life in various European countries, thus bringing its Irish readership (mostly clerical) into the sphere of what was happening in what was becoming the central workstation of the future reforms.⁴² Thus, at least some priests in Ireland were becoming exposed to the new theological ideas and developments, even though their own training and ecclesial culture may not have always prepared them for it. This represented both the theological deficit and the promising possibilities for the church in Ireland in the decades before the council.

How did this compare with other countries? In the United States of America, Catholic intellectuals were, by the 1950s, beginning to engage with new ideas. As we will see in chapter

³⁸ Desmond Fennell, 'Will the Irish stay Christian', *Doctrine and Life*, 12, no. 5 (May 1962), p. 247.

³⁹ Mary Purcell, 'Baptism and the Community', *The Furrow*, 7, no. 11, (November 1956), pp 709-12.

⁴⁰ See Thomas Holland, 'The Church in the New Testament', *The Furrow*, 9, no. 2 (February 1956), pp 102-10; Placid Murray, 'Liturgical Principles for Church Architecture', *The Furrow*, 13, no. 9, (September 1962), pp 499-515; Basil Hermans, 'The Sunday Instruction', *The Furrow*, 4, no. 11, (November 1953), pp 626-32; Ethna Conway, 'Television and Radio', *The Furrow*, 8, no. 11, (September 1957), pp 727-30.

⁴¹ See, Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 88.

⁴² See, P. J. Brophy, 'New Trends in France', *The Furrow*, 1, no. 4 (May 1950), pp 179-86; C.B. Daly, 'The New French Revolution', *The Furrow*, 3, no. 5 (May 1952), pp 177-89; Henry Boelaars, 'Catholic Life in Holland', *The Furrow*, 3, no. 2 (February 1952), pp 59-68; Seán Ó Riordan, 'In Germany Today', *The Furrow*, 4, no. 3 (March 1953), pp 119-31.

six, the impact of the liturgical movement had a particular resonance there. The 1950s was also a time when Catholic intellectuals there ‘were primarily concerned with overcoming Catholic exclusiveness and the so-called “ghetto-mentality”’ and from this standpoint they began to look towards past images of Catholic liberals of the 1890s who called attention to ‘ecumenical activities... concern with social problems, their love of democracy and their passion to make Catholicism a relevant and meaningful feature of American life.’⁴³ Until the 1950s, David O’Brien argues, American Catholics did not question the conservative character of their local church. However, an essay by John Tracy Ellis in 1955 pointed to a more assertive, confident and self-critical grouping of Catholic intellectuals who felt that the need for unity was no longer strong enough to prevent public controversy.⁴⁴ The American Jesuit theologian and ecumenist, Gustave Weigel (1906-64), a *peritus* at the council, wrote in 1957 that theology in the United States was confused and that too many theologians there viewed the subject from an viewpoint of apologetics. Like Birch in Ireland, he was critical of the lack of Catholic intellectuals in the secular world and contrasted this with France, Germany and Italy where Catholics engaged in every phase of intellectual life. He went on to outline his analysis:

The American Catholic problem is a sociological one, not theological. The peculiar situation of a church whose historical roots are a non-intellectual proletariat, gathered from all over Europe and only recently rising to economic conditions requisite for scholarly dedication is the cause of our poor intellectual showing.⁴⁵

The core of this argument could well be applied to Ireland at this time too. In fact, given the strong influence of Irish immigrants on the church in the United States, it is a reflection of the sociological dimension of theological reflection. Knowing the true good of scholarship is also important in this respect. In other words, it is not meant for defence of theological positions but for reflection, contemplation and investigation.

Weigel was a colleague of another renowned American theologian John Courtney Murray (1904-67) and both of them worked together on a journal called *Theological Studies*. Weigel specialised in Protestant theology, publishing a wide range of articles on this subject.⁴⁶

⁴³ David J. O’Brien, ‘Catholic Historiography: A Post-Conciliar Evaluation’, *Church History*, 37, no. 1 (March 1968), p. 92.

⁴⁴ See John Tracy Ellis, ‘American Catholics and the Intellectual Life’, *Thought*, xxx (Autumn 1955), pp 351-88; Robert D. Cross, ‘Rewriting American Catholic History’, *The Commonweal*, LXXIX (December 13 1963), pp 351-52; Joseph M. White ‘Theological Studies at the Catholic University of America: Organization and Leadership before Vatican II’, *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 7, no. 4 (Fall 1988), pp 453-66.

⁴⁵ Gustave Weigel, ‘Catholic Intellectualism: A Theologian’s Reflections’, *The Review of Politics*, 19, no. 3 (July 1957), p. 287.

⁴⁶ For example, Gustave Weigel, ‘American Roman Catholicism and Ecumenism’, *Lutheran World*, 5 (June 1958, pp 30-37; ‘Catholic and Protestant: End of a War?’, *Thought*, 33, no. 130 (Autumn 1958), pp 380-98; ‘Recent Protestant Theology’ *Theological Studies*, xvi (December 1953), pp 145-53; see also Patrick W. Collins ‘Gustave Weigel, S.J.: The Ecumenical Preparations, *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 7, no. 1 (Winter 1988), pp 113-27.

Courtney Murray, who was to play an important role at Vatican II was also a prolific writer contributing articles on the place of the church in society and the relationship between church and state.⁴⁷ Courtney Murray also contributed to the *The Furrow*.⁴⁸

Subsequent chapters will also show some of the extent to which new theological ideas were being developed and reflected in various publications in Europe, especially in France and Germany. The above survey shows how the winds of change were shaping not only theological discourse on the continent but what the key influences in that discourse were. The ‘mental and emotional climate’ of the post-war years would certainly have been a factor in Europe, but only to be a driving force for change. The Irish view, as typified by the comments of Conway and McNamara, for example, gave the impression that while they could understand the rationale behind the new thinking and the promotion of new ideas, Ireland was not yet ready. That Ireland was different would be a feature of the theological approach and, in general, the stance of the bishops in the years before and during the council. Being aware of the theological winds of change in Europe and elsewhere and having their own consciousness of the church in Ireland, made the bishops defensive. This was unfortunate because, as we will see, the new thinking that was beginning to emerge in the Ireland through publications such as *The Furrow* and *Doctrine and Life* was more pastoral and would be of great value in the years following the council. The fact that the pastoral and the theological did not meet impoverished the reception of Vatican II in Ireland.

When compared with the United States, one sees a wider discourse there, encompassing a broader range of journals, including those outside the field of theology. But, as has been noted, the questions about engagement with new ideas there was not theological, but sociological. And one might add to that, historical too.

Liturgical Reform

The modern movement for liturgical reform dates to before the First World War and, over the years, featured such names as the Belgian Dom Lambert Beauduin (1873-1960), the German Romano Guardini (1885-1968), and the French Dominican Pierre-Marie Gy (1922-2004). It was during the inter-war years, however, that the movement blossomed. The *Centre*

⁴⁷ John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths* (New York, 1960); see also, John E. Tashjean, ‘On Reading Fr Murray’, *The Christian Scholar*, 44, no. 4 (Winter 1961), pp 347-9.

⁴⁸ John Courtney Murray, ‘Censorship and Literature’, *The Furrow*, 7, no. 11 (November 1956), pp 679-91.

National de Pastorale Liturgique was formed in France in 1943. In 1943 also, a community Mass was sanctioned for use in Germany. This allowed for a mixture of Latin and German with greater use of the Dialogue Mass.⁴⁹ In 1947, these innovations received approval in the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII, which acknowledged the role of the laity in the liturgy. Shortly afterwards, the celebration of the Easter Vigil was restored to what liturgists see as its rightful place on the evening of Holy Saturday, initially on an experimental basis from 1951. In 1956 a whole series of reforms saw the universal re-introduction of the entire Easter Triduum, the three-day celebration by Christians of the paschal mystery, from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday. This was a return to what happened in the early church, a return to what many see as the true meaning of tradition – *tradere* – a handing on. These changes in liturgical practice also included a call on the lay faithful ‘to a more active and fruitful participation in the ceremonies’, terminology that would resonate in the post-conciliar parlance with regard to liturgy.⁵⁰ In essence, Vatican II drew from these developments to return the church back to its sources.⁵¹

During its early years, *The Furrow* devoted much space to liturgy and liturgical renewal. It enabled serious soul-searching as to the quality and understanding of liturgical praxis among Irish Catholics and an assessment of the spiritual health of Irish Catholicism. Edward Long, a Donegal priest, bemoaned the excessive private piety of Irish people. As he put it: ‘Private needs, the worries and hopes of the individual, dominate piety and there is little consciousness of being a family in Christ.’⁵² In 1958, a Monaghan priest, Daniel Duffy, cited the strong Mass attendances and the improvements in the numbers receiving holy communion subsequent to relaxation in the fasting regulations but highlighted that, particularly in rural areas, there was still ‘the survival of a certain jansenistic attitude towards the reception of the blessed sacrament.’ He attributed this to the ‘false association of “confession and communion”’.⁵³

⁴⁹ Edward Long, ‘The Background to *Mediator Dei*’, *The Furrow*, 1, no. 9, (October 1950), pp 450-1.

⁵⁰ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (hereinafter AAS.), xlvii (1955), *De ordine Hebdomadae Sanctae instaurato rite peragendo* (*Cum propositum*), 16 November 1955, pp 838-847. See also, *The Furrow*, 7, no. 1, (January 1956), p. 47; *The Furrow*, 7, no. 3, (March 1956), pp 132-159; see, S.C. no. 14.

⁵¹ Speaking at the MacGill Summer School, in Glenties, County Donegal, on 24 July 2012, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin stated: ‘If anything [Vatican II] was a Council which brought us backwards, it brought us back beyond what we had experienced in our youth and education to a deeper understanding of the faith of the Church, which was rooted in the scriptures themselves and in the constant tradition of the Church.’ See, <http://www.macgillsummerschool.com/the-catholic-church-in-ireland-turning-the-corner-of-renewal/>.

⁵² Edward Long, ‘Irish Piety’, *The Furrow*, 1, no. 2, (March 1950), p. 14.

⁵³ Daniel Duffy, ‘Eucharistic Piety in Irish Practice’, *The Furrow*, 9, no. 6, (June 1958), p. 358.

From the early 1950s, the Benedictine monks at Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick became actively engaged in the promotion of liturgical reform. In 1954, they organised the first liturgical congress there and thus began the Irish liturgical movement. These congresses were to be a feature of Catholic life in Ireland for the next twenty-one years and they attracted some of the most high-profile scholars and thinkers in this area. The papers presented at Glenstal were often published in journals such as *The Furrow* and *Doctrine and Life*, together with commentaries on the progress of the congresses, thus enabling priests and others in parishes to access some understanding of what was happening. A listing of some of the papers delivered at the Glenstal Congresses is set out in Appendix I.⁵⁴

One of Glenstal's promoters, Dom Placid Murray (b. 1919) saw the attitude of the majority of the clergy as the principal obstacle to reform, with many of them seeing liturgy as 'nothing more than rubrics or outward ceremonial.'⁵⁵ This was unsurprising in view of their training at Maynooth. As far as the laity was concerned, one of the senior bishops of the time had observed as far back as 1920 that:

... despite their pre-eminent piety, and devotion to Church practices, the strange fact remains, that there are no people who evince so much reluctance to active participation in Church functions as our Irish people. Their whole tendency in assisting at public devotions and liturgical functions is towards a devout passivity.⁵⁶

At an international liturgical congress at Assisi in 1956, Josef A. Jungmann, a regular contributor at Glenstal, reminded his listeners that the forms of the church's liturgy in the early centuries were determined by the necessity for bringing the faithful close to the act of worship. He pointed out that when the language used in the Mass, *i.e.* Latin, was no longer understood by the people it gave rise to a 'petrification of the liturgy and its estrangement from the people.' He called for modern languages to be given a greater place in the rites of the church.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, despite the zeal and efforts of a small group of priests, the general attitude of the Irish bishops to liturgical reform in the pre-Vatican II period was lukewarm, as will be

⁵⁴ The archives of the Benedictine Abbey at Glenstal hold a wide range of papers concerning the congresses. The papers delivered at Glenstal and a range of commentaries on them were published in three volumes in 1961, 1962 and 1967. See, Dom Placid Murray (ed.), *Studies in Pastoral Liturgy*, 1, (Maynooth: The Furrow Trust, 1961); Vincent Ryan (ed.), *Studies in Pastoral Liturgy*, 2, (Maynooth: The Furrow Trust, 1962); Dom Placid Murray (ed.), *Studies in Pastoral Liturgy*, 3, (Maynooth: The Furrow Trust, 1967). I am grateful to Brian O'Shea OSB, Glenstal, for this information.

⁵⁵ Placid Murray O.S.B., 'Liturgical Piety', *The Furrow*, 5, no. 11, (November 1954), p. 677.

⁵⁶ J. J. McNamee, 'Our Silent Congregations', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Fifth Series, xv (June-December 1920), p. 177. McNamee was Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise (1927-1966) and chairman of the Liturgical Commission of the Irish Hierarchy from 1955 until 1963. His interest in liturgy saw him introduce the dialogue Mass at St Macartan's Cathedral, Monaghan in the early 1920s when he was a priest of Clogher diocese. Information supplied by Bishop Joseph Duffy in a private conversation (2014).

⁵⁷ *Irish Press*, 20 September 1956.

seen below. The work of the bishops' liturgy committee was so sparse as to be considered nominal. In fact, the liturgy committee and its role was regarded as so peripheral that in February 1961 Cardinal D'Alton had to engage in a fact-finding mission in order to find out the names of its chairman and members. This incident arose from the arrival of a questionnaire from the Vatican II preparatory commission for liturgy.⁵⁸

The Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid (1895-1973), speaking to priests at their annual retreat in 1961, referred to his anxiety about any liturgical reform that might alter the spiritual life of people as follows:

To those who state that in Dublin there is no 'liturgical movement', as they call it, I should like to reply: generations of parish clergy, to whom is committed the pastoral care of souls, and who have visitated and know their people, have slowly built up a framework of religious practice, within which the faithful have lived the Christian life with great fidelity.⁵⁹

Again, there was 'stubbornness, denial and delusion' on the part of McQuaid. As we will see, he was aware of change happening but sought to delay it as much as possible. McQuaid quite clearly had reservations about the potential for change that *ressourcement* brought to liturgy. His attitude gave expression to a deep authoritarianism that marked Irish Catholicism, one that failed to recognise that biblical and liturgical renewal was very closely connected to a renewed interest in the church fathers. According to Roger Aubert, the aim of this renewal was to recover that which had been lost or neglected in the course of history.⁶⁰

Ecumenism

Another critically important feature of the theological developments during this period lay in the area of ecumenism. Congar's view of ecumenism was rooted in *ressourcement* and an intensification of dialogue on questions such as, *inter alia*, christology and mariology, redemption, creation, the church as the people of God and body of Christ – terms which would feature at Vatican II and upon which Congar would have such a strong and lasting influence.⁶¹ The roots of the ecumenical movement can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, at

⁵⁸ Lenny to Fergus, 1 February 1961; Fergus to Lenny, 3 February 1961; D'Alton to Fergus, 29 March 1961; Harty to D'Alton, 21 April 1961; D'Alton to Harty, 25 April 1961 (COFLA, John D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/3/2, Box 4.1).

⁵⁹ 'Address to Priests Retreat, 13 July 1961, handwritten notes' (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/406).

⁶⁰ Aubert, *La Théologie Catholique au milieu du XXe siècle*, pp 38-9.

⁶¹ Yves Congar, *Dialogue between Christians*, pp 356-7; see also, Gabriel Flynn, 'Ressourcement, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to *Nouvelle Théologie*', in Flynn & Murray (eds), *Ressourcement*, pp 231-2.

least.⁶² In the twentieth century, an octave of prayer for Christian unity began in the USA in 1908 and spread to Scotland two years later. Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) introduced the octave into the Roman calendar. However, such Catholic initiatives envisaged unity as a return of the ‘separated brethren’ to the ‘one true church’. This emphasis on ‘return’ dominated official church thinking until the period of Vatican II, and was one particularly put forward by Irish church leaders. On the other hand, Pope John XXIII saw the work of the forthcoming Council as being directed towards:

...light, improvement and joy for all Christian people, towards a renewed invitation to the faithful of the individual religious groups, for them also to follow Us with friendly courtesy in this seeking after unity and grace...⁶³

Turning to the complex legacy of sectarianism in Ireland, it is clear that the politically-charged history of relations between Catholics and Protestants on the island of Ireland has created many legacies in the social, cultural and religious spheres. The initial reaction of the Catholic Church in Ireland to the ecumenical dimension of the Council can best be measured in some of the pastoral letters issued by bishops. Cardinal D’Alton devoted a lenten pastoral to the theme in 1959. As Fuller points out, his treatment of the subject was very factual but traditional.⁶⁴ Joseph Rodgers, the bishop of Killaloe, dismissed the argument that ‘one religion is as good as another’, describing it as ‘religious indifferentism’.⁶⁵ McQuaid saw the question of Church unity in unapologetic terms. In noting the aims that motivated Pope John XXIII to call the council, he said it would ‘provide an invitation to the dissidents to seek the unity that so many souls desire’.⁶⁶

Some bishops, such as Daniel Mageean, whose diocese included Belfast, perhaps in view of their minority situation, adopted a more conciliatory tone. He commented that ‘no quick and easy solution can be anticipated. The factors of misunderstanding, ignorance and prejudice, the growth of centuries, constitute a formidable obstacle’. He stressed the need for

⁶² See George H. Tavard, *Two Centuries of Ecumenism* (London, 1960); Thomas E. Fitzgerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport, CT, 2004); Michael Kinnamon, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Voices and Texts* (Geneva, 2015).

⁶³ English translation of Address by His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, 25 January 1959, with covering letter, Tardini to D’Alton, 29 January 1959 (COFLA: D’Alton papers, ARCH/12/1/, Box 1.1).

⁶⁴ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 178; ‘Lenten Pastoral to the Clergy and Laity of his Diocese, The Unity of the Church, Armagh, February 1959’ (COFLA, D’Alton papers, ARCH/12/3/16); see *Irish Independent*, 9 Feb. 1959, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *Irish Independent*, 9 Feb. 1959, p. 11.

⁶⁶ ‘Lenten Pastoral 1962’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/443).

the Church to be so united throughout the world as to form a single society.⁶⁷ Eugene O'Doherty in the neighbouring Dromore diocese declared that a determined effort towards unity was required. Using the imagery of journey, he concluded that every step taken on the journey towards unity, which may be rough at times, was a step in the right direction.⁶⁸ Just ten days before the beginning of Vatican II, William Philbin, by then bishop of Down and Connor, paid a courtesy call on the Unionist Lord Mayor of Belfast at City Hall. The visit was the first of its kind by a Catholic bishop since partition.⁶⁹

At an official level there were no points of contact between the churches and very little between church leaders. The reaction of Irish bishops to the ecumenical dimension of the council gave expression to this, notwithstanding some conciliatory gestures. This inertia would be challenged by rapid changes both in the church and society in the years that followed as the reception of the council became a reality.

The Irish Hierarchy

The Irish bishops had been meeting regularly as a body since the 1780s, initially out of necessity in order to cope with political pressures.⁷⁰ By the time of Vatican II, the day-to-day business of the hierarchy was handled by a Standing Committee composed of senior bishops which met several times each year. General meetings of all the bishops were held twice annually. Business was governed by statutes adopted in 1882. By the late 1950s, in order to exert influence for wider change, the Holy See requested that the statutes be updated. These requests for updating were transmitted through the papal nuncio in Dublin.⁷¹

In April 1958, the then papal nuncio, Albert Levame, wrote to D'Alton to transmit a request from Rome that the Irish bishops carry out a review of their statutes in line with those that bishops' conferences in other countries had undertaken. It was suggested that revised statutes could be modelled on those of Italy, Colombia or Mexico.⁷² More specifically, Rome

⁶⁷ *Irish Press*, 13 Feb. 1961, p. 4.

⁶⁸ *Irish Independent*, 5 Mar. 1962.

⁶⁹ *ICD 1963*, p. 734.

⁷⁰ For more on the origins of the Irish Hierarchy, see Pádraig Murphy, 'The Emergence of the Irish Episcopal Conference 1788-1882', *Seanchais Ard Mhaca*, 22, no 2, (2009), pp 78-87.

⁷¹ The Irish Free State opened diplomatic relations with the Holy See in 1929, a decision which was not universally welcomed by the Irish bishops at the time and the bishops, liturgical protocols apart, kept a distance from the nuncio. See Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican: The Politics and Diplomacy of Church-State Relations 1922-1960* (Cork, 1995), pp 265-311; Dermot Keogh, *The Vatican, The Bishops and Irish Politics 1919-39* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 123-57.

⁷² Archbishop Albert Levame to D'Alton, 21 April 1958 (COFLA, D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/2/ Box 3.1).

wanted the nuncio to have the right to be present at hierarchy meetings and to have access to minutes and other documents. Furthermore, Rome sought clarity on the role of the standing committee and called for the establishment of a permanent secretariat. A further request invited the bishops to consider having the chair of the hierarchy rotate among them rather than the archbishop of Armagh.⁷³

The nuncio's letter evoked a response from the joint-secretaries, Bishops James Fergus and William MacNeely, dated.⁷⁴ They stated that they did not see the need for, or the wisdom of, revising procedures which long experience had proved to be adequate in every emergency. Informing the nuncio that Ireland had witnessed a rich growth in pastoral activities and a flowering of missionary activity, unparalleled in over a thousand years, they ignored the requests to have the nuncio involved in any way with the work of the body. Instead, they outlined the effectiveness of existing arrangements. There were three commissions: (i) Primary and Technical Education (ii) Secondary and University Education and (iii) Emigration. Liturgy was relegated to a sub-committee. The bishops also rejected a further request from Rome to rotate the presidency of the hierarchy, citing partition, and stating that it was 'of the utmost importance that the chairman should be one who is fully conversant with conditions on both sides of the border...'⁷⁵

The response of the bishops brought a further letter from Cardinal Marcello Mimmi, prefect of the office dealing with the matter, in which he asserted that Rome 'rejoiced at the tremendous outpouring of pastoral activity' in Ireland and at the increasing levels of vocations and missionary activity. However, it could not share the conclusions that the statutes adopted in 1882 were adequate for present times. Mimmi added that the Holy See was inviting the Irish bishops to improve their practices as other countries had done. He concluded:

This Sacred Congregation therefore is confident that the revered and well-deserving Bishops of Ireland will be good enough to take again into consideration this question and will accept this authoritative invitation.⁷⁶

While the Irish bishops reluctantly accepted the 'authoritative invitation' to review the statutes, their hesitancy in progressing anything that would hinder their independence manifested itself in their approach. In November 1958 Bishop John Kyne of Meath, a former Rector of the

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.; Bishops MacNeely and Fergus to Levame, 19 July 1958 (COFLA, D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/2/ Box 3.1)..

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Levame to MacFeely, 23 August 1958 (COFLA, D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/3/10 Box 5.2). My emphasis.

Pontifical Irish College in Rome, was delegated by D'Alton to speak with officials he knew in the Roman Curia in an effort to determine what was motivating the Holy See in this matter. His confidential report is telling in how it conveys the general attitude of the Irish bishops to change, and the Roman view of them. Kyne expressed the view that it was the papal nuncio who was behind the moves to have the revision undertaken, so that he could have more access to the deliberations of the bishops. Another unnamed official, having shown Kyne copies of the statutes for the conferences of some European countries – some of which Kyne described as 'long, generic, involved, cumbersome' – proceeded to outline the concerns that the Holy See had regarding the Irish Hierarchy:

[The Holy See] felt we were dealing only with *questione di periferia* and neglecting fundamentals like Catechism, Catholic Press and schools. I told him we had settled all these questions long ago and invited him to Ireland to see our church in action; that our priests were nearly killed with confessions and that the number of communions was raising problems. He felt that the agenda [for Bishops' meetings] should be presented to the nuncio ... He was very keen on the setting up of a secretariate.⁷⁷

Kyne's intimation to the officials in Rome that the presence of the nuncio 'would be more of a hindrance than a help' reflected the peripheral and independent mentality of the Irish bishops with regard to the wider church. The Irish were loyal but insular.

Rome was concerned for some time that some of them were operating without reference to one another or to developments outside of Ireland. Earlier, in 1956 the Irish ambassador to the Holy See, Con Cremin, in a report to the Department of External Affairs, stated that the nuncio had reported to Rome that the general attitude of the bishops was

...symptomatic of some dangers inherent in Ireland which are not the less serious for not being obvious: the waves he said which do the harm in the Mediterranean are those that are not evident on the surface of the sea and our position is perhaps not dissimilar. He observed that there is a tendency in Ireland to "rest on our laurels" (obviously he meant from the point of view of Catholicism). In the old days, it was not easy to get to Ireland but now people and ideas can be transported with remarkable rapidity.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, the question of the reform of the statutes governing the workings of the hierarchy was left in abeyance. In 1959, the Hierarchy set up a sub-committee to review the statutes of other Bishops' Conferences. It issued a progress report which was considered at the

⁷⁷ Kyne to D'Alton, 25 November 1958, enclosing handwritten memorandum of meeting with a Mgr Avardi and another unnamed official in the Sacred Consistorial Congregation on 14 November 1958 (COFLA, D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/3/10/, Box 5.2).

⁷⁸ Cited in Niall Keogh, *Con Cremin: Ireland's Wartime Diplomat* (Cork, 2006), p. 214. This report arose from a dispute over the control of a school in Ballina.

meeting of the bishops in June 1960 and the sub-committee was ordered to continue its work and report back in a year.⁷⁹ In January 1962, D'Alton wrote to the then nuncio, Archbishop Riberi, informing him that the hierarchy had decided to postpone the revision. He cited the absence of some bishops who were attending to the work of the preparatory commissions for the forthcoming Council, and the recent Patrician Year celebrations as factors in the decision. Moreover, the chief reason was the belief among the bishops that

...the coming Council would deal with the position of the *coetus localis Episcoporum*, and that any revision that might take place now might in that case be out of date. I think there is a good deal to be said for this last point, as I presume the position of the bishops in each country will be considered by the Council.⁸⁰

In any event, the revision of the statutes was not completed until 1969 when new ones were approved by the Holy See.⁸¹ It was not until November 1969 that the nuncio was in attendance at meetings of the Episcopal Conference, as the Irish Hierarchy was by then termed.

The lack of any real dialogue or openness to theological debate, coupled with a complacent sense of power and a rather patriarchal concern for the laity meant that the Irish bishops as a body were at a disadvantage when it came to being prepared for the council and the reception of the conciliar vision. As the correspondence quoted above shows, the devotional and vocational outlook of the church in Ireland was robust but it meant that the bishops were complacent, they did not see the need for major change. Their aim was to maintain stability and not to inflict what many of them saw as unnecessary change on an unsuspecting and loyal laity. That is not to say that they did not see challenges ahead, but such challenges were still viewed largely in terms of the dangers of new ideas and changing social mores, which they often warned against. When such a course became no longer tenable, their approach to the council's vision was imbued with a cautious rigidity.

Part Two – The Church in Council: The Irish at Vatican II

Preparing for the Council: the ante-preparatory and preparatory phases

In Ireland, the response of the bishops to the calling of the council was low key. At a collegial level, the minutes of the general meetings of the hierarchy show no references at all

⁷⁹ Minutes of Meeting of the Hierarchy, 21 June 1960 (COFLA, D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/3/2, Box 4.1).

⁸⁰ D'Alton to Riberi, 30 January 1962 (COFLA, D'Alton papers, ARCH/12/2/, Box 3.1).

⁸¹ A further revision occurred in 1983.

to the council between the announcement in 1959 and its opening in October 1962, with the exception of arrangements for accommodation at the Pontifical Irish College in Rome and for travel.⁸² In the summer of 1959, Rome sent a questionnaire to all bishops and to Catholic universities, inviting them to submit their concerns and ideas for discussion at the Council. This was known as the ante-preparatory phase. This consultation, John XXIII hoped, would provide an opportunity for those tasked with planning the council to understand the needs of the local churches and bring all into dialogue with the conditions of the wider world. This was something new. As Alberigo points out:

The Catholic bishops were shocked by the invitation to assume an active role at the level of the universal Church, and it would take some time to create an atmosphere of inquiry after the long period of passivity experienced during the preceding pontificates.⁸³

All of the suggestions were synthesised into a series of questions covering eleven categories. This was then followed by the establishment of a central preparatory commission, to which D'Alton was appointed, and ten sub-commissions in June 1960.⁸⁴

There were thirty-one individual ante-preparatory submissions from Ireland, twenty-four from diocesan bishops,⁸⁵ two from auxiliary bishops, three from retired missionary bishops and one each from the papal nuncio and St Patrick's College, Maynooth.⁸⁶ These have been described as being 'short and skimpy', giving expression to 'a legalistic mentality and a concern to stick firmly to classical positions' and showing 'a scrupulous or timid conformism' especially concerning liturgy.⁸⁷ They were all individual submissions and there is no evidence of any consultation having taken place. This approach was fairly similar to other countries, although some effort at making united submissions was made in Holland and Switzerland,

⁸² Smith, 'Life at the Irish College', pp 262-3.

⁸³ Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Also appointed to the central body was the Cork-born Archbishop of Port of Spain, Finbar Ryan. Michael Browne (1895-1980) the Bishop of Galway, was appointed to the theological commission. Another prominent member of that commission was the Master-General of the Dominican Order, Cardinal Michael Browne (1887-1971), a native of Tipperary. He was one of the dominant personalities before and during the council, principally on what became known as the 'minority' or conservative side of debates. Archbishop Walsh of Tuam was also named as one of the advisers to the commission on liturgy. P. F. Cremin, Professor of Moral Theology and Canon Law at St Patrick's College Maynooth, was named an adviser (*peritus*) to the commission for religious. Later, Donal Herlihy, the Rector of the Pontifical Irish College, Rome (and future bishop of Ferns), was appointed a member of the preparatory commission for studies and seminaries. See, *ICD 1961*, pp 688, 693, 696, 698.

⁸⁵ There were no submissions from the archdiocese of Cashel & Emly or the diocese of Waterford & Lismore. Cashel & Emly was vacant from February 1959 until the appointment of Thomas Morris as archbishop in February 1960.

⁸⁶ The submissions are published in the *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando, Series I, Vol. II, Pars III: Europe, (Hibernia)* (Vatican City, MCMLX), pp 63-109, [hereafter AD]..

⁸⁷ Étienne Fouilloux, 'The Antepreparatory Phase: The Slow Emergence from Inertia (January 1959-October 1962)' in Alberigo & Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, i, p. 117.

though both were frustrated by internal disagreements. Only three countries made joint submissions, Germany, Mexico and Indonesia. There was also one international submission from some bishops in Central America.⁸⁸

An analysis of the submissions internationally shows us that most bishops viewed the forthcoming council as being one which would speak about bishops, thus continuing the work of Vatican I. However, there were variations in how that was to be approached. Some, like the Irish, wanted matters of discipline dealt with, such as the rights of bishops with regard to religious orders, the powers of bishops to grant various faculties; effectively these were ‘demands that would turn each bishop into a pope in his own diocese’, while a small minority raised the theological structure for the relationship of bishops with the pope.⁸⁹ Many of the submissions wanted definitions of dogma and condemnations of errors. Some of them made weak suggestions on reform, although the word itself was rarely used. Fouilloux points out that these submissions can be categorised geographically as coming from churches that were ‘dominant in their territories and knew how to remain in this position by protecting themselves against all harmful influences’.⁹⁰ He includes here Italy, Spain and Portugal. These were countries, like Ireland, where Catholicism and nationalism overlapped and which were resistant to change. For example, in the Spanish submissions, there were ten demands (out of eighty-one) for condemnations of *nouvelle théologie*.⁹¹ The responses from churches in more hostile environments, such as those behind the Iron Curtain, were ‘reduced to great simplicity by the hostility of the authorities’ pleading that the council maintain the positions that had served them well against the Marxist threat.⁹² On the other hand, it was noted that the submissions from Great Britain showed ‘some signs of progress’.⁹³ The German submission, mentioned above, was a collective response ‘permeated for a concern for ecumenism in a country in which Catholics and Protestants had been living side by side for years’.⁹⁴ It also sought a reassessment of the role of bishops, liturgical reform and a definition of the place of the laity in the wider

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 108.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 114; Evangelista Vilanova, ‘Los “vota” de los obispos españoles después del anuncio del concilio Vaticano II’, *Revista Catalana de Teologia*, (1990), pp 67-9 cited in Fouilloux, ‘The Antepreparatory Phase’, p. 114.

⁹² Fouilloux, ‘The Antepreparatory Phase’, p. 116.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 118. Jay P. Corrin argues that much of the leadership and energy for change in the Catholic Church in England around the council came from a new generation of Irish immigrant families who, though influenced by both an authoritarian clergy and insular communal existence, had gained access to higher education in the decades following the World War II. See Jay P. Corrin, *Catholic Progressives in England after Vatican II* (Notre Dame, 2013), pp 3, 16-19.

⁹⁴ Fouilloux, ‘The Antepreparatory Phase’, p. 121.

church. The French submissions, while containing some requests for the condemnation of communism and expressions of concern about the temporal involvement of priests in worker movements, raised voices in favour of preserving biblical studies from repressive measures. Some also called for the removal of the anti-modernist oath which was introduced earlier in the century to combat the modernist crisis. While some called for clarity on doctrine and definitions on Mary, these were balanced by concerns for ecumenism and the need for the creation of a Rome-based office for dialogue with other Christians.⁹⁵

The range of issues dealt with in the Irish submissions mostly concentrated on clarity of doctrine and reflected the theological disposition of the pre-conciliar church.⁹⁶ A number of the Irish bishops wanted the council to issue condemnations, a point illustrated by James Fergus of Achonry, who sought from the council an exposition of Catholic faith that would provide a buffer against what he termed as the 'philosophical and moral errors of today.'⁹⁷ McQuaid wanted the council to explain true doctrine and to condemn errors such as evolution, polygenesis, existentialism, as well as socialism and communism. He also advocated condemnation of errors concerning some understandings of Christian marriage.⁹⁸ The peripheral and legalistic disposition of the bishops was further underlined by some bishops who simply wanted the council to clarify or modify liturgical rubrics such as faculties or powers to delegate the administration of confirmation, faculties to erect stations of the cross, guidelines for penances for mortal sins, the length of intervals between the administration of *extreme unction*, the hours of the breviary and related matters of rubrics. A number of bishops wanted clarity on regulations governing servile work, particularly on holy days of obligation as well as reform of the rules governing fasting and abstinence. Almost all of the bishops wanted clarity on the role of priests from religious orders while working in dioceses. This was indicative of a defensive stance on the part of diocesan clergy to safeguard the potential for vocations to the priesthood in dioceses. In addition, two northern bishops, Farren and O'Doherty, asked about a modification in relation to the Church's discipline on cremation.⁹⁹

On dogmatic matters, Bishop Cornelius Lucey of Cork & Ross wanted a clearer and stronger definition of the conditions required for allocutions of the Pope to be considered as infallible. He asserted that, among other reasons, this was required in order to counter

⁹⁵ Yves-Marie Hillaire, 'Les vœux des évêques français après l'annonce du concile de Vatican II (1959)', in *Deuxième*, p. 106 cited in Fouilloux, 'The Antepreparatory Phase', pp 120, 124.

⁹⁶ For example, see Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 106.

⁹⁷ AD/I/II/III, p. 63.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 74, 77.

communist ‘brain washing’.¹⁰⁰ Clarification of the teaching power of residential bishops was also an issue raised by Archbishop McQuaid.¹⁰¹ The calling of the council was viewed by some as an opportunity for a dogmatic definition in relation to the Blessed Virgin Mary as *co-redemptrix* and *mediatrix* of all graces. However, they varied in their approach to the question, from all-out declaration on the one hand (Kyne, Rodgers)¹⁰² to the call of MacFeely that a discussion on the ‘nature of cooperation of Mary in the act of redemption’ was timely.¹⁰³ Archbishop McQuaid suggested an examination of marian doctrine with a view to a precise definition of Mary as *mediatrix* of all graces, but not *co-redemptrix*.¹⁰⁴ Bishop Thomas Keogh of Kildare & Leighlin questioned if a declaration on Mary was expedient while Bishop Neil Farren of Derry wondered if it was necessary and what impact it would have for Church unity, a question that would determine the fate of the issue on the floor of the council itself.¹⁰⁵

Nonetheless, upon closer examination of the Latin texts, it is possible to detect some movement towards renewal and *ressourcement*. Cardinal D’Alton stated that any dogmatic definition should be christological; that Christ is the centre and fundamental truth of the Catholic faith and that the devotion of the faithful should be centred on him. He protested against placing Mary at the centre of devotion from the psychological and practical point of view.¹⁰⁶ This submission was noted by Yves Congar.¹⁰⁷

As regards liturgy, some bishops such as McNamee, Moynihan and O’Callaghan (of Clogher) called for consideration of the use of the vernacular in the context of people being better able to understand it.¹⁰⁸ Bishop Staunton was positively in favour of its use in the Mass, adding that the epistles and gospels should be read in the vernacular only. Furthermore, he believed that the celebrant should face the people.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp 90, 92.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp 74, 86-7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰⁷ Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, trans. by Mary John Ronayne and Mary Cecily Boulding (Collegeville, 2012), p. 24. Congar noted that this part of D’Alton’s submission was badly written and therefore misread by him and others to mean that Mary be declared the centre of devotion, Christ remaining only *de iure*, while the opposite was in fact the case. He also rated D’Alton as one of the English-speaking Fathers who could counter ‘a surfeit of mariology’ (see, p. 84). See Daithí Ó Corráin, ‘The Quiet Leader: The Episcopacy of John Cardinal D’Alton 1946-63’, *Seanchas Ard Mhaca*, 21, no. 1, (2006), pp 285-322.

¹⁰⁸ AD/I/II/III, pp 64-5, 68-9, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 82.

Whatever about differences in relation to the question of language in the liturgy, there appears to have been general agreement among the Irish bishops on the use of the vernacular in church administration. McQuaid thought that it should be the language in which to consult the Holy See during matrimonial processes, while Bishop Browne (Galway) believed that the use of English would improve the confidence of the people in such processes.¹¹⁰

Bishop John Ahern of Cloyne highlighted a further area for attention, namely, that of priestly formation. He said that practical experience of parish ministry must include experience of the lives of people, adding that mere scientific theories from books and lectures are insufficient.¹¹¹ Further, in relation to seminaries, Bishop Patrick Collier of Ossory wanted a full consideration of diocesan power regarding seminary professors and what he described as ‘priest experts’.¹¹²

Ecumenism or Church unity, one the central themes of the council, was mentioned in some of the submissions. But the tone was generally one which reflected limited contact with the newer theological thinking in this area. Bishop Hanly wanted methods to be found for the reconciliation of ‘dissident churches’ under the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ,¹¹³ a view shared by Archbishop McQuaid who emphasised the Catholic Church as the one true Church.¹¹⁴ Browne simply asked: ‘*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus?*’ - is there salvation outside the church?¹¹⁵

Concerning the modern world and, interestingly, ahead of Pope John’s encyclical on world peace *Pacem in Terris*, McQuaid and O’Boyle raised the concerns inherent in the development of physics, especially the atomic and hydrogen bombs and the arms race generally.¹¹⁶ McQuaid also raised the question of world peace in the light of the ‘space conquest’¹¹⁷ and wanted the council to consider the relationship between supernatural faith, natural science and the emergence of what he termed ‘new agnostics’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp 80, 83-4.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 72.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 93.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 81.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 83.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp 78,88.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 80. In formulating his submission, McQuaid consulted a number of priest-experts in Dublin. The suggestions regarding the arms race and the conquest of space came from Cremin in Maynooth. See, ‘undated memorandum of suggestions’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8 /VC/XLV, VC Box 1).

¹¹⁸ AD/I/II/III, p. 78.

The place of the church in the modern world at local level was raised by Bishop William Conway, then the auxiliary bishop of Armagh. He said the church in Ireland was beginning to encounter problems in parish life in large urban parishes, with upwards of twenty thousand people to care for. It was becoming impossible for priests to know everyone. He urged united action and sound pastoral planning. Theological programmes, encompassing both dogmatic and moral theology, needed to be promoted not only in seminaries but as part of study programmes in large universities. He suggested the development of a programme of ‘Theology of Christian Life’ which could be taught with other disciplines. A new catechetical programme was needed, he argued, one which put forward Catholic truth together with the realities of history and life.¹¹⁹ In this regard, Bishop Moynihan also suggested that a catechism for the universal Church should be produced following the council.¹²⁰

The survey of the submissions provides an insight into the thinking of the bishops in different parts of the country. They reflect the juridical and devotional character of Irish Catholicism and the desire for certainty. But they also reflect a pastoral concern for the spiritual welfare of people. While reflecting the inevitability of change in society, the tone was generally defensive in the face of what the bishops perceived as the challenges posed by modern society, including, new philosophical thoughts together with scientific, social and demographic trends.

The very processes by which the submissions were formulated reflected a closed and very select clerical mindset. Within that clerical structure, the relationship between priests and bishops was largely governed by the statutes agreed at the Synod of Maynooth in 1956. Written in Latin, they highlighted exclusivity.¹²¹ This would continue to inhibit the ‘authentic’ reception of the council if measured against the criteria devised by Órsy.¹²²

As the opening of the council approached, many bishops wrote pastoral letters devoted to it. Sounding as if the church in Ireland was on the sideline, Archbishop McQuaid concluded ‘...we too shall humbly await the outcome of the Council and welcome its decisions as the will of God and the teaching of the Holy Ghost.’¹²³ Writing to priests of Dublin diocese on 27 September 1962, McQuaid, in comments that reflected his deeply authoritarian mindset, warned against unwarranted expectations of the council.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp 103-4.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 86. This was completed for the universal church in 1992 and for Ireland in 2014.

¹²¹ Tom Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, p. 45.

¹²² See Chapter One.

¹²³ ‘Lenten Pastoral, 1962’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/443).

The faithful will be careful not to expect from the council what in the plan of God it is not meant to achieve. They will guard against undue expectation of new definitions of doctrine, new laws of discipline, new or startling movements towards the unity of Christendom. After the council, we shall believe exactly the same truths in exactly the same terms as we have always believed on the teaching authority of the church.

On the reception of the council, McQuaid concluded

If it should please the Council to issue new laws concerning the discipline of Catholic life, we will accept the decrees and loyally execute the commands of the Holy Father and the Council.¹²⁴

These comments were far from visionary and reflected not only McQuaid's abhorrence of any consequences flowing from change, but demonstrate the level of provincialism of the church in Ireland at the time. The manner in which he and his fellow bishops engaged with the wider church in Ireland portrayed their ecclesial mentality as legalistic and elitist. All of this led to a form of participation in the entire council process that was characterised by passivity and conservatism.¹²⁵

Irish Bishops at the Council

Almost all of the residential Irish bishops travelled to Rome for the opening of Vatican II on Thursday 11 October 1962.¹²⁶ At the opening ceremony, they were joined by the Taoiseach Seán Lemass and the Irish ambassador to the Holy See, Thomas Commins. The grandeur of the occasion was reflected in the newspaper accounts and also in the annals of the *Irish Catholic Directory* in tones of monarchical and regal splendour, with references to the pope being 'enthroned on a throne of gold'.¹²⁷ In his opening address, entitled *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Pope John XXIII called for a positive approach to the dissemination of the church's doctrine and deposit of faith and criticised the prophets of doom who predict the downfall of the world.

¹²⁴ McQuaid to Priests of Dublin, 27 September 1962 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV/ Box No 1, VC1).

¹²⁵ McQuaid viewed this special status for Ireland and for himself as the leader of the largest diocese in the country as something to be cherished. He was even afforded special seating arrangements at the council – beside the cardinals and was referred to as 'the first metropolitan of the universal church, the first primate'. See Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 61.

¹²⁶ The Bishop of Waterford & Lismore, Daniel Cohalan did not attend any of the sessions. He died in January 1965. His successor, Michael Russell, was appointed in November of that year and attended the final weeks of the council before his consecration. The Bishop of Clogher, Eugene O'Callaghan, attended part of the first session only. See Daithí Ó Corráin, 'Semper fidelis: Eugene O'Callaghan, bishop of Clogher (1943-1969)' in Henry A. Jefferies (ed.), *History of the Diocese of Clogher* (Dublin, 2005), pp 235-7. Due to ill-health, the Bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnoise, James J. McNamee, did not attend the final session.

¹²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 12 Oct. 1962.

The opening days of Vatican II saw moments of drama as the council, led by the French and German bishops among others, rejected attempts by the Roman Curia to force their agenda. The election of members of new commissions was one example.¹²⁸ Two Irish bishops were elected to the commissions, namely Browne of Galway to the commission dealing with the documents on bishops and Thomas Morris, the Archbishop of Cashel, to that dealing with communications and media. Their election, however, owed more to their names being on a list compiled by the European bishops than their own efforts at seeking a central role in the work of the council. Once again, in a demonstration of their independence and insularity, the Irish bishops decided not to become involved with the European bishops and made proposals of their own.¹²⁹ In addition, the schemata on divine revelation, particularly referring to the place of scripture and tradition was rejected and sent back for re-drafting by a new joint commission on which the council fathers would have a direct say. In fact, the entire agenda of up to seventy documents was sent back for re-working.

A feature of life in Rome during the council was the ongoing series of talks, lectures and conferences being held for national and other groupings of bishops. The major theologians such as Rahner, Congar, Hans Küng, Ratzinger and others were much in demand, to explain and discuss with the various bishops the significance of the conciliar documents in the light of theological trends. Bishop Michael Smith of Meath states that he has no recollection of any such speaker addressing the Irish bishops. In what is the only account by an Irish participant, he notes that the bishops hoped the council would be a short affair and that life would soon return to normal.¹³⁰ It should be noted, however, that McQuaid's papers show that he organised some speakers to address the bishops at the Irish College during the first session. These included the Dominican scripture scholar, Conleth Kearns and a Franciscan scholar, Alexander Kerrigan.

¹²⁸ Andrea Ricardi, 'The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council' in Alberigo & Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, ii, pp 27-32. The postponement was proposed by Cardinal Liénart of Lille and supported by Cardinals Frings of Cologne, Döpfner of Munich and König of Vienna. The conservative Cardinal Siri of Genoa believed that in the initiative to delay and change the procedure for the election of commissions there lay 'the eternal inferiority complex towards Rome typical of "northerners".'

¹²⁹ Smith, 'Life at the Irish College', p. 262. Also, while the Irish bishops did meet with their colleagues from Scotland, England and Wales during the early days of the council in an attempt to agree proposals for speeding up procedures, McQuaid was adamant that they maintain independence. This may have been in response to the emergence of various blocs in the council based on geography and language groups and these were seen by conservatives as a challenge to the *status quo*. See, Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 57; see also 'Meetings with UK Hierarchies' (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV/6). An Irish journalist, Louis McRedmond, noted the insularity of Irish bishops while in Rome, 'how rarely we saw a face from the Irish College' and how the bishops 'never seemed to realise the pastoral value – not to mention the sheer public relations – of the social contacts that flourished in conciliar Rome.' Cited in McMahon, 'McQuaid', p. 372.

¹³⁰ Smith, 'Life at the Irish College', pp 264-5.

Between the first and second sessions of the council and the interregnum following the death of Cardinal D'Alton in February 1963, McQuaid, taking his lead from a meeting of central European bishops convened by Frings of Cologne, set about organising further seminars for the Irish bishops in June 1963. The proposed purpose of these meetings was to enable the Irish bishops to become familiar with the thinking of the French and German theologians whose theology was prominent at the council. McQuaid planned to have a paper on collegiality by Canon Hamell of Maynooth, and others by two Jesuit theologians Michael O'Grady and Kevin Smyth.¹³¹ However, he faced a degree of opposition from some of his colleagues, notably Walsh of Tuam who said that Professors Kevin McNamara and Enda McDonagh of Maynooth would be as good as those suggested and that going outside Maynooth would cast aspersions on its record.¹³² Archbishop Morris felt that the bishops needed to include priests more in their deliberations.¹³³ In any event, due in part to the visit to Ireland of US President John F. Kennedy, the seminars did not materialise. A further indication of the low regard for theology and theologians can be confirmed from a report by the Irish Ambassador to the Holy See during the second session when he stated that the Irish periti or experts (Mgr Cremin and Mgr Herlihy) were 'never consulted by the body of bishops and are not in fact permitted to be present at any meetings which the bishops hold in the Irish College for the discussion of Council matters.'¹³⁴

William Conway became Archbishop of Armagh in September 1963 in succession to D'Alton. Though conservative in outlook, Conway brought a new style and greater flair to the role of chairman of the hierarchy. His skills were recognised at the end of the second session of the council in November 1963 when he was elected to the conciliar commission on the clergy. Congar describes his occasional chairing of that commission as having 'authority and precision'.¹³⁵

Conway was also more amenable than his fellow bishops to speaking to the media during the council sessions. Denis O'Callaghan, who was in Rome pursuing further studies during the council, recalls the low profile kept by the Irish bishops while there, as they 'took refuge in their obligation of confidentiality.'¹³⁶ John Horgan, who reported on the last session of the council for the *Irish Times*, subsequently revised his earlier view and suggests that the

¹³¹ McQuaid to Smyth, 15 February 1963 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box No. 1, VC 13).

¹³² Walsh to McQuaid, 17 February 1963; Walsh to McQuaid, 22 February 1963 (ibid).

¹³³ Morris to McQuaid, 16 February 1963 (ibid).

¹³⁴ Cited in Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 59.

¹³⁵ Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, p. 827. See Mauro Velati, 'Completing the Conciliar Agenda', in Alberigo & Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, v, pp 248-9.

¹³⁶ O'Callaghan, 'The Challenge for Irish Catholicism', p. 493.

media did not go after the Irish bishops enough to get their reactions. However, it does re-iterate that bishops from other countries were much more accessible in Rome during that time.¹³⁷

The contribution of the Irish bishops to the council sessions was, for the most part, sparse and defensive. During the one hundred and sixty-eight general congregations (as meetings of the council were termed) and amongst the many hundreds of interventions, the Irish bishops made only eighteen. Cardinal Conway made eight of these; the remaining ten speeches were made by four others, McQuaid, Browne, Philbin and Lucey.

The first to speak was McQuaid, who on 24 October 1962 made a very short intervention of ninety-seven words during the discussion on the document on liturgy. He spoke on behalf of the entire Irish bishops and his contribution simply asked that more emphasis be placed on the encyclical *Mediator Dei* and its references to the active participation of the laity in the Mass and to the Mass as a sacrifice.¹³⁸ Six days later McQuaid again spoke on behalf of the bishops of Ireland, this time on chapter two of the same document. He emphasised the need for the faithful to acknowledge the sacrifice of the Mass as the centre of their religious lives. In relation to change, the Irish bishops wanted the Tridentine discipline to be rigorously maintained and they were opposed to communion under both species. They also did not see the need for concelebration of the Mass, as was being suggested in the document. McQuaid said the people of Ireland were happier having several Masses celebrated on different altars at the same time.¹³⁹

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy – *Sacrosanctum Concilium* – was adopted and promulgated on 4 December 1963. This was to be the foundation document for the renewal of liturgical practice and reflection in the years ahead and constituted the most immediate and visible sign of the council's reforms. While it was not a prescriptive document, again reflecting the transitional nature of the council, it set out a path and orientation for the liturgy in the period ahead. While all the Irish bishops present in Rome voted for the adoption of the final draft of the constitution, they had earlier submitted several *modi* or amendments to the initial draft. A few of these were notable insofar as they reflected the cautious and protectionist approach to change, a clerical mindset, and a lack of significant theological insight into what was actually happening at the council. This will become evident over the following pages.

¹³⁷ Interview with John Horgan, 1 November 2018.

¹³⁸ AS, I, pars I, i-ix, p. 414.

¹³⁹ AS, I, pars. II, x-xviii, p. 44; F. X. Carty, *Hold Firm*, pp 62-3.

Sensing the direction of the council, a number of the Irish bishops tabled amendments to chapter two of the draft document on 14 October, the day of the vote. Among these was one which sought the addition of a clause that would prevent the canon of the Mass (or Eucharistic prayer) being recited in the local language.¹⁴⁰ In relation to the re-introduction of the historic practice of concelebration and the mandatory provision for its use at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday and on other occasions, several Irish bishops inserted a *moda* seeking to have that permission restricted to the bishop of the place and not to the bishops of the country as a whole.¹⁴¹ This amendment, which did not make its way into the final document, reflected the centuries-old territorial mindset of Irish bishops and their vision of themselves as ‘rulers’ rather than as co-workers.

The exclusively clerical outlook also permeated another unsuccessful amendment that was proposed, this time to article 79 of the liturgy document, concerning sacramentals. That article states that provision could be made for suitably qualified lay people, with the permission of the bishop of the area, to administer some sacramentals. They include blessings, consecrations and dedications. However, a number of the Irish bishops petitioned unsuccessfully to have this provision deleted.¹⁴²

Reaching an understanding of the church as the people of God and the placing of its hierarchical structure in context was another achievement of the council. A feature of this was the citing of the ‘priesthood of the laity’ arising from baptism in Christ. The principal document in this respect is *Lumen Gentium*. It represented one of the crowning highlights of *ressourcement* movement. Towards the end of his life, Archbishop Morris reflected on this in the following terms:

It wasn't until we came to the schema on the Church that the newer thinking became apparent - thinking that we weren't familiar with. I only vaguely guessed at the combination of the North European bishops. I'd heard of a pastoral issued by the bishops of Holland; the late Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin told me about it; he would have regarded it as too advanced, unorthodox. But I didn't know about the cleavages within the theology schools.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Submission by Bishop Patrick O’Boyle, 14 October 1963; No. 6.65, Submission of the same date by Quinn, Walsh, Morris, O’Doherty, Fergus, Kyne, Farren, Hanly, Rodgers, Browne and William Brennan (of Toowoomba, Australia). Walsh added, in his own handwriting: ‘*Canonem Missae mutare non debemus*’ – ‘we ought not change the canon of the Mass’ (Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV): Concillii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Busta 148, no. 6.19).

¹⁴¹ Submission by Conway, Ahern, Birch, Farren, Fergus, Kyne, Lucey, Morris, Moynihan, Murphy, O’Boyle, O’Doherty, Philbin, Quinn and Rodgers (ASV: Concillii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Busta 149, no. 2.5).

¹⁴² ASV: Concillii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Busta 151, No’s. 14.43, 15.21, 16.2 to 16.22.

¹⁴³ <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/features/index.cfm?recnum=4091> (accessed 18 January 2018), ‘A Bishop’s Candid Memories of Vatican II’, interview with Archbishop Thomas Morris, 22 January 1997. Morris was the last resident Irish council father at the time of his death.

Morris was ordained in 1939 and taught for a time at the Benedictine school at Glenstal. He was appointed Archbishop of Cashel in 1960. During his time as Archbishop, he showed a remarkable interest in communications matters. He was also responsible for the restoration of the Cistercian monastery at Holy Cross, Co. Tipperary, where he ministered following his retirement as archbishop in 1988. His comments here spell out once again the peripheral presence and approach of the Irish bishops to Vatican II. His comments highlight their remoteness from and distrust of emerging theological ideas and debates and, indeed, point to the place that McQuaid occupied among his peers in terms of ensuring orthodoxy.

Bishop Philbin, in a speech to the council on 17 October 1963 during the debate on *Lumen Gentium* argued that the church needed to engage seriously with modernity and speak to the secular world in the battle for ideas. He stated that the church should be careful not to encourage the false idea that it is concerned exclusively with the afterlife. There should be, he argued, more focus on questions of poverty and injustice and their relevance to the religious life. He also said that modern science and technologies should be stressed alongside what he termed ‘natural virtues’ of industry, temperance and self-discipline. He believed that the document was too idealistic in terms of its treatment of the human person.¹⁴⁴ Novak described Philbin’s speech as ‘one of the most memorable talks of the entire session.’¹⁴⁵ It was during the debate on this document also that the new Archbishop of Armagh, William Conway made his first contribution on 9 October 1963. He approved of the document in general but was critical of it for its lack of emphasis on priests. He held that with a worldwide shortage of vocations the council should exalt rather than minimise the priesthood and compared the treatment of priesthood in the document to that of the episcopate at Vatican I.¹⁴⁶ In his journal, Congar reflected that Conway’s speech ‘made a great impression’.¹⁴⁷ Conway also spoke on chapter four of the same document on 30 October when he criticised it for failing to give a reasonable explanation of sanctity. He claimed that there was too much emphasis on activity rather than prayer.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ ‘Council Digest’ prepared by USA Council Fathers. 17 October 1963 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box No. 1, VC 10).

¹⁴⁵ Novak, *Open Church*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Council Digest’ prepared by USA Council Fathers. 9 October 1963 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box No. 1, VC 10).

¹⁴⁷ Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, p. 354. Congar also implied that Conway’s speech, though good, was too long and with parts that were somewhat superfluous.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Council Digest’ prepared by USA Council Fathers. 30 October 1963 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box No. 1, VC 10).

Turning to the question of collegiality, *Lumen Gentium* asserts that the bishops of the world as a body continue to exist in an uninterrupted way ‘provided it remains united with its head, the Roman pontiff, and never without its head; and this power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman pontiff’.¹⁴⁹ In other words, the bishops act as a college – a *communio*. This communion is known as collegiality.

During the debate on collegiality, the Bishop of Galway, Michael Browne, who was a member of the commission that produced the draft document, argued against any furtherance of the concept on the basis that such a declaration was not fundamental. Speaking on behalf of the Irish bishops as a whole, he declared that ‘for one hundred years we have had an episcopal conference in Ireland without ever hearing of collegiality.’¹⁵⁰ He also criticised the draft document on the role of bishops for not laying enough emphasis on the status of a bishop in his diocese. Browne’s assertions gave expression to the reality of the Irish episcopate as it entered into the period inaugurated by Vatican II.

The position of the Irish bishops on collegiality was not lost on the Irish government. The Irish ambassador to the Holy See Thomas Commins advised the Department of External Affairs that

Archbishop McQuaid as well as Dr Browne of Galway have expressed themselves...as opposed to the grant of power to the National Episcopal Conference which could or might be held to limit or modify in any way the supreme power exercised by an individual bishop in his own diocese.¹⁵¹

Government ministers and civil servants would have viewed the changes in the balance of power among the bishops with interest. In view of the political relevance of bishops in Irish political life, the emergence of a more structured hierarchy was clearly a political consideration.

The bishops were determined to safeguard the *status quo*. Among the submissions of *modi* or amendments to the conciliar documents by various bishops before the commencement of the second session of the council is one which sought the inclusion of a provision to allow for those conferences that already had statutes approved by the Holy See to be maintained as such, without change. Such a submission was included in the amendments proposed by bishops such as Browne, O’Callaghan, Moynihan, Ahern and Hanley. The wording of all the amendments is similar which indicates a common drafting and concerted effort to resist

¹⁴⁹ LG, 22.

¹⁵⁰ ASV: Concillii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Busta 18, No. 10, ff11, 9-X-1963. See ‘Council Digest for 2nd Session’, prepared by Council Fathers of the USA (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box No 3, VC60(a)).

¹⁵¹ ‘Vatican Council, Second and Third Sessions, 1963-64’ (NAI: DFA/S.24/184, 2/305/).

change.¹⁵² At the same time, seeing the mood for change the council was creating and as if to copper-fasten their local control, several of the bishops, including Philbin, were calling for the local conferences of bishops to be given competent powers for the authentic interpretation of the council decisions in their regions.¹⁵³

Continuing our analysis of the Irish participation in the council, the bishops made verbal contributions during the second session on the draft document on ecumenism. On 19 November 1963, McQuaid professed himself to be generally happy with the document but used the opportunity to warn against what he termed ‘private’ theologians:

We bishops, however, long versed over many years in dealing with newly converted non-Catholics, have learned from experience rather than books. We have discovered that converts who accept the Catholic faith wish, in the last analysis, to understand specifically the Catholic doctrine set out, not nebulously but precisely, a doctrine that is not the speculations of private theologians, but as set out in serene and pastoral terms by the Holy Roman See.¹⁵⁴

Article 8 of the decree on ecumenism declared that in special circumstance ‘it is allowable and indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with other Christians’. Before the adoption of this decree in 1964, McQuaid wrote to the Holy Office voicing his concerns. He said the paragraph was ‘altogether repugnant’ to him and wanted it changed.¹⁵⁵ While nothing came of his intervention, it is noteworthy that he did not make a *moda* or amendment but wanted the Roman Curia to effect the change from within the relevant conciliar commission. In a further written submission, he was critical of new ecumenical approaches and highlighted his concern for the ‘simple’ laity:

It is clear that simple Faithful who were brought up on the old catechesis, and abhorred heresy from their infancy, would find it very difficult, if not impossible to understand how today it could be possible to have common prayer with heretics...¹⁵⁶

Concern for the faith of the laity led McQuaid to believe that any ecumenical encounters following the council would have to involve a lengthy period of preparation ‘to prevent scandal and even damage to the Faith arising.’¹⁵⁷

The cautious approach of the Irish bishops was also evident in a speech made by Conway on 26 November 1964 during which he called for clarity in the document to the effect

¹⁵² Submission by Eugene O’Callaghan, 31 August 1963 (ASV: Concillii Oecumenici Vaticani II, Busta 116, No. 4.26); Submission by Michael Browne (ASV: Busta 118, No. 4.2); see AS III.III, pp 529-40. The wording on all amendment submissions is similar: ‘*Statuta pro conferentiis iam constitutes, quae a Sancta Sede probate sunt, intacta maneat.*’

¹⁵³ AS III.III, pp 529-540. Suggested amendment: ‘*Conferential nationali Episcoporum competit potestas dandi interpretationes authenticas decretorum conciliorum plenariorum in regione.*’

¹⁵⁴ AS, I, V, pp 63-4.

¹⁵⁵ Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 64.

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 64.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

that the ecumenical movement should only proceed under the direction of the local bishop and that Catholics should first seek to have a fuller knowledge of their own faith. He feared error and warned that confusion could be spread through modern communications.¹⁵⁸ Conway's siege mentality on this question differed from that of Cardinal Josef Frings. The German prelate spoke during the same debate and declared:

The ecumenical movement is from the Holy Spirit. There are dangers but the way to heaven is fraught with danger. Let it be said that the Catholic Church is not some superior church which will co-ordinate all others but rather that it is the Church founded by Christ on Peter, always to be reformed, moving through this earth to glorification with Christ.¹⁵⁹

The role of the church in the modern world was at the heart of the council's entire programme of renewal. The final document or constitution promulgated by it was *Gaudium et Spes*, meaning 'joy and hope'. It had a tortuous journey through the council and emerged finally as a product of a mixed commission, between the theological commission and that dealing with laity. Although the document had the status of a constitution, it differed from the other council documents in that it dealt with questions such as the vocation of the human person, Christian conduct and responsibility, human dignity, peace and war, solidarity among people, marriage and the family, culture and economic and social life. Norman Tanner points out that the debate came at a time of maturity for the council and placed the questions, beyond the traditional 'motor' of north-western Europe, out to the entire church. He states that it was 'the debate's mingling of lived experience with ideas, theory and practice, the divine and the human, that gave it weight and appeal'.¹⁶⁰ The focus of the contribution of Archbishop Conway to the opening debate was on Christian conduct. Speaking on 21 October 1963, he said the document lacked any reference to the commercialisation of sex and the desecration of love 'for no other motive than sordid gain'.¹⁶¹ Conway's final address to the council, on 30 September 1965, was also on this document with particular attention to the chapter relating to marriage and the family. He said that the church should not speak with a sense of inferiority, which he felt the document projected. Instead, he suggested that *Gaudium et Spes* should be downgraded from a constitution to a 'pastoral letter from the Council to the people of our time'.¹⁶² This was, once again, an example of an Irish bishop being cautious about embracing the modern world. The

¹⁵⁸ 'Council Digest' prepared by USA Council Fathers. 26 November 1963 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/XLV, Box No. 1, VC 10).

¹⁵⁹ 'Council Digest', 28 November 1963 (ibid).

¹⁶⁰ Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica* (New York, 2005), p. 29.

¹⁶¹ *Irish Independent*, 22 Oct. 1963.

¹⁶² *Irish Independent*, 1 Oct. 1965.

sense that ‘things are different in Ireland’ was also evident from an interview Conway gave to Rocco Caporale, a sociology research student from Columbia University, around this same period of the council when he stated:

Ireland is deeply religious, 95% practice...[It] has not been faced with problems of mass paganism and defections and new mores. Many suggestions brought up in the Council have been forced upon bishops [for these reasons]. In Ireland we don't feel the same pressure as in other countries; obviously our situation is different.¹⁶³

How did the approach of the Irish bishops to Vatican II compare to other countries? Earlier, this chapter looked at some international comparisons in terms of the ante-preparatory submissions. Essentially, these comparisons showed the highly defensive approach of Irish bishops when it came to putting forward questions for discussion at the council. But how did the input of the Irish at Vatican II in general compare to that of other countries?

The best comparison is with that of the bishops of other English-speaking countries, notably Britain and the United States. The sociologist Jay P. Corrin has described British Catholicism after World War II as being ‘authoritarian and paternalistic in structure, leadership and teaching.’¹⁶⁴ It was made up of a mix of old recusant families, a rising number of converts from Anglicanism who viewed the Roman Catholic Church as a refuge from modernity, and a strong but distinct presence of Irish immigrants for whom the church communities were a haven from mainstream English culture, while at the same time being a *locus* from which they might find access to that same wider English culture. Like their Irish counterparts, the English bishops were not distinguished as intellectuals. They too were insular and out of touch with what was happening in theological circles in Europe and in the United States. This resulted in their contributions to the council itself being of very limited significance. Even in terms of the election of commissions, like the Irish (and Portuguese) bishops, they did not participate with the other European conferences, preferring instead to submit their own lists.¹⁶⁵

The English and Welsh bishops responded to the ante-preparatory questions by raising issues such as sexual morality, birth control and matters of internal church discipline and mixed marriages. The historian Kester Aspden has noted that the role of the Church in the wider secular world was largely ignored by them, their priority being on declining moral standards

¹⁶³ Cited in Melissa Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change* (Oxford, 2007), p. 32. See also p. 9. Caporale interviewed around eighty bishops and theologians at the council as part of his research.

¹⁶⁴ Corrin, *Catholic Progressives*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ Riccardi, ‘The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council’, p. 38.

in the face of increased economic prosperity and the growth of materialism.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, the maintenance of the Catholic identity was, in their view, endangered by rising trends of mixed marriages. But while the conservatism of the like of the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal John Heenan (1905-75) was out of line with the thinking of the council, there were those who took a more progressive stance, such as Christopher Butler (1902-86), the abbot-president of the English Benedictines. Butler, a biblical scholar and a voting member at the council, was an Anglican convert and an ecumenist who saw the great promise of Vatican II. Another English contributor, was a layman, James Keegan from Wigan and a native of Co Mayo. He addressed the council in English on 13 October 1964 during the debate on the decree dealing the role of laity, becoming the first layperson in history to address an ecumenical council. Keegan was President of the World Movement of Catholic Workers.¹⁶⁷ Keegan was later appointed to the Pontifical Commission for Laity by Pope Paul VI.

The American contributions were much more diverse than those of the Irish and British. The bishops of the USA, though not formally an episcopal conference, had been meeting since 1917 to discuss matters of common concern. The presence of American bishops at Vatican II was strong but not dominant. They had twenty-six members elected to the different commissions (they were represented on every commission) and they promoted questions such as liturgical reform, renewal of the catechism and the restoration of the permanent diaconate.¹⁶⁸ Their biggest contributions were on the question of religious freedom, John Courtney Murray being the foremost proponent of the document, and also the question of the church in the modern world.

Conclusion

Pope John XXIII believed that the church needed renewal so as to be able to proclaim joyfully the gospel to contemporary society. He also sought to promote unity with other Christian churches. To achieve such renewal, Vatican II sought to return the church to its sources – the bible, its liturgy, its self-understanding as *communio* and its relationship with other Christians. The review of the preparation for and participation in the Second Vatican Council by the bishops of Ireland, in their capacity as local leaders of the church, revealed an

¹⁶⁶ Kester Aspden, *Fortress Church: The English Roman Catholic Bishops and Politics, 1903-1963* (Leonminster, 2002), p. 290.

¹⁶⁷ *ICD 1965*, p. 762.

¹⁶⁸ Riccardi, 'The Tumultuous Opening Days of the Council', p. 42.

unpreparedness for and a lack of understanding of what the council was called for: to enable the church, as a world church, to speak to the world and, in so doing, to return to its sources. While many of the Irish bishops acknowledged that the world was changing, they themselves were not, for the most part, prepared to change or to embrace a more open church. Their contributions to the deliberations of the council were protectionist, overly cautious and more inclined towards maintaining the *status quo* than seeking ways to engage in dialogue with modernity. This is perhaps a reflection of the anti-intellectual nature of Irish Catholicism in general in the years before the council, as exemplified by the issue of the statutes governing the workings of the Irish bishops: combining dutiful loyalty to Rome while protecting their complacent provincialism.

The preparation for the council and the Irish participation in it reflected the peripherality of the church in Ireland. Ireland was suffering from the ‘desolation of the spirit’ that McNamara had referred to; the churches were full, vocations were thriving and all the outward indicators were positive. Ireland had not been through the emotional trauma of World War II and its aftermath in the same way that the European church had been. That had an impact in how the churches there saw and embraced the need for renewal. The renewal that sprang from the European countries was based on new theological trends that sought a return to the sources and, moreover, a unity of theology. Given the scholastic background of Irish theological formation, Ireland was at a disadvantage when it came to debate and reflection on these areas.

But what was also a factor to be considered concerned the emergence of new journals and periodicals in Ireland. These had the blessing of the church leaders. These new organs were vehicles for the diffusion of new ideas, particularly in the area of pastoral theology. Added to these was the fledgling liturgical movement, as evidenced by the Glenstal congresses which began in 1954. Therefore, the bishops had to be conscious that change was on the way. It is to be regretted that they and the church in Ireland generally was not ready for it and not able to play a more pro-active part in the council itself.

Shortly after the announcement of the calling of the council, Yves Congar wrote that ‘from the theological point of view, and above all from that of ecumenism’, it seemed that the council had come twenty-five years too soon.’ This, he felt, was because the new theological ideas that were developing had not sufficiently taken root and that after a further quarter of a century the Church might have bishops more rooted in scripture and tradition, based on a

realistic pastoral and missionary outlook.¹⁶⁹ While Congar had the world church in mind, his sense of unpreparedness was pertinent to the situation of the Irish *réalité* on the eve of the council and throughout its course.

In conclusion, the response of the Irish bishops to the original idea of the council, namely, reform was, at best, unenthusiastic. Nonetheless, the outcome of the council made reform mandatory in a number of areas, not least in how the bishops themselves governed the church within their national areas and how they related to each other, to priests and to the laity at various levels. The application of these reforms in Ireland will be the subject of Chapter Three.

¹⁶⁹ Congar, *My Journal of the Council*, p. 4.

Chapter Three

The Practical Application of Collegiality and Communion in Ireland

Introduction

Vatican II was an exercise in communion and collegiality by a world church, on a world stage. As a result of this, many of the ways in which the church understands and governs itself have changed significantly since Vatican II. The dogmatic constitution on the church, *Lumen Gentium*, was promulgated at the conclusion of the third session on 21 November 1964. Chapter One of that document speaks of the church as a sacramental reality and ‘the sign and instrument of intimate communion with God and of unity among the whole human race’.¹ In this regard, *Lumen Gentium* should be considered alongside other documents of the council, namely, *Christus Dominus*, the decree on the pastoral office of bishops, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the decree on the ministry and life of priests, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, concerning the apostolate of the laity. The renewed emphasis on collegiality and communion resulting from these documents led to the creation or re-modelling and development of local bishops’ conferences, the establishment of councils of priests in local dioceses, and greater involvement of lay people at all levels of the church.

This chapter will examine the meaning of collegiality and communion and the related process of synodality. It will examine how, and to what extent, the sense of collegiality and communion (and, where relevant, of synodality) permeated the reform of governance in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland during the decade following the council. In particular, it will focus on the practical workings of the hierarchy (episcopal conference), the creation of councils of priests at diocesan level, and structures for lay involvement, including a brief overview of some actions at the level of parishes.

¹ LG, 1. The translation used here is that of Gerald O’Collins. See O’Collins, *The Second Vatican Council: Message and Meaning*, p. 18. Tanner’s translation is of the church being an ‘instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity...’ In *Lumen Gentium* we find themes cherished by Congar and other *ressourcement* theologians. Another of these was the Belgian theologian, Gérard Phillips who is credited with having drafted most of the document, at the behest of Cardinal Leo Jozef Suenens (1904-1996).

Collegiality and Communion

Collegiality may be defined as ‘the doctrine that all bishops, by virtue of their episcopal consecration and their hierarchical communion among themselves and with the head of the college, the pope, have a corporate responsibility for the unity of faith and of communion in the universal church.’² This was one of the most contested questions at the council. It refers to the interaction and attitude of bishops in terms of their collaboration and shared responsibilities across territorial boundaries – diocese, country, or region – and the impact of that interaction on their individual and collective relationships with the pope as bishop of Rome. As the bishop of the church or diocese of Rome, the pope is a member of the college and, as successor of St Peter, he is also its head. According to the doctrine, there is a collegial spirit that should imbue the activities of bishops in their shared governance, known as ‘affective collegiality’. This is also meant to percolate to the local churches (dioceses) where it can be reflected in councils and bodies that involve and enable the voices of priests, religious and laity to be heard and acted upon. In turn, this should engender a spirit of collaboration and co-responsibility between the bishop as the head of the local church and all his priests and people. Citing Congar, Anthony Oelrich notes the fundamental link between collegiality and apostolic succession when he writes: ‘Ordination to the episcopacy is a succession from the college of apostles and insertion into the college or *ordo* of bishops.’³ He goes on to refer to Congar’s use of the term ‘the Twelve’ in the New Testament, that is to say that the apostles were not a collection of individuals; they formed a body, an organically united college. This ancient understanding of collegiality underpins the communal (or *communio*) reality of the episcopacy. Such a shift reaffirmed the return to the sources. The American theologian Avery Dulles stated that in terms of ecclesiology the council followed the *nouvelle théologie* ‘but it made no sharp break with the official teaching of the recent past.’⁴

Collegiality as a theological idea or principle was recognised by a large number of the participants in Vatican II. Georges Dejaifve states that its insertion into *Lumen Gentium* was a turning point for the council.⁵ Collegiality was promoted at the council by the French and German bishops principally, but also by Maximos IV, Patriarch of Antioch and by leading *periti*, most notably, Gerard Philips. As we have already seen, collegiality received a rather

² Frederick J Cwiekowski, ‘Collegiality’, *NDT*, p. 210.

³ Anthony Oelrich, *A Church Fully Engaged: Yves Congar’s Vision of Ecclesial Authority* (Collegeville, 2011), p. 89.

⁴ Avery Dulles, ‘A Half Century of Ecclesiology’, *Theological Studies*, 50 (1989), p. 429.

⁵ Georges Dejaifve, *Un Tournant Décisif De L’Ecclesiologie À Vatican II*, *Le Point Théologique* 31 (Paris, 1978), pp 23-42.

-muted reaction from the Irish contributions, notably Browne of Galway. In speaking of the development of the theology of collegiality at Vatican II, we cannot ignore political realities.

As O'Malley writes:

Collegiality's claim to legitimacy at Vatican II surely did not surface independent of political developments in the postwar years. Christian democracy in its parliamentary forms flourished, with the blessings of both Pius XII and John XXIII. Both these popes spoke eloquently about how participation in the political process accorded with human dignity.⁶

The theology of the episcopacy had not been developed at Vatican I. Prior to Vatican II, the French bishops were on record as being of the view that 'the bishop is unknown.'⁷ But as Gabriel Flynn notes:

The Second Vatican Council helped restore equilibrium in the Roman Catholic approach to the church by emphasising its human, as well as its divine, elements and by stressing the need for ongoing reform and renewal in the human dimension of the church.⁸

Vatican II clarified the place of the bishop in terms of sacrament and institutional relationship. On the one hand, as Karl Rahner points out, sacramentally, the episcopacy is the fullness of the priesthood.⁹ But, it is more. Collegiality, in terms of the nature of the college of bishops, 'is a structured *communio*'.¹⁰ It is also, as Claudiu Ciubotariu points out, the 'visible sign of the communion between the local communities'.¹¹ It may be argued, therefore, that Vatican II recovered a tradition and an understanding that existed in the early church.¹² In this way, it furthered the work of Vatican I by bringing the church back to its earliest roots where the focus was on unity expressed through collegial union and communion of all the local churches with the centre.¹³ The council's teaching in this regard represented both a development of doctrine

⁶ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, p. 302.

⁷ See B. D. Dupuy, 'Vers une Théologie de l'Épiscopat', in Yves Congar and B.D. Dupuy (eds), *L'épiscopat et l'Eglise universelle, Unam Sanctam*, no. 39 (Paris, 1962), p. 18.

⁸ Flynn, *Yves Congar's Vision of the Church*, p. 52; see Kevin McNamara, 'From Möhler to Vatican II: The Modern Movement in Ecclesiology', in Kevin McNamara (ed.), *The Church, A Theological and Pastoral Commentary on the Constitution on the Church* (Dublin, 1983), p. 9.

⁹ Karl Rahner, 'The Hierarchical Structure of the Church, with Special Reference to the Episcopate' in H. Vorgrimler (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, I (London, 1967), p. 193.

¹⁰ Örsy, *Receiving the Council*, p. 9.

¹¹ Claudiu Ciubotariu SJ, 'Some Considerations on Collegiality and Synodality in the Light of Lumen Gentium', *Studia Theologica*, vi, no. 4 (2008), p. 269

¹² See, Declaration dated 13 May 2015 of International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches,

<http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/anc-orient-ch-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20150513_exercise-communion_en.html> (accessed 18 January 2018)

¹³ See Killian McDonnell OSB, 'Walter Kasper on the Theology and the Praxis of the Bishop's Office', *Theological Studies*, 63 (2002), p. 716.

and a challenge in that it enabled the bishops to sit alongside their local representatives as ‘the source and foundation of unity’ in their own dioceses.¹⁴

While collegiality was discussed at Vatican II and expressed in its documents ‘in the sense that it is not taught in the same language by previous popes and councils’, there were those who opposed it on the basis that it could not be reconciled with the doctrine of papal infallibility or that it put at risk the pope’s universal and supreme power of governance.¹⁵ These opponents included the Irish-born Cardinal Michael Browne, a native of Grangemockler, Co Tipperary and a member of the Doctrinal Commission. Browne had been Master of the Dominican Order from 1955 until 1962 when he was made a cardinal. He warned that collegiality was not in agreement with Vatican I and could not, therefore, be countenanced.¹⁶ Others, while seeking a clearer and more definitive acceptance of collegiality and communion also wanted to respect the teaching of Vatican I and the place of the pope. Indeed, Pope Paul VI intervened personally in the debate in November 1964 to issue a *Nota explicativa praevia* (preliminary explanatory note) that acknowledged the view that ‘college’ was not understood in its strict juridical meaning ‘that is, as a group of equals who might hand over their power to their president, but as a stable group whose structure and authority must be deduced from revelation’.¹⁷ Furthermore, communion was understood in the note to be ‘a notion which was held in high esteem in the ancient church (as it is also today, especially in the east)’. However, the *Nota* went on to clarify that communion was understood not ‘as in some vague *disposition* but as an *organic reality* which requires a juridical form and at the same time is animated by charity.’¹⁸ The note also sought to protect the pope’s power by stating that the college of bishops can never act without its head. The issue of the *locus* of authority in the church remains a complex and unresolved tension within the church.

John R. Quinn, a former President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, notes that while Vatican II affirms that the church ‘is a visible society with laws, it goes more

¹⁴ LG, 23; Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, 2012), pp 123-4.

¹⁵ Avery Dulles, ‘Nature, Mission, and Structure of the Church’ in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, p. 33.

¹⁶ AS II, IV, p. 627.

¹⁷ Tanner, *Decrees of Ecumenical Councils*, ii, p. 899. This clarification was announced by the secretary-general of the council (Mgr Felici) at the 123rd General Congregation on 16 November when the note was communicated to the council fathers ‘at the command of higher authority’. While the note is published as an appendix to *Lumen Gentium*, it is linked to chapter three of that constitution - the introduction to the appendix stating that ‘[t]he doctrine set forth in this third chapter must be understood and explained in accordance with the mind and the statement of this note’. See, Luis Antonio Tagle, ‘The “Black Week” of Vatican II (November 14-21 1964)’ in Alberigo & Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, iv, pp 387-452.

¹⁸ Tanner, *Decrees of Ecumenical Councils*, ii, p. 899.

deeply and develops the ancient and biblical vision of the church as a communion.’¹⁹ Quinn argues that the failure to understand the church as a communion is ‘a significant reason for opposition to collegial sharing by the pope and the bishops in teaching and government’ roles.²⁰ The Irish theologian Eugene Duffy describes ‘an ecclesiology of communion’ which gave a new image to the church at Vatican II. He states that communion is ‘the outcome of the activity of the Triune God’ which empowers local communities of the people of God to grow and develop through networks of ‘close interpersonal relationships’. He sums up the council’s position on communion as follows:

Vatican II, then, speaks of a communion of life which is grounded in the heart of the Trinity and which finds genuine expression in the concrete life of the Christian community. The church is to be the sign and instrument through which the Spirit effects the union of all people with God and of all people with one another.²¹

Pope Paul VI reflected on this new image of the church in his first encyclical letter *Ecclesiam suam* in which he states:

The mystery of the church is not a truth to be confined to the realms of speculative theology. It must be lived, so that the faithful may have a kind of intuitive experience of it, even before they come to understand it clearly.²²

The French theologian T.M.R. Tillard has written of the church being not merely an addition of members, but rather, each individual allowing himself or herself to be ‘integrated by the Spirit of the Lord into the communion in which the totality of what is human... has become one with Christ... in the *agape* of the cross and resurrection.’²³ Foundational to all of this was the renewed emphasis by the council on the sacrament of baptism as the means of bringing people into relationship with God, which lay at the core of what Vatican II taught.

The reception of the council’s teaching on collegiality and communion with regard to understanding and practice, took several forms. These included new structures and procedures affecting the life and role of bishops, priests, religious and laity at every level. These changes were alongside the liturgical reforms in the church which actualised the communion of the

¹⁹ John R. Quinn, ‘Vatican Council II: Collegiality and Structures of Communion’, in Crowley (ed.), *From Vatican II to Pope Francis*, p. 58.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

²¹ Eugene Duffy, ‘Clustering Parishes: Reflections on the Practice and Theology’ in Eugene Duffy (ed.), *Parishes in Transition* (Dublin, 2010), pp 103-104. Some of the promoters of *ressourcement* used such terms. For example, De Lubac is quoted: ‘The Church is a mystery: that is to say that she is also a sacrament. She is “the total locus of the Christian sacraments”, and she is herself the great sacrament that contains and vitalises all the others’. See, Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. by Michael Mason (San Francisco, 1999), p. 202.

²² Paul VI, *Ecclesiam suam*, encyclical letter dated 6 August 1964, no. 37. <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_06081964_ecclesiam.html> (accessed 11 Nov 2017)

²³ J.M.R. Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ*, trans, by Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, 2001), p. 61.

assembly in each community. All of this was in pursuance of the call for greater communion and more active participation in the life of the church by its members, calls which lay at the heart of the council.

Synodality

Arising from the intervention of Paul VI was the establishment of a body of bishops to assist the pope in governing the church, namely, the Synod of Bishops. This had been promoted at the council, and its supporters included the Bishop Browne of Galway.²⁴ The first meetings of the Synod of Bishops took place in September and October 1967. Cardinal Conway was one of the first presidents of the new body (a personal appointment of Pope Paul VI). Conway played a significant part in the deliberations of the early synods, until the outbreak of the political troubles in Northern Ireland which diverted his attentions. Ciubotariu refers to the operation of the new synod structure as being ‘permanent by nature, but its way of functioning is not permanent or continuous, rather it works in an occasional way’, much like the way in which Pope Paul’s document establishing the synod envisaged.²⁵

The second meeting of the Synod of Bishops was held in October 1969 in the aftermath of the controversial encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. There was considerable tension between some episcopal conferences and the Vatican over the lack of consultation on important topics such as those covered by that encyclical. Twenty-three conferences, including Australia, New Zealand, India, Venezuela, USA, Canada and northern European blocks, had proposed that the pope should not treat important problems until he had first consulted the synod or the episcopal conferences. But they remained a minority, with the majority seeking to keep the work of the synod to the practical and pastoral dimensions.²⁶ Conway stoically aligned himself with those who expressed satisfaction with the progress of the synod, saying that the most important matters were those that were least visible:

In an event of this kind, very often the most important things are the least tangible; more important than any actual decisions taken was a certain drawing together of the Pope and the bishops of the Universal Church, a certain realisation that there is a problem of working out how the bishops shall share more in the government of the Universal Church without prejudice to the

²⁴ *ICD 1964*, p. 779. This is despite his misgivings about collegiality during the council sessions. See Chapter Two.

²⁵ Claudiu Ciubotariu SJ, ‘Some Considerations on Collegiality and Synodality’ p. 274. See also, Paul VI, *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* dated 15 September 1965, establishing the Synod of Bishops. Part I reads: ‘The Synod of Bishops... is to be constituted in such a way that it is: a) a central ecclesiastical institution; b) representing the whole Catholic episcopate; c) of its nature perpetual; d) as for structure, carrying out its function for a time and when called upon.’ See, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19650915_apostolica-sollicitudo.html> (accessed 18 January 2018).

²⁶ *Irish Independent*, 10 Oct 1969, p. 8.

principles of Vatican I and II, and a great will on the part of the Pope and the bishops to work together in a spirit of charity and seriousness towards the working out of concrete solutions.²⁷

The synod was a consultative body, with no decision-making or governance roles. Literally, the word synod means ‘walking together’ in discernment. It is meant to aid collegiality in terms of process and sharing. Eugene Duffy points out that ‘synodality is an expression of the fact that the pilgrim people of God journey together, interdependently, continually seeking out the way in which God is leading them towards their final goal’.²⁸ This ultimately leads to co-responsibility.

From its inception after Vatican II, the Synod of Bishops had a restricted input in matters of governance and was merely a servant of the council’s desire to enhance the collegial dimension of the office of bishop and its relationship with the papacy. In 2013, Pope Francis declared:

We must walk together: the people, the bishops and the pope. Synodality should be lived at various levels. Maybe it is time to change the methods of the Synod of Bishops, because it seems to me that the current method is not dynamic. This will also have ecumenical value, especially with our Orthodox brethren. From them we can learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and the tradition of synodality.²⁹

Such an understanding has a special place in the eastern churches, where through the synod the local patriarch governs, in communion with the bishops under his jurisdiction. In other words, the power of the bishops participating in such a synod is neither diminished nor increased by the patriarch – he is *primus inter pares*. In the west, the Synod of Bishops in the Roman Catholic Church is under the guidance of the Roman pontiff and its role is restricted accordingly.³⁰ The church can be synodal with the convocation of formal synods, but even when such synods are held it does not mean that the church is synodal.³¹

²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 28 Oct 1969; *ICD 1970*, pp 767-8.

²⁸ Eugene Duffy, ‘Reimagining the Church in Ireland’ in Coll (ed.), *Ireland & Vatican II*, p. 119.

²⁹ Pope Francis, Homily, Feast of Ss Peter and Paul, 29 June 2013.

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_omelia-pallio.html> (accessed 18 January 2018). The Synods held in Rome in 2014 and 2015 did offer an opportunity for all in the church – clerical and lay – to be consulted formally on matters pertaining to marriage and the family and enable their views to be channeled into the synod discussions. This linked collegiality and communion in the sense of inclusion of the wider church in the conversations. The operation of this was left to each diocese, to which some responded better than others, depending on the process adopted locally. More recently also, the Diocese of Limerick and the Diocese of Down and Connor have held diocesan synods on creating a pastoral vision and plan for their respective dioceses. See also, ‘Pope wants to make synodality “a permanent feature” of the Church’s life’.

<<https://www.americamagazine.org/content/dispatches/blogging-archbishop-mark-coleridge-pope-wants-make-synodality-permanent-feature>> (accessed 18 January 2018); see Ormond Rush, ‘Inverting the Pyramid: The *Sensus Fidelium* in a Synodal Church’ *Theological Studies*, 78, no. 2 (2017), pp 299-325.

³⁰ Claudiu Ciubotariu SJ, ‘Some Considerations on Collegiality and Synodality’, p. 274.

³¹ Cited in Duffy, ‘Reimagining the Church in Ireland’, pp 119-20; see, Eugene Duffy, ‘Assembly or Synod? – some theological considerations’, *The Furrow*, 63, no. 6 (June 2012), pp 295-303; A. Melloni and S. Scatena (eds),

We turn now to a consideration of two important questions for our study. First, how was the more developed doctrine of collegiality in terms of structured *communio* received in Ireland? Second, did its reception give expression to any greater sense of co-responsibility? In what follows, we consider the reception of collegiality among bishops, priests, and laity.

The People of God in Communion

One of the terms closely associated with the ecclesiology of Vatican II is that of the People of God. In fact, a whole chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is devoted to it, ahead of one dealing with the hierarchical church, i.e. bishops, priests and laity. This, in itself, makes an important statement, drawing on the biblical imagery of God's holy people, (see, Jer. 31, 31-34; I Peter 2, 9-10). In essence, the People of God metaphor is one of unity; that the church is united from the pope to all of the faithful. As the chapter on the laity puts it: 'Everything that has been said of the People of God is addressed equally to laity, religious and clergy.'³² Following the council, misinterpretations of the term emerged, with some believing that it belonged alone to the laity, thus mirroring the traditional term of 'priests and people'. However, as the Irish theologian, Kevin McNamara, points out in one of his commentaries on the Vatican II documents, the term 'incorporated a wealth of theological development that has taken place particularly over the past half-century', noting that it is as old as Christianity itself. However, he pointed out that that 'priesthood and apostolate, though intrinsically related to each other...are by no means identical notions. They indicate a sharing in the two distinct roles of Christ as priest and prophet of the new covenant.'³³

Pre-conciliar religious instruction had been built on a vertical relationship between God and the individual Christian. Each individual had to save his or her own soul and the church existed to help them to this. However, the People of God term emphasised another dimension, the community dimension, that people journey together through life as pilgrims. As the journalist Desmond Fisher pointed out, 'this stress on community, on fellowship, is one of the key themes of Vatican II. It is basic to a proper understanding of all the other documents of the Council.'³⁴

Synod and Synodality: Theology, History, Canon Law and Ecumenism in a new contact International Colloquium Bruges 2003 (Münster, 2005).

³² *LG*, no. 30.

³³ Jeremiah Newman, 'The Laity in the Church Constitution' in Jeremiah Newman (ed.), *The Christian Layman* (Dublin, 1966), p. 39.

³⁴ Fisher, *The Church in Transition*, p. 80.

Joseph Ratzinger had concerns about a misinterpretation of the term ~People of God; that it might be seen in terms of a political term for empowerment and greater democratisation. In 1968, he wrote, ‘a Church is not a secondary organization of ideas...it belongs to a faith whose significance lies in the interplay of common confession and worship.’³⁵ On the eve of the 1985 Synod Bishops, Ratzinger noted, quite correctly, that

the Church of Christ is not a party, not an association, not a club. Her deep and permanent structure is not democratic, but sacramental, consequently hierarchical...authority is not based on the majority of votes, it is based on the authority of Christ himself...

The 1985 synod placed greater emphasis on using the term ‘communion’ rather than the ‘People of God’. Nonetheless, communion, properly understood in terms of its bond and unity in Jesus Christ, is the spirit-filled outpouring of the People of God; it is the fuel that bonds together the holy people whom Christ has called as his own. In fact, communion, gives validity and strength to the actualisation of the People of God in the church. As this thesis will demonstrate across the range of area that that it covers, one of the impediments to the reception of Vatican II in Ireland was the lack of deeper understanding of what lay at its heart. Clearly *communio* (and collegiality and synodality) were among these areas. In 1982, the Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Ryan, reflected something of Ratzinger’s concerns when wrote in his quinquennial report that, while the concept of the people of God was familiar to most people, it had led to ‘a misunderstanding of the nature of the Church through being identified with Western democracy of a rather decadent kind.’ Ryan suggested that people needed to read *Lumen Gentium* in full in order to better appreciate ‘[t]he full reality of the mystery of the Church.’³⁶

Collegiality and Communion: The Irish Case

While the liturgical changes, to be considered in detail in Chapter Six of this thesis, proved to be an eye-opener for many in Ireland, the reforms relating to collegiality and structure were, for the most part, less visible. That is not to say that there were no changes; however, these tended not to impact directly on the daily life experiences of most people and parishes around the country. Essentially, the structures affected the hierarchy initially, and were then reflected at diocesan level in terms of the councils of priests and, only sporadically, at parish level.

³⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. by J.R. Foster, (San Francisco, 2004), p. 98.

³⁶ ‘Dublin Quinquennial Report 1982’, p. 12.

The Irish Hierarchy: becoming a 'conference'

The decree of the Second Vatican Council on the pastoral office of bishops, *Christus Dominus*, gave national or territorial episcopal conferences an official status of ecclesiastical institution.³⁷ This status was also enshrined in the new *Code of Canon Law* of 1983 (canons 447-459). Basically, an episcopal conference is a formal body consisting of the bishops of a given territory meeting and making joint-decisions, together with whatever support structures may be necessary. At a corporate level, the changes arising from the council enabled the Irish hierarchy to be reformed and re-structured in order to act collegially, to engage with bishops in neighbouring conferences and throughout Europe, as well as to plan for the future direction of Catholicism in Ireland.³⁸

As part of the reforms, the Irish Episcopal Conference, the name by which the hierarchy now came to be known, had newly-revised statutes, finally adopted in 1969. Essentially, these statutes were concerned with structures and the conduct of episcopal meetings, including the participation of the papal nuncio. They included provisions for the creation of several episcopal commissions to deal with the vast swathe of new activities for which the bishops as a body would now be responsible. By mid-1967, there was a total of thirteen commissions.³⁹ Some of these were serviced by professional people and by consultative councils and committees drawn from different dioceses and organisations. The first commission to be established formally was that for Liturgy in 1964. The requirement of Vatican II that the liturgical reforms be introduced via episcopal conferences, also developed the collegial authority of the bishops.⁴⁰ Other

³⁷ CD, 37.

³⁸ In 1998, Pope John Paul II issued a *Motu Proprio*, entitled *Apostolos Suos*, on the theological and juridical nature of episcopal conferences. This document defines the conferences as permanent organisations of the bishops of a given territory. They are, therefore, set up canonically by the Holy See. Órsy notes that they 'are not corporations, *synodos*, or colleges of their own right in the proper sense of the term. In colloquial language, they are mere "associations" of individual bishops' and that their power is 'at the pleasure of the giver'. Órsy adds further that, flowing from Vatican II, this situation means that the 'effective power' of conferences comes from the Holy See and their 'ordinary power' is conferred canonically. See, Órsy, *Receiving the Council*, pp 16-23 and note 3. In 2013, Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* highlighted the failure of Episcopal Conferences to realise a fuller collegial spirit. Like Órsy, Pope Francis cites the lack of clarity with regard to juridical status and excessive centralisation. This, says Francis, 'rather than proving helpful, complicated the Church's life and her missionary outreach.' See, Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 32, (24 November 2013).

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html> (accessed 18 January 2018). See, Faggioli, 'Evangelii Gaudium as an Act of Reception of Vatican II', pp 43-4.

³⁹ 'Agenda for General Meeting of the Hierarchy, 20/21 June 1967' (GDA: Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/91). The thirteen commissions were those for Liturgy, Religious, Ecumenism, Doctrine, Emigration, Apostolate of the Laity, Television, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Universities, Priestly Training, the Statutes for Episcopal Conference and the Revision of Rules of the Irish College in Rome. In effect, many of these operated as mere sub-committees of the general body of the hierarchy.

⁴⁰ O'Collins, *Second Vatican Council*, p. 76.

commissions also reflected the renewed sense of the church in modern society, tackling issues of social justice, peace and world poverty. Three additional commissions were set up in 1969 covering pastoral planning, social welfare, and vocations.

The emerging troubles in Northern Ireland propelled the bishops of the dioceses in that part of Ireland to come together collegially and to work collaboratively on a more regular basis. This is a dimension that has lasted until the present, enabling the northern bishops to work together on questions concerning areas such as education, policing, social justice, and social policy among others.⁴¹

In a newspaper interview in 1975, Cardinal Conway, the man to be most credited with the re-shaping and re-moulding of the Irish hierarchy into the model desired by Vatican II, recalled that when he first became a bishop in 1958 there were two bishops' meetings a year lasting three hours each. By 1975 there were three conferences per year lasting two and a half days each. By the early 1970s each of the conference meetings had enormous agendas for which Conway was largely responsible. 'The whole management of the Church in Ireland has become an amazingly complex matter'. As he notes: 'There are nearly three hundred people involved in various activities association with the Episcopal Conference, half of them lay people, and there are sixty professional people involved full time. It costs more than £100,000 per annum.'⁴²

Among the other innovations was the formal engagement of the Irish bishops with other bishops from Great Britain and across Europe. Again, the liturgical reforms enabled this act of collegiality, as the Irish, British and American bishops engaged on matters pertaining to the translations of the Mass and other rites. Furthermore, there were largely informal gatherings such as that at Noordwijkerhout in Holland in July 1967 at which European bishops discussed post-conciliar developments in their respective countries. This led to the creation in 1976 of the Catholic Pastoral European Information Service based in Brussels. Following the first

⁴¹ The practice of the bishops of the northern province meeting together can, however, be traced back to the third home rule crisis in 1912-14.

⁴² *Sunday Independent*, 27 July 1975. Copy of interview and accompanying notes are on file at COFLA: Conway papers, File 18/7, 'Articles for publication 1975', Correspondence with Vincent Browne, *Sunday Independent*, 21 July 1975. Conway is most likely referring to the total cost of all the agencies and commissions combined, including Trócaire, Communications Centre and Veritas. In 1972 a Finance Commission of the Episcopal Conference was established and it was tasked with compiling budgets for the Hierarchy General Purposes Fund, including those of the different commissions. It was also asked to undertake a study of the cost-effectiveness of the various infrastructures of the Episcopal Conference. The total budget of the Hierarchy General Purposes Fund for 1973 was £63,770, as presented to the General Meeting of the Bishops in October 1972. The Finance Committee was chaired by Bishop Eamonn Casey of Kerry and included the bishops of Dromore and Raphoe, as well as Ivor Kenny of the Irish Management Institute, Dr T. K. Whitaker, Governor of the Central Bank, and Martin Rafferty, Managing Director of Allied Irish Investment Bank. See Minutes of General Meeting of the Hierarchy, 12-15 October 1972 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/b/iii/103).

direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, a new body COMECE – the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community was formed. Ireland's first representative on the body was Bishop Cahal B. Daly and he was succeeded by Bishop Joseph Duffy of Clogher in 1982.⁴³ Together with the Holy See having diplomatic representation at the European institutions, this body was a link between the Irish bishops and ongoing developments on the European political stage and social front. An Irish priest, Noel Treanor of Clogher diocese, was Secretary-General of the organisation from 1993 until 2008 when he was appointed Bishop of Down and Connor.

In November 1969, the bishops convened as a body, joined by members of the various commissions, to consider the future direction of the episcopal body. Entitled 'Ireland in the Seventies', its report covered topics such as pastoral practices, the family, education, economic development, emigration, social welfare, the sharing of information and the use of resources between dioceses, as well as the organisation and structure of the episcopal conference itself. It included a review of the state of Catholicism in Ireland and the trends the bishops saw as likely to develop, as well as evaluating the steps that needed to be taken in order to foster and reinforce the vital influence of the faith in the daily lives of the people. Speaking at the time, and reflecting a general rhetoric then prevailing in Ireland, Cardinal Conway said that the country could no longer see itself as isolated or insulated from the pressures and stresses of the world or from the problem of faith which was causing concern in the church at that time.⁴⁴ His comments marked a departure from his analysis during the final session of the council itself when he reacted against pressure from some quarters for a faster pace of change.⁴⁵

Conway played a very big role in re-shaping the leadership structures of the church. Of Conway's leadership, Cathal B Daly is quite forthright:

His leadership of the Irish Episcopal Conference during those momentous post-Council years was undoubtedly his greatest contribution to the life of the Church in Ireland. It is by this, above all, that his place in the history of the Irish Church will be measured. Much of his earlier formation and self-formation and experience can be read in retrospect as providential preparation for this.⁴⁶

As we have seen, Conway was in a pivotal place to shape the direction of the Irish Episcopal Conference in terms of its agenda and also its make-up. But bishops are appointed by the pope,

⁴³ *ICD 1968*, p. 750; 'Material relating to a symposium of European Bishops held in Noordwijkerhout, Holland, 1967' (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/i/42); see, website of COMECE <http://www.comece.eu/dl/tploJmoJKKJqx4KJKJKJnml/COMECE_HISTORY_EN.pdf> (accessed 16 January 2018).

⁴⁴ *ICD 1970*, pp 769-70.

⁴⁵ See Chapter Two for Conway's comments, as cited in Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Daly, *Pilgrim Journey*, p. 374.

following a lengthy period of consultation. One person who is central to that is the papal nuncio. Since 1929 the papal nuncio to Ireland has had an increasing role in the appointment of Irish bishops. During the council the nuncio had been Archbishop (future Cardinal) Giuseppe Sensi (1907-2001). Sensi was a career diplomat who had served in Costa Rica and Jerusalem before his term in Ireland (1962-67). He was followed in Ireland by Archbishop John Francis McGeough (1903-70), from July 1967 until March 1969. McGeough was a native of New York city and his people came from Crossmaglen in Co. Armagh.

However, the nuncio who exerted the most influence in the post-conciliar church in Ireland was Gaetano Alibrandi (1914-2003) who arrived in Ireland in April 1969 and remained until 1989. A native of Castiglione di Sicilia in Sicily, Alibrandi was personally close to Pope Paul VI, having been his private secretary for a time during the 1940s while Montini was the Holy See's pro-Secretary of State. He had also spent two years in the Dublin nunciature during the 1950s, in a period of unquestioning loyalty to the church and which he was later to describe as 'a spiritual bath'. The acknowledged expert on Irish diplomatic history, Dermot Keogh, has noted that 'not since the time of the US wartime envoy, David Gray, had a diplomat enjoyed so much notoriety in Dublin.'⁴⁷ It is known that his relations with the two Fine Gael-led governments during his time here were less than cordial, particularly over matters concerning the treatment of IRA prisoners, with whom he was viewed as sympathetic.

Alibrandi's role in the appointment of bishops was guided by his own firmly-held view of Irish Catholic values and their place in Irish tradition. During his term he oversaw the appointment of forty-eight Irish bishops, including three Archbishops of Dublin⁴⁸ He was also instrumental in having Tomás Ó Fiaich (1923-1990), the President of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, appointed to succeed Conway in Armagh in 1977, despite the preferences of the coalition government in Dublin and the British government to have Cathal Daly appointed.⁴⁹ Alibrandi saw his role as one of preserving the faith in Ireland, north and south, in its traditional form. When he left in 1989, all but two of those serving as members of the Irish Episcopal Conference were appointed during his term. These were the men who were tasked with guiding the church in Ireland through the post-conciliar period.⁵⁰ Though he always claimed that the

⁴⁷ Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican*, p. 359

⁴⁸ The Dublin appointments were those of Dermot Ryan (1972-84), Kevin McNamara (1985-87) and Desmond Connell (1988-2004).

⁴⁹ Keogh *Ireland and the Vatican*, pp 363-5. For more on the appointment of Tomás Ó Fiaich to Armagh, see Oliver P. Rafferty, 'The British government and the appointment of Tomás Ó Fiaich as Archbishop of Armagh, *Seanchas Ard Mhaca*, 25 (2014), pp 27-62.

⁵⁰ Keogh *Ireland and the Vatican*, p. 360

final decision on all these matters remained with the pope, his recommendations were always accepted. Critics saw his excessive emphasis and reliance on orthodoxy and conformity to papal dictates as a negative dimension of his legacy in Ireland and that he had ‘passed over more charismatic candidates.’⁵¹ Be that as it may, he played a significant part in shaping the pathway taken by the church in Ireland in the latter part of the twentieth century.

New appointments of bishops played a part in reshaping the hierarchy, or the Episcopal Conference as it was to be known, into a more collegial body in which it assumed a greater role in the governance of the church in Ireland. In 1966, an Instruction approved by Pope Paul VI enabled bishops to submit their resignation when they reached the age of seventy-five. The first Irish bishop to have his resignation accepted in this way was Thomas Keogh of Kildare and Leighlin who was succeeded by his auxiliary Patrick Lennon. Over the ensuing years, Conway used his influence to implement generational change in the episcopal conference and to secure appointments of men who shared his vision for the future of the church in Ireland. These included Cahal B. Daly to Ardagh and Clonmacnoise in 1967, John McCormack to Meath in 1968, Eamon Casey to Kerry in 1969, Patrick Mulligan to Clogher and Thomas O'Donnell to Killala, both in 1970. Daly was a well-known academic at Queen's University and had been a *peritus* at the council. He was to be a pivotal figure in the church in Ireland for the next thirty years, eventually being a successor of Conway in Armagh. Casey's appointment was unexpected and there was considerable emphasis on his experience of working with Irish emigrants in London through his involvement in social housing projects. In addition, Dermot Ryan had succeeded McQuaid in Dublin in 1972. The theological formation of these new bishops had been broadly similar to those whom they succeeded, although they would have been more exposed to the winds of theological change that pervaded the church. It was, however, a pity that they missed out on participation in the council; had they been there they might have helped to make a somewhat more pronounced Irish presence and, perhaps, a more focussed and strategic approach to aiding the council's reception journey in Ireland.

The reforms emanating from collegiality meant that many decisions previously made by bishops locally were now made together (or collegially) at a central level. As a result, the bishops as a body had, arguably, a greater collective voice, although it is well known that bishops such as McQuaid and Browne were opposed to the granting of further powers to the national episcopal conference on the basis that it weakened the power exercised by individual

⁵¹ *Irish Times*, 12 July 2003.

bishops.⁵² The slow emergence of a more collegial style of leadership strengthened the element of collaborative responsibility among the bishops and enhanced their profile as a body.

One situation in which the collective decision of the bishops as a body circumvented the prerogative of the local bishop concerned the lifting of the ban on Catholics attending Trinity College, Dublin. This ban, known officially as Statute 287 of the Maynooth Statutes, was a national ban (to which the bishops as a body were entitled to amend or abrogate even without Vatican II), but it was a ban with which McQuaid became closely associated due to the location of Trinity College in his diocese. Nevertheless, in June 1970, the Irish bishops as a body, and in view of an agreement on a proposed merger between Trinity College and the National University of Ireland, voted to lift the Trinity ban and, at the same time, agreed that a Catholic chaplain be appointed to the college. This infuriated McQuaid and in his notes he recorded his profound displeasure:

Such a resolution passed by this assembly in effect forces the Archbishop of Dublin to take a certain step within his own Diocese. It will be the first occasion on which the Episcopal Conference will have forced a measure on an individual bishop.⁵³

McQuaid's predicament was an example of hierarchical reception being used to push through and give effect to an important reform. Legally, the bishops were entitled to do so in this particular case (notwithstanding the chaplaincy question) but it does bring the issue of the power and place of a bishop who disagreed with a decision arrived at by the collective body into sharp relief. Such a scenario which saw the partial usurpation of the function of an individual bishop was touched on some years later by Joseph Ratzinger. In a much-publicised interview in 1985, he pointed out that while the place and order of the bishops was restored in the documents of the council, each bishop still had his own particular responsibilities.

The decisive new emphasis on the role of the bishops is in reality restrained or actually risks being smothered by the insertion of bishops into episcopal conferences that are ever more organised, often with burdensome bureaucratic structures. We must not forget that the episcopal conferences have no theological basis, they do not belong to the structure of the church, as willed by Christ, that, cannot be eliminated; they have only a practical concrete function.⁵⁴

⁵² See Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 106.

⁵³ 'Hierarchy minutes 1970' (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/08). See Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 107. McQuaid's handwritten notes on the margins of the minutes tell us that the proposal to seek approval from the Holy See for the lifting of the ban was passed by eighteen votes to eight. He added that decision to establish a chaplaincy was badly timed and that it had 'no immediate compelling reason'.

⁵⁴ Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori*, trans. by Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco, 1985), p. 59.

The consent of each bishop is, therefore, necessary and a provision to this effect was included in the new *Code of Canon Law* in 1983.⁵⁵

The workload of the episcopal conference increased dramatically during the years following Vatican II as the conference became the structure for the hierarchical reception of the council in Ireland. In terms of productivity as a collegial body, its output, as measured by the establishment of commissions and other bodies, made a significant contribution to the reception of the council and its vision for the church in the modern world. Lane sees these developments as ‘instructive’ of ‘the actual implementation of the directives in the [council] documents’.⁵⁶ However, while the listing of commissions and other bodies (some of which, such as the founding in 1966 of the Mater Dei Institute of Education, were established by individual bishops), is impressive, Lane contends that these were a ‘mixture of genuine innovation...and at the same time, in some instances, centres of control on developments issuing from the council.’⁵⁷ He concludes as follows:

One of the most serious defects however, of this significant body of Commissions is that they rarely came together as a corporate entity in the service of the gospel and the mission of the Church. The absence of a shared vision and an overall structure handicapped the work of the Commissions. The only time they met together was at an annual reception in Maynooth, hosted by the bishops to thank the Commissions for their work.⁵⁸

In an effort to establish a shared vision for both the Episcopal Conference and the wider church in Ireland, the bishops held a special meeting over several days at Mulranny in Co Mayo in April 1974. In advance of that meeting, a working party sought the assistance of theologians, priests and laity. In addition, some thirty-one written submissions were made, including a preliminary report on a survey commissioned by the bishops into religious attitudes and practice in Ireland. Following the meeting a document was produced, for private circulation only, in which the outcomes of the meeting and extracts from some of key submissions were set out. The areas covered were clergy, religious and pastoral life, the church and communications, adult religious education, the family and ecumenism.⁵⁹ The document clearly

⁵⁵ See *The Code of Canon Law in English translation* (London, 1983), esp. Canon 455 (1) and (4); Thomas J Green, ‘The Normative Role of Episcopal Conferences in the 1983 Code’ in Thomas J Reese (ed.), *Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies* (Washington DC, 1989), pp 150-3.

⁵⁶ Lane, ‘Vatican II: The Irish Experience’, p. 70.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 71-7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵⁹ ‘Pastoral Guidelines 1974: Report of Special Meeting of Irish Bishops, Mulranny, April 1974 – For Private Circulation’. (hereafter ‘Mulranny Report’). I am grateful to Mgr Gearóid Dullea, Executive Secretary to the Irish Episcopal Conference, for providing me with a copy of this report.

roots the work of the Mulranny meeting and the work of the Episcopal Conference in Vatican II.

While the recommendations from Mulranny were passed to the Episcopal Conference and the various commissions, there was no follow up at a corporate level. One important outcome, however, was the establishment of the Catholic Press and Information Office. This new entity was headed by Edward Daly, the new Bishop of Derry, for whom Mulranny was his first opportunity to attend a meeting of the Irish bishops. In his autobiography, he recorded that none of the subsequent meetings he attended were as enthusiastic. Almost fifty years after Mulranny, he wrote:

I have often looked at and studied the documents of that Mulranny meeting in the intervening years, and many of them are still as relevant and interesting as they were in 1974. Had the implementation of all the decisions been as enthusiastic as the discussions that determined them, I am convinced that the Irish Church would have benefitted immensely. However, many of the decisions became lost in translation from aspiration to reality.⁶⁰

Such an analysis would be pertinent to all levels of the church in Ireland in terms of creating and sustaining practices of collegiality and communion.

While there was considerable work done by the Irish bishops in exercise of affective collegiality in the aftermath of Vatican II, the new structures, and the workings of the bishops' meetings generally, lacked a clearer direction, particularly in the aftermath of Mulranny. As Edward Daly suggested, the aspirations of Mulranny, rooted in Vatican II, failed to translate into reality. This may be explained in part by Cardinal Conway's attention being diverted more to the political situation in Northern Ireland and by his declining health. But if the bishops were truly acting collegially, Conway's diverted attention or absence should not have mattered so much. In his rather scathing analysis of the bishops, Oliver P. Rafferty points out that the problem was the quality of men appointed as bishops in the aftermath of the council.⁶¹ This may seem rather harsh, but the lack of theological formation in the church in Ireland, combined with its authoritarianism and a mixture of its excessive deference to and control by Rome, stymied *inter alia* the possibilities of real collegiality in Ireland.

However, the failure to seize the potential offered by Mulranny had wider implications, in terms of the reception of the council across a wide range of areas, especially in the area of the church in society, which we will consider in Chapter Four.

⁶⁰ Edward Daly, *A Troubled See: Memoirs of a Derry Bishop* (Dublin, 2011), p. 59.

⁶¹ Oliver P. Rafferty, 'The Catholic Church in Ireland and Vatican II in Historical Perspective' in Coll (ed.), *Ireland and Vatican II*, p. 27

Irish Priests

The collegial dimension of priestly ministry is another development that flowed from Vatican

II. As Duffy remarks:

[W]hen Vatican II spoke about the collegiality of bishops it was simply giving concrete expression to this ecclesiology of communion. The same quality of collegial relationships belongs to all who minister in the church. Just as the bishops are called to co-operate with one another under the leadership of the pope, so are the priests of a diocese called to co-operate with one another under the leadership of their bishop.⁶²

Following the council, Pope Paul VI issued a *Motu Proprio* which gave local bishops the express power to establish councils of priests within each diocese.⁶³ Such councils would be the senate of the diocese. It was hoped that the new bodies would give priests a greater sense of responsibility. The primary role of the councils was to serve as a means by which the bishop and the priests could study together important questions affecting the diocese. Furthermore, the Roman Congregation for Clergy was of the opinion that the title '*senatus Episcopi in regimine dioecesis*'⁶⁴ should pertain only to the Council of Priests as opposed to the traditional structure of the Chapter of Canons, a body composed mostly of senior priests.⁶⁵

Some bishops were more open to having a Council of Priests than others.⁶⁶ In the diocese of Galway, Bishop Browne, perhaps conscious of his involvement in the commission that helped draft the Vatican II decree on bishops, moved within days of the *Motu Proprio* taking effect in October 1966. Writing to Cardinal Conway on the progress of the council, he pointed out that his statutes provided that 'the *consilium* shall be competent to discuss and investigate matters concerning the pastoral work of the clergy, the rights and duties of priests, the temporal and financial organisation of parishes and churches. It may submit proposals on these subjects to the bishop.'⁶⁷ In Dublin, McQuaid was also diligent in moving to put a Council

⁶² Duffy, 'Clustering Parishes', pp 104-05.

⁶³ Paul VI, *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*, dated 6 August 1966, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19660806_ecclesiae-sanctae.html> (accessed 176 January 2018). Article 15 (1) reads: 'In each diocese, according to a method and plan to be determined by the bishop, there should be a council of priests, that is a group or senate of priests who represent the body of priests and who by their counsel can effectively assist the bishop in the government of the diocese. In this council the bishop should listen to his priests, consult them and have dialogue with them on those matters which pertain to the needs of pastoral work and the good of the diocese.' The document also noted that the councils were to be consultative only. They were given somewhat greater functions under the *Code of Canon Law* in 1983 (Canon 495 ff).

⁶⁴ Translation: 'The bishop's senate in the diocesan government'.

⁶⁵ Circular Letter dated 11 April 1970— 'Priests' Council – Correspondence concerning the establishment of the *consilium* in accordance with the decrees of the Vatican Council' (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30); The Chapters of Canons were retained in the new Code of Canon Law but their functions were greatly reduced to largely honorific matters; their principal functions being given to a new body, the College of Consultors, which, *inter alia*, elects the Diocesan Administrator in the event of a vacancy in the diocese.

⁶⁶ The term 'Council of Priests' is used in the Code of Canon Law (1983) and will be used here.

⁶⁷ Browne to Conway 19 February 1969 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30).

of Priests in place and its members were all appointed by himself. In 1969, he allowed for the second council to be elected. He explained his thinking thus:

But I may now reveal to you that it has long been my intention to have you elect all the Council... Only to launch a Council and to allow you three years of experience did I nominate the first Council.⁶⁸

The elected Council of Priests for the Diocese of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora held its first meeting on 12 December 1966. Its constitution reveals a considerable emphasis on seniority and on order— the chair would be a senior canon nominated by the bishop. An elected secretary drafted the agenda after consultation with the chairman. Initially, the Council held three ordinary meetings each year – in April, June and November.⁶⁹ The constitution and method of the election of the council was believed to be the source of some tension in the diocese, especially among more junior clergy. This led in 1972 to members being elected not on the basis of status (*i.e.* parish priest or curate) but based on the year of ordination. The mover of the new system, Fr Pádraig Ó Laoí, intimated in a letter to the council secretary that reform was needed in order to overcome divisions in the council; he wrote that ‘caucus meetings’ were taking place while ‘cards being held close to chest’, together with ‘a certain mistrust [that] it cultivates.’⁷⁰ A similar system of election for the Council of Priests, based on years of ordination, was adopted in Clogher diocese in 1971.⁷¹ A survey of the minutes of the meetings of the Galway Council of Priests, reveals a transition in each new council term to younger clergy articulating their concerns.

The question of ‘religious compulsion’ in boarding schools, *i.e.* obligatory attendance at morning Mass and other devotional exercises, took up a considerable amount of time at meetings of the Council of Priests in the diocese of Galway. A number of junior priests were anxious that the system whereby all students of boarding schools were compelled to take part in religious exercises outside of school hours should be set aside. The question was first raised

⁶⁸ ‘Speaking notes at beginning of Post-Ordination course, Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, 24 June 1969’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8 / B / LVII). McQuaid held no election for the first Council of Priests in 1966. In 1969, Fr Dermot Ryan, McQuaid’s successor and a man considered to hold views at odds with McQuaid, was elected chairman of the new council. See John Cooney, *John Charles McQuaid: Ruler of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1999), p. 403.

⁶⁹ Browne to Conway, 19 February 1969 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30).

⁷⁰ Pádraig Ó Laoí to M Spellman, 1 March 1972 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/ 35). This was also articulated by Ó Laoí at a meeting of the Council of Priests in Galway in April of that year where he highlighted the divisions between the parish priests, curates and college priests and called for a new model of council. See Priests’ Council Minutes, 28 April 1972 (Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30).

⁷¹ ‘Minute Book of Council of Priests 1969-1987’ (Clogher Diocesan Archives (hereafter CDA)). The Council of Priests was only established in the Diocese of Clogher in November 1969, just before the retirement of Bishop O’Callaghan.

at the June meeting of the council in 1967 and was taken up again in October of that year when it was decided to contact the heads of the relevant schools. At a meeting on 21 November, it was noted that exception was being taken by the superiors of the schools to the use of the term 'religious compulsion' and to the involvement of the council in the matter. A report on the matter came before the council again in June 1968 when it was agreed by six votes to one, with two abstentions, not to pursue the matter further.⁷²

A question that dominated Council of Priests' meetings during the early years of their existence concerned the payment of salaries to priests. At the first working meeting the Galway Council of Priests in 1967, the question of paying a fixed salary to curates was raised by notice of motion and generated a lot of discussion, including the need for social insurance and pension provision.⁷³ In the diocese of Clogher, this subject was discussed at the first meeting of its Council of Priests in November 1969. One of the proposals made there was to link the salaries of curates to those of single male teachers. The council set up a working group which, in addition to surveying priests' cost of living, also travelled to other dioceses (such as Kildare and Leighlin) to learn of systems in the place there and by 1971 they had agreed minimum salary levels for clergy. This led to a new system for funding the income of priests and parishes through a monthly and weekly envelope collection, together with the abolition of funeral offerings in Clogher from 1 January 1973.⁷⁴

At the end of the term of the first Council of Priests in Galway, its chairman wrote to Bishop Browne acknowledging his re-appointment by the bishop, but adding a note of caution.

I was not all happy with the *Consilium* for term (1966-69); most of its members were very negative in their views; viz. they seemed to be concerned more about abolishing old rules rather than achieving something positive. I hope that with a new team of members we shall achieve more positive results in the coming sessions.⁷⁵

The second and subsequent Councils of Priests in Galway continued to pursue areas of church life and questions of social interaction and community interest. Increasingly, the questions raised at meetings were of a pastoral and social nature, thus representing what Vatican II envisaged for the church in the modern world. These included a renewed emphasis on catechetical training (including an assessment of adult education methods used in Limerick

⁷² Priests' Council Minutes, 10 April 1967, 21 June 1967, 2 October 1967, 21 November 1967, 24 June 1968 (GDA, Browne papers, /7/A/vii/30).

⁷³ Ibid., Priests' Council Minutes, 10 April 1967.

⁷⁴ Minutes of meetings held on 12 November 1969, 21 January 1970, 24 February 1970, 12 May 1970, 21 October 1970, 3 May 1971 'Minute Book of Council of Priests 1969-1987' (CDA, 'Minute Book of Council of Priests 1969-1987'). The minimum salary figures in Clogher were set at £800 for a curate and £1,200 for a parish priest.

⁷⁵ 'Priests' Council miscel. Material'; J. G. Jennings to Browne, 3 December 1969 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30). Jennings also urges the bishop to appoint a different secretary to the next council.

diocese), new formats for priests' conferences (based on the approach made in Killaloe diocese), social communications, youth issues (including anti-authority and anti-establishment trends), religious indifference, renewal for priests in the area of scripture studies, the further pursuit of liturgical reforms, the introduction of training for choirs and, notably, carrying out a survey of underage drinking and related issues in Galway city.⁷⁶ The establishment of a social services centre in the city was also discussed in 1971.⁷⁷ By 1974, there was considerable criticism at the lack of action on youth-policy, catechetics and social work and it was felt by some that the diocese lagged behind in these areas.⁷⁸ The need for co-ordinated pastoral teams, moving beyond the traditional parish priest and curate model, in new estates around Galway city was also put forward in February 1975. Another proposal suggesting that on Vocations Sunday priests should be free to invite lay people to speak on their vocation in the church was passed and forwarded to the bishop. The fact that such a proposals could emerge showed the degree of confidence that was growing among priests who were now able to give voice to their sense of co-responsibility in the church and that there was an increased awareness of the baptismal vocation of all, as renewed by Vatican II.⁷⁹

The agendas in other dioceses were broadly similar to that in Galway. In Waterford and Lismore, for example, the Council of Priests debated the better distribution of priests and the staffing of parishes; it also looked at the re-organisation of the system of priests' conferences as well as salaries and retirement provision for priests. The establishment of a pastoral council consisting of priests, religious and laity at diocesan level was also a topic. This was another opening offered by Vatican II.⁸⁰ Such councils were discussed at the bishops' meeting in Mulranny in 1974, where they were stated to be 'an excellent means towards bringing the life and activity of the whole people of God within the diocese into greater conformity with the Gospel'.⁸¹ However, the emergence of such bodies in Ireland was sporadic. By 1978 only two dioceses, Armagh and Dromore, had such a pastoral council in existence.⁸² Even as late as 1982 there was still no pastoral council in Dublin archdiocese, although, positively, a episcopal vicar had been appointed for pastoral development.⁸³

⁷⁶ Ibid., Priests' Council Minutes, 9 June 1970. It was decided to extend the survey to parishes other than those in Galway city and academics from both UCD and UCG were invited to become involved.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Priests' Council Agenda, 18 January 1971. The minutes state that this was noted.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Priests' Council Minutes, 4 November 1974.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Priests' Council Minutes, 17 February 1975.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Note in file, 'Subjects for discussion by Presbyteral Council- Waterford'.

⁸¹ Mulranny Report, section 1.1.5.

⁸² See, *ICD 1978*, pp 34, 75.

⁸³ 'Dublin Quinquennial Report 1982', pp 12, 49.

There is also evidence of the growth of a trans-diocesan and even transnational movement of bodies representing priests emerging. Structurally, these were not called for by the council. However, it was in the USA and the other European countries that such initiatives emerged initially. In the United States, a national meeting of priests' councils had been held in Des Plaines, Illinois as far back as February 1968 when it was decided to form some alliance or national association.⁸⁴ In June 1970, delegates representing different Councils of Priests from across Europe met in Brussels to draw the attention of national episcopal conferences to what they described as 'an urgent need for priests to be associated in studying the problems to be debated at the Synod of Bishops in Rome' in 1971. A further meeting in Paris in December 1970 was attended by delegates from West Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Great Britain, Holland and Switzerland, with observers also present from Italy and Portugal. There was no Irish representation. In anticipation of a document on the life and ministry of priests being sent to all bishops from Rome ahead of the synod, the delegates agreed to ask for priests to make an input in their own right to such a synod document. To assist in this, the Paris meeting arranged for a questionnaire to be drawn up and sent to all priests' councils. The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- (a) church and priest questioned by the contemporary world;
- (b) mission and ministry of the priest;
- (c) the life of the priest;
- (d) the priest and celibacy;
- (e) the priest in a poor and servant church;
- (f) the exercise of authority and initiative in the church; and
- (g) formation of priests.

Councils of Priests were invited to contribute their views and input these in advance of a European Council of Priests meeting to be held in Switzerland in April 1971. Browne of Galway noted that in the European document the words "soul", "death", and "eternal life" were never mentioned and 'that the whole attitude is secular and materialistic.'⁸⁵

When the same European document was discussed at a meeting of the Clogher Council of Priests on 9 February 1971 the minutes contain the following entry.

⁸⁴ 'Proceedings of The National Meeting of Priests' Councils, Des Plaines, Illinois, 12-13 February 1968' (GDA, Browne papers, B7/A/vii/30).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

From the outset it was clear that the members had difficulty in understanding not only the questions but the thinking that prompted them. They obviously didn't refer to the life of the priest in Ireland and his work in community here.

John B. Leyden, the Parish Priest of Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh, told that meeting that he thought the document reflected more what was going on in Europe 'where new answers were being sought', adding that 'there, the priests had lost their congregations – churches were empty. They were (spiritually) unemployed.' Clogher priests agreed that it was important to emphasise the vocation of the priest rather than seeing his role in terms of profession as the document seemed to. It added that the nature of the priest's role saw him fulfil a social and community function also. With regard to priestly celibacy, the Clogher priests recorded that 'celibacy is part of the image of the priest in Ireland and in the eyes of the people, the priest is respected for his celibacy. It is not an issue at the moment among the priests of the diocese'.⁸⁶

It would be some years though before a recognised association of priests would be in place. In May 1972, a provincial council was elected to represent the priests in the metropolitan province of Tuam.⁸⁷ Each diocese elected one parish priest, together with one priest ordained for fifteen years or more, and one who was ordained for less than fifteen years. These provincial councils had no functions other than that of networking and they went into decline within a short period.

Something else that started to go into decline from the time of Vatican II was the number of priests in Ireland. This period also marked the beginning of a decline in the number of religious sisters and brothers. When Vatican II opened, Ireland had a remarkably high level of priests and religious. In fact, as Ó Corráin points out, there were more religious (Catholic and of other Christian communities) than civil servants (15,323 to 14,695).⁸⁸ However, by 1968, for the first time in the twentieth century, there was a decline in the total number of priests, nuns and brothers in Ireland.⁸⁹ Another indication of the impending decline was the decline in the overall number of students or seminarians studying for the priesthood; down from 3,205 in 1964 to 1,890 in 1970 (of whom 986 were diocesan seminarians). Here is an indication of future patterns, with fewer young men opting to enter the priesthood.⁹⁰ This cannot be put down to the council alone. Rather, it is an indication of economic and social

⁸⁶ Minutes of Council of Priests, 9 February 1971 (CDA, 'Council of Priests Minute Book 1969-1987').

⁸⁷ Priests' Council Minutes, 28 April 1972 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30).

⁸⁸ Daithí Ó Corráin, 'Catholicism in Ireland, 1880-2015', in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, iv (Cambridge, 2018), p. 748.

⁸⁹ 'A Survey of Vocations in Ireland, 1971' (a confidential report submitted to the Irish Episcopal Conference in 1971, cited in Ó Corráin, 'Catholicism in Ireland', p. 748.

⁹⁰ *ICD 1965*, p. 675; *ICD 1971*, p. 704.

change in Ireland and in western society generally, where calls other than the priesthood were being followed by men.

The following table shows gives some insight into the overall decline of the number of priests ordained in Ireland over the three decades from the end of the council in 1965.

Table 3.1: Numbers of Ordinations in Ireland, 1965-85.

	1965	1968	1970	1977	1985
Ordained for Irish Dioceses	101	69	65	57	81
Ordained for Foreign Dioceses	123	97	85	17	17
Ordained for the 3 Missionary Societies*	51	37	27	12	4
Ordained for Religious Orders / Congregations	137	103	82	55	30
TOTAL	412	300	259	141	132

* St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers), the Columban Missionaries and the Society of African Missions (SMA Fathers).

Source: *Irish Catholic Directory*, 1966, 1969, 1971, 1978, 1986.

What the figures tell us is that there was a 68 per cent decline in the number of ordinations over the thirty years. Within the figures the massive decline was concentrated on the numbers being ordained for foreign dioceses and the three missionary societies— from one hundred and seventy-four to twenty-one, a fall of 88 per cent. This was reflective of both the economic and social changes at home and the decisions of the council. The council's shift from the institutional church to a renewed emphasis on the local church as a community, sharing its life with the world, witnessing to the message of the gospel, was one that placed its mission in the context of the local and the everyday. Coupled with this, many missionary countries were beginning to find priests from within their own communities, a trend that would continue.

The decline in the numbers of priests ordained for dioceses, while significant, was not so pronounced, showing a 44 per cent reduction between 1965 and 1977. As the table shows, the numbers increased slightly for a period in the 1980s before the increasing level of secularisation in Irish society and the levels of turmoil and scandal in the church accelerated a major decline. Ó Corráin has pointed out that in overall terms, the number of diocesan

vocations (new entrants to the seminaries) fell from two 254 in 1966 to just twenty-eight in 2006, a decline of 89 per cent.⁹¹

One of the features that marked post-Vatican II life in the church was the numbers who left the priesthood and religious life. The numbers who left the diocesan priesthood in Ireland were modest, just fifteen priests were laicised between 1966 and 1970. In the case of the religious orders, the numbers of priests who left during the same period totalled seventy-two, with a further one 164 brothers also leaving. During the same period, some 269 Irish religious sisters left religious life following final profession.⁹² These departures affected more than parishes, as many of the personnel were teachers. The reduction in priests and religious in education was to have effects in terms of a religious presence in schools. The ratio of religious to lay teachers dropped from 18.9 per cent of trained primary teachers in 1956-66 to 4.6 per cent in 1992.⁹³

In comparison with France, Ireland was relatively unscathed by the loss of priests during this period. There, the decline in the number of priests being ordained pre-dated Vatican II. In 1950, there were one 1033 priests ordained, this figure falling to less than 600 by 1960. Between 1965 and 1969, 501 priests were ordained, falling to 220 between 1970 and 1974 and one 107 between 1975 and 1979. In terms of departures from the priesthood, in France some 241 priests left between 1960 and 1964, a further 485 between 1965 and 1969, rising to 972 between 1970 and 1974.⁹⁴ In Ireland, while the overall number of priests declined between 1965 and 1980, the number of diocesan priests remained constant, at 3,965 in 1965 and increasing slightly to 3,998 in 1980.⁹⁵ This compared with a decline in England and Wales during the same period, from 5,033 in 1965 to 4,712.⁹⁶

These statistics and the trends that they portray in relation to ordinations, the departure of priests and the overall number of priests in dioceses show that while there was an underlying downward trend, the numbers were relatively constant during the period under review. Compared to France and England and Wales, Ireland was still in a comfortable place when it

⁹¹ Ó Corráin, 'Catholicism in Ireland', p. 749.

⁹² Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 167.

⁹³ Ó Corráin, 'Catholicism in Ireland', p. 748.

⁹⁴ Philippe Foro, 'Paul VI et La France, 1963-78', in Jean-François Galinier-Pallerola, Augustin Laffay, Bernaerd Minvielle (eds), *L'Église de France après Vatican II (1965-1975): Actes du colloque "Retour sur L'Église de France après Vatican II 1965-1973, le regard de l'histoire" organisé par le Centre Histoire et Théologie de la Faculté de Théologie de Toulouse et tenu à l'Institut Catholique de Toulouse les 16 et 17 octobre 2009* (Toulouse, 2011), pp 203-4.

⁹⁵ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 170.

⁹⁶ Michael P. Hornsby Smith, *The Changing Parish: A study of parishes, priests and parishioners after Vatican II* (London, 1989), p. 2.

came to the supply priests. At an ecclesial level, the figures show that there was a significant clerical presence in the Irish church from the end of Vatican II until well into the 1980s and beyond. While this showed a continuing regard for the place of the priest in Irish life, it also meant that the church in Ireland could still operate in a way that meant it did not have to give laity the rightful place that Vatican II had pointed out was theirs by virtue of their baptism. This reinforced the clerical culture, even in the face of the impending crisis that was on the horizon. This false sense of security compounded another failure, the failure to activate in any real and meaningful way the priesthood of the laity. Also, the permanent diaconate, restored by Vatican II, did not feature and would not do so in Ireland for at least another quarter of a century.

Vatican II gave a voice to priests at diocesan level, enabling them to share in the governance of the local church, in communion with the bishop, each other as priests and with the laity. The structural outworking of this in Ireland was slow at first and depended on the attitude of the local bishops. When it occurred, it gradually allowed priests to air their views, critically or otherwise. Much of this was concerned initially with the income of priests and related matters. In some cases, the new structures pushed the church in local settings, such as in Galway, to go to the peripheries and to be visibly identified with social problems locally. However, the councils were, in effect, the property of the bishops, and their role was consultative. In the period under review, they did not drive the kind of overall vision which the council's ecclesiology of communion empowered priests and parishes to achieve. Nor did it enable priests themselves to speak to each other, to work together as collaborators to the greatest extent possible. The slow response to the establishment of the national council of priests is but one example. As we have seen, the apparent stability in the numbers of diocesan priests, despite the underlying and comparative trends, meant that those voices within councils and elsewhere that sought to move the priest-lay relationship from one of quasi-collaboration to co-responsibility did not make much progress. Clericalism prevailed. Building a sense and understanding of co-responsibility and mission with laity was to continue to be a challenge.

Irish Laity

Vatican II gave formal recognition to the role of the laity. Article 37 of *Lumen Gentium* states that the laity have a right and a duty to 'to make known their opinion on matters which concern

the good of the church', going on to say that this should be done, if possible, through institutions or bodies set up by the church.⁹⁷ Above all, it said that bishops and priests were to

...acknowledge and promote the dignity and the responsibility of the laity in the church; they should willingly make use of their prudent counsel; they should confidently entrust to them offices in the service of the church and leave them freedom and space to act. Indeed, they should encourage them to take up work on their own initiative.⁹⁸

This development would challenge the traditional practices of the hierarchy, dioceses and parishes in Ireland. This is not to say that lay people had no role hitherto. In Ireland, lay people participated in assisting the church through Catholic Church organisations such as the Legion of Mary (founded in 1921), the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Knights of St Columbanus (founded in 1915), to name but three. In addition, lay Catholics had played a major part in assisting fundraising drives for the church building surge of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, for example, as Vatican II was being held, the involvement of laity in the fundraising and planning for the new cathedral in Galway was clearly evident.⁹⁹ But their role was a largely subservient one, a helper at the behest of the local pastor or bishop who was clearly the decision maker; co-responsibility was not a consideration. Inculcating an understanding of *communio* in practice would take time, as would the emergence of any of the 'new movements' which flourished on the continent following the war. Many of these movements, rooted in *ressourcement*, had a predominantly lay membership and a particular charism that eclipsed the Catholic Action dominance that had existed from the 1920s in continental Europe and instead gave expression to the theology of the council.¹⁰⁰ In Ireland, with the possible exception of the Charismatic Renewal Movement, there was no sudden emergence of any of these new movements in the years after Vatican II. Again, the absence of intellectual dialogue in the area of faith and culture at this time, impeded the kind of growth that such movements experienced elsewhere.

The nearest Ireland came to having any such 'new movement', and one that showed itself open to dialogue, was the Legion of Mary, a worldwide Marian movement founded in Dublin in 1921 by Frank Duff (1889-1980). Duff was invited by Pope Paul VI to be a lay auditor at the final session of the council and he received a standing ovation in St Peter's upon

⁹⁷ LG, 37.

⁹⁸ LG, 37.

⁹⁹ 'Annual Reports on the work carried out on the Cathedral 1957-1966' (GDA, Browne papers, B/6/ C/95); 'Minute Book of the Cathedral Building Committee 1964-1966' (GDA, Browne papers, B/6/ C/62 (2)).

¹⁰⁰ Massimo Faggiolo, 'Between Documents and Spirit: The Case of the "New Catholic Movements"', in O'Malley (ed.), *After Vatican II* p. 6.

his arrival on 14 September 1965.¹⁰¹ It is noted that the ‘mobilisation of the laity in apostolic effort was recognised at the Second Vatican Council years after Duff had effectively mobilised the laity in practice’.¹⁰² Following the council, the Legion of Mary had to contend with the demands for change in its own organisation and practices in countries such as France, Germany, Holland and Brazil. An example of which is to be found in Frankfurt where the Legion members wanted all Latin terminology in its *Handbook* to be removed and a full revision to take into account the vision of the council. Duff reacted carefully, noting that ‘to be progressive is a duty’ while adding that ‘we should ascend, as we climb stairs, one step at a time’.¹⁰³ He sought and obtained approval from the Holy See for changes in the organisation’s *Handbook* and practices and in the process, some hearty compliments from Archbishop McQuaid who, showing his Catholic Action roots, said that the Legion of Mary was free from ‘the spirit of unreasoning, or even bitter criticism that now marks some groups of lay people.’¹⁰⁴

As part of the 1969 re-organisation of the structures of the Irish Episcopal Conference, the National Council for the Apostolate of the Laity (formed in the early 1960s) was re-named as the Committee for the Apostolate of the Laity and put on a more formal footing, being linked formally to the Commission for the Laity. Speaking at the launch of the new entity, Cardinal Conway developed this link of lay vocation and the place of Catholic organisations in the practical reception of the council:

We talk about a vocation to the priesthood or a vocation to the religious life, but the Vatican Council talks about the vocation to be a Christian... The apostolate of the laity in no way requires membership of an association – although such associations give invaluable service to the Church. The most powerful exercise of the apostolate is the example and influence of a genuinely Christian life.¹⁰⁵

Eugene Duffy makes an important praxis-oriented point that an ‘ecclesiology of communion can remain an abstraction unless it is practised at the most local level of ecclesial life. It is not something that applies only to the ministry of the church, it applies to communities as well.’¹⁰⁶ Despite the emphasis on the role of the laity, there was a hesitancy to develop more formal lay involvement in the church at local level, where the influence of the church is felt most profoundly. Setting up structures and getting people to participate readily and actively in them at that level was problematic, particularly if people did not see or understand the need for

¹⁰¹ Finola Kennedy, *Frank Duff: A Life Story* (London, 2011), p. 220.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁰⁵ *ICD 1970*, p. 741.

¹⁰⁶ Duffy, ‘Clustering Parishes’, p. 105.

them or their own particular role in them. Edward Daly wrote concerning his experiences in the Diocese of Derry in the early 1970s. While it was possible to establish commissions and other bodies at diocesan level, it was a more difficult task at parish level.

Some priests were enthusiastic. Others did not have the appetite for it. The laity, generally, did not show great interest, and prominent among the more vocal laity were those who were quite strongly opposed to changes of any kind. In such circumstances, the more timid priests were tempted to 'keep their heads down'.¹⁰⁷

The matter of parish councils came before the meeting of the Irish Episcopal Conference in June 1969 when a paper on the matter was put forward by the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity.¹⁰⁸ The short document noted that there was 'no specific recommendation of parish councils by Vatican II comparable to the institution of councils of priests or the recommendation of diocesan pastoral councils'. Any reference to them is in the context of co-ordinating the wider work of the lay apostolate, although it did acknowledge that they had a role in fulfilling the structures contemplated in *Lumen Gentium* concerning relations between laity and their pastors.¹⁰⁹ The document took a very cautious approach and did not provide clear direction. It noted that there were almost twelve hundred parishes in the country and that it would be impossible to put in place recommended structures that could suit all. It cautioned against having a body that was too large or unwieldy and pointed to tensions that existed in parishes over such questions as identity and role. Highlighting a potential flaw that existed, it noted that interest in the new councils would only be likely to gain momentum if 'a favourable official attitude, and a willingness to promote and study experiments under the guidance of skilled priests' was pursued. In other words, a sense and understanding of *communio* on the part of priests and laity would be required. Finally, the document cited the experience of such councils in Germany where a basic constitution was adopted. It allowed for local flexibility and established the functions of the council, working procedures and process of elections. Parish councils in Germany, it stated, had one-third of their membership elected, one-third drawn from Catholic organisations and the remainder appointed by the parish priest.

The development of parish councils in the Diocese of Killaloe was first proposed in 1966 by the ageing bishop Joseph Rodgers. He called on each parish to elect such a council to assist the priest in the running of the parish.¹¹⁰ In Clontibret parish in Monaghan, three separate

¹⁰⁷ Daly, *Troubled See*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁸ Miscellaneous material for the meeting of the Irish Bishops June 1969: 'Memorandum on Parish Councils' (GDA: Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/87). A further reference to parish councils is made at the November meeting of the bishops in 1969 when it was noted that progress was not fast enough. See also Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁹ LG 37.

¹¹⁰ *Irish Catholic*, 10 Aug 1966.

parish councils – one for each church area in the parish – were established and the membership of these included not just men and women from the parish community *per se*, but also representatives of organisations such as the GAA, the National Farmers Association, Macra na Feirme as well as units of Catholic organisations.¹¹¹ In Armagh, Cardinal Conway led an initiative to establish a model parish council in the cathedral parish in 1969. Two-thirds of the council was to be elected by the laity of the parish, with all laypeople who had reached the age of sixteen having a vote. The remaining one third would consist of priests, religious and other laity appointed by him. It followed a series of briefing meetings for parishioners (including one on 27 June 1968 which was presided over by the cardinal himself) and the efforts of a working-group which established the boundaries.¹¹²

In Galway, the minutes of the Chapter of Canons for December 1967 record that Bishop Browne wanted the names of all those on parish councils to be sent to him and he stated that he wanted these councils ‘to meet soon’. He further stated that ‘...it should be explained that the councils are entirely concerned with the spiritual welfare and progress of the people, so that their desires and opinions should be made known regarding such matters as liturgy, frequentation of Mass, the sacraments and local conditions which may affect the welfare, especially for the young’.¹¹³ The elitist and cautious approach to such ventures is evidenced by the record that at a Council of Priests meeting in Galway the following June, a motion calling for the admission of curates to membership of parish councils was marked ‘read’ by seven votes to two.¹¹⁴ In April 1973, the then Council of Priests debated the role of parish councils and it was felt that they were under-utilised. During the debate, examples were cited of the benefit of new community councils and it was suggested that parish councils need to be also linked to these.¹¹⁵ Later that year the Council of Priests returned to the subject, noting that parish councils were now part of church life but that they were ineffective in Galway due to priests being either disinterested or over-enthusiastic. Other obstacles cited were local prejudices, lack of training and resources, lack of a clear purpose and the inability of some

¹¹¹ ‘Parish Chronicon 1967’, Clontibret Parish, County Monaghan.

¹¹² ‘Press Releases 1969, handwritten note dated 16 February 1969’ (COFLA, Conway papers, File 18/8); Jack O’Hare, *The Story of St Patrick’s Cathedral Armagh and its Prelates: to commemorate the 2003 Restoration* (Armagh, 2006) p. 72. The first parish council in Armagh was elected in March 1969.

¹¹³ ‘Minute Book of Chapter Meetings’, Minutes of Chapter meeting 4 December 1967 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/ii/4).

¹¹⁴ Priests’ Council Minutes, 24 June 1968 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/30).

¹¹⁵ Priests’ Council Minutes, 11 April 1973 (*ibid*)

people to work together.¹¹⁶ In June 1974, the Council of Priests also called for the publication of parish financial accounts in all parishes of the diocese.¹¹⁷

In Dublin, F.X. Carty makes reference to a very slow and sporadic uptake on the establishment of parish councils there.¹¹⁸ This is not surprising given the general attitude of Archbishop McQuaid. Speaking at the annual diocesan retreat in July 1968, McQuaid cited examples of parish committees dictating to clergy and advised that no step be taken towards the definite formation of Parish Councils ‘whatever the pressure exerted, in the name of or under the pretext of implementing the decrees of the Second Vatican Council.’¹¹⁹ A year later, McQuaid used the same occasion to voice his annoyance at the development of local parish committees, adding a note of extreme caution:

The uprise of local committees calls for vigilance and careful handling. It is well for the clergy to be linked with such committees; if only to know their plans. The priests who have formed or allowed to be formed, parish committees must maintain their proper positions in law. *Parochi est regere parocciam suam* [The Parish Priest is the ruler of his parish]. Where a priest is too complacent...the committees speak of THEIR halls, THEIR schools, THEIR churches.¹²⁰

McQuaid’s successor was also cautious with regard to Parish Councils. By 1982, ten years after the departure of McQuaid, Dermot Ryan reported to Rome that there were parish councils in seventy-four out of the one hundred and eighty-four parishes in Dublin. He added that it had been decided not to impose them but to ‘let them evolve as a joint venture of priests and people.’¹²¹

Vigilance was also called for due to the rise of political tensions in Northern Ireland. Edward Daly refers to the good work done around the Derry diocese by those elected to the first councils in parishes, noting that only fifteen per cent of the electorate actually voted. Highlighting the dangers inherent in an electoral process where church and secular communities interface, Daly noted that at subsequent parish council elections during the 1970s there was a surprisingly high poll, adding that in the midst of a highly politicised atmosphere in nationalist and republican areas, and without naming any party, ‘one political grouping had obviously decided to get in on the act and to use their votes to good effect.’¹²² On the progress of parish councils generally and the attitude of priests to them, Daly summarised:

If truth be told, some of the clergy were not too enthusiastic about parish councils and there was a widespread misunderstanding of their true purpose on the part of both clergy and laity. There

¹¹⁶ Priests’ Council Minutes, 29 November 1973 (ibid).

¹¹⁷ Priests’ Council Minutes, 17 June 1974 (ibid).

¹¹⁸ Carty, *Hold Firm*, pp 108-9.

¹¹⁹ ‘Speaking notes for diocesan retreat 3 July 1968’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/604)

¹²⁰ ‘Speaking notes for diocesan retreat July 1969’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/654).

¹²¹ ‘Dublin Quinquennial Report 1982’, p. 23.

¹²² Daly, *Troubled See*, p. 31.

was in some cases a degree of mistrust between priests and people; in some cases an individual or a group of individuals dominated and the others became disillusioned and discouraged. Some of the councils became 'talking shops' dominated by certain individuals. I must accept my share of responsibility for that.¹²³

With the exception of the introduction of lay ministries in the liturgical life of the church, little had changed in Ireland in terms of the role of lay Catholics in the church in the years following the council. The lack of experience, the absence of direction, the scarce availability of training and resources, together with the attitude of many of the priests (and some laypeople too), when combined with minimalist leadership from the Irish bishops, meant that parish councils did not generally survive for long in the aftermath of Vatican II. And the continuing high number of priests allowed them to continue to control the governance and leadership of parishes. Many people, including priests, saw the role of the laity as being merely one of helping the many priests still around, and not as a project based on collaboration, renewal and development, leading to co-responsibility. As Duffy points out, 'up to 1983 [when the new *Code of Canon Law* was promulgated] the parish was both a spiritual reality and a temporal reality – a benefice.'¹²⁴ Territory and economic factors, together with a changed religious landscape in Ireland and elsewhere, would change this reality over time. However, in the period under consideration, the *communio* envisaged by the council was, for many lay people in parishes, just an abstraction.

Overall, the emergence in the church in Ireland of governance practices and models, rooted in the vision of the church as a communion of priests and people united to Christ through baptism, was not to be realised in the period under consideration, due principally to the inability of the church as a whole in Ireland to receive the vision of Vatican II in this respect. Such a failure would be brought into sharp relief decades later. The series of scandals that engulfed the church in Ireland from the 1990s brought into focus a form of clericalism that runs counter to the vision of church set forth in the documents of Vatican II and which was not received adequately in the years following the council. The Irish public policy specialist in the area of violence and sexual abuse, Marie Keenan, offers a critique of this clericalism in which she contends that the response of the Irish bishops to the child abuse crisis was as much to do with ecclesiology as with moral theology.¹²⁵ She argues that the council gave little by way of real practical guidance to priests in terms of managing boundaries, professional and personal, and

¹²³ Ibid., p. 32.

¹²⁴ Duffy, 'Clustering Parishes', p. 114.

¹²⁵ Marie Keenan, *Child Sexual Abuse & The Catholic Church: Gender, Power and Organizational Culture*, (Oxford, 2012), pp 222-3.

that this failure left priests with no true friends other than priests and thus further promoted a clerical culture.¹²⁶ Picking up a similar theme, Louise Fuller, in an edited collection published following the Murphy Report in 2009, argues that ‘the ideals laid down at Vatican II have not been realised in practice.’¹²⁷ Nonetheless, it can also be argued that such questions were themselves not authoritatively concluded at the council due to the kind of ambiguities which lay at the heart of the debate on collegiality and the *locus* of authority in the church. This brings us back to what O’Malley has argued: that at Vatican II, three interrelated issues ‘underneath the issues’ were not resolved. These were: the capacity to deal with change, the relationship of the centre and the periphery and coming to terms with the new conciliar style of Vatican II.¹²⁸ Given the models of authority which permeated the church in Ireland, such a solution would have been impossible in Ireland during the period under review, and especially within the short timeframe following Vatican II. This was primarily due to the pace of societal change, the cautious approach of the Irish bishops as primary receivers and the absence of sufficient education process accompanying the changes. Any such education process would have been required in order to give a sense of rootedness to the reforms and their relationship with the sources of the church’s life, theologically and historically.

Despite the promise of the council and the efforts of Cardinal Conway and others, the Irish experience of collegiality and communion was not as rich as that in some other countries. The fact that the Irish hierarchy had been meeting for its own purposes over a lengthy period of time did impinge on its capacity to change into something new in a way that Vatican II sought. The bishops saw themselves as local managers who implemented decisions that best suited what they saw as their own local needs.

The Irish situation differed from the experience of countries such as France, where the episcopal conference was formed only in the aftermath of the council. Prior to that, plenary assemblies of all the French bishops were rare, one in 1951, for example, being the first for forty-four years.¹²⁹ Prior to that, especially from 1951, there had been a series of regional assemblies and various commissions dealing with a range of questions affecting church life. This subsidiary approach provided the basis for the process that flowed in and through Vatican II and thus led to the creation of the episcopal conference. Christian Delarbre puts it that ‘the

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp 236-7.

¹²⁷ Louise Fuller, ‘Disturbing the Faith: Aspects of Catholic Culture Under Review’, in John Littleton & Eamon Maher (eds), *The Dublin/Murphy Report: A Watershed for Irish Catholicism?* (Dublin, 2010), p. 165.

¹²⁸ See O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, pp 299-300.

¹²⁹ Christian Delarbre, ‘La reception du Concile par la Conférence de évêques de France (1963-1975’ in Galinier-Pallerola, Laffay & Minvielle (eds), *L’Église de France après Vatican II*, p. 252.

conciliar experience could not fail to mark the assemblies of the bishops of France.’¹³⁰ It could also be argued that the ‘bottom-up’ approach, imbued with a lively animation rooted a long-held desire for active renewal of the church and drawn from the conciliar experience, would have also assisted greatly. Also, as Delarbre points out, the council experience provided the motivation for the French bishops to draw up and review statutes to govern their activities; this they did from 1963. The following year, at the opening assembly of the French bishops it was clear that they were energised to have a body that would be active, one that would coordinate and lead initiatives for the whole of the French church. Speaking at the opening assembly, Cardinal Achille Liénart (1894-1973), one of the foremost council fathers, spoke of the great value of the ‘real authority’ of episcopal conference as a body to coordinate actions and initiatives for renewal while respecting the authority of individual bishops.¹³¹ The areas for this renewal covered a wide range of questions; from liturgy, to catechetics, the place of the priest and deacon, formation of clergy, the special place of the laity, ecumenism, and the mission of church generally in French society, including debates on the role of the episcopate on questions of sexual morality. Apart from whatever difference in emphasis there might have been in terms of approach, one significant difference from Ireland was that the proceedings of the plenary assemblies of the French bishops were published and made available for all to read and thereby participate in. There was a real sense of collegial journeying. Delarbre sees the contribution of collegiality in France during the first ten years following the council in terms of helping bishops to accompany the conciliar reforms, to assist common action through structural reflection, and, thirdly, to assist the bishops have a public voice together as pastors both within the church and within wider society. This, he contends, was important in a period of great uncertainty in French society. While bishops found a common path, they did so without eliminating diversity of approaches or opinions. Unlike in Ireland, there was a common vision.¹³²

The reception of the council in the USA has been analysed in terms of cycles or stages. Joseph P Chinnici refers to the period from the end of the council to 1983 as being categorised around the shift from doctrinal to the pastoral, taking Pope John XXIII’s opening address to the council as the touchstone.¹³³ Like in France, the US bishops had only loose connections in terms of meeting for joint action. The origins of an episcopal conference in the USA can be

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 251; ‘L’expérience conciliaire n’a pas pu ne pas marquer les assemblées des évêques de France.’

¹³¹ Cardinal A Liénart, ‘Allocution à l’ouverture de l’Assemblée plénière de l’Épiscopat de France’ in *Assemblée plénière de l’Épiscopat français*, Paris, 18,19,20 Mai 1964 (Issy-les-Moulineaux, 1964), p. 13.

¹³² Delarbre, ‘La réception du Concile par la Conférence de évêques de France (1963-1975)’, pp 273-4.

¹³³ Chinnici, ‘Reception of Vatican II in the United States’, pp 461-71.

traced to 1917 when the bishops there formed the National Catholic War Council (NCWC) to enable people support the American effort in World War I. In 1922 the National Catholic Welfare Council was established to promote and assist social assistance for Catholics, including in the field of education. These continued to be the only bodies for collegial activity in the USA until 1966 when two new bodies were formed. The first was the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), an body comprised solely of bishops which fulfilled the requirements of Vatican II for episcopal collaboration. The second was the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) which enabled Catholics of all levels, lay and clerical, to cooperate in a range of areas of concern to the church in wider society.¹³⁴ Both co-existed until they were amalgamated in 2001 to form the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

These were new bodies in the church in the USA were created in the light of the council and had a degree of freedom and freshness, amidst the tensions that mirrored the reception elsewhere, except in Ireland. This was reflected on by the first President of the NCCB, Cardinal John Dearden of Detroit (1907-88), when at the bodies first plenary session in 1967 he stated that

A change in the way of life of the world's Roman Catholics was launched at the Vatican Council. It is up to each individual nation to adapt to its particular conditions the broad guidelines laid down, and it [is] our belief that this session of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has taken several steps forward in the process that must continue into the future...

There will the criticism from some who are given to the notion that failure to alter radically any form of the past is a grievous fault in itself. There will be balancing criticism, it may be presumed, from those at the other extreme [*sic*] who see any adaptation to conditions in the world about us a desertion of the sacred heritage of the past.

These criticisms, as well as those made by the great body of the faithful lying between are welcome. They serve the useful purpose of keeping ever fresh in our minds the great task entrusted to the Church in the United States by the Council – that of adapting ancient and unalterable truths to new cultural settings.¹³⁵

As an expression of new ways to negotiate such new situations, the US bishops established a committee on pastoral research and practices. Through the 1970s this committee dealt with a range of questions 'which touched the entire Church as a system of people in relationships of aspiration, desire, power, authority, tradition, creed, sacraments, hierarchy and decision-making responsibility.'¹³⁶ Among the questions covered were the adaptation of the liturgy, reception of communion in the hand, women in ministry, integration in fair housing and employment, conscientious objection to war, the reception of *Humanae Vitae*, pastoral care of

¹³⁴ Website of the USCCB: <http://www.usccb.org/about/> (accessed 10 October 2018)

¹³⁵ Chinnici, 'Reception of Vatican II in the United States', pp 473-4.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 474.

Catholics living in marriages not recognised by the church, and guidelines for confessors in questions of homosexuality.

In line with other countries, the church in America also witnessed the establishment of Councils of Priests. This was followed by the setting up of a National Federation of Priests Councils in order to represent the interests of priests at a national level and engage more readily with the Episcopal Conference. In some places, such as Chicago and San Francisco, some priests formed independent associations of priests, due, it is claimed, to their disillusionment with the official councils. There was further change as the council 'gradually released among the American Catholic laity a spirit of public frankness and constructive dissent.'¹³⁷ This was represented by the establishment of the National Association of Laymen, with affiliate organisations based all over the country. These groups became quite vocal on matters such as church finance, liturgy, birth control and other topics. This represented a new challenge to authority and how pastoral leaders might respond.

Chinnici argues that in the period from the late 1960s until 1983 there were two significant dimensions of that historical process that shaped the response of US pastoral leaders and scholars. These were the symbolic character of religious practice and the interactive character of such practice. By symbolic is meant the symbolic impact of actions, from marching in the street to touching the holy or reading the Word of God. By interactive is meant the interaction of new religious practices with the lived experiences of people and how such practices take several years to 'gestate, mature, purify themselves and, if possible, reach equilibrium in relationship to the whole body of Church believers.'¹³⁸

As can be seen, the genesis of the episcopal conferences in both France and the USA, rooted in Vatican II, had a profound effect on the manner in which the bishops and wider church there received the council. It was much more reflective, much more deliberate, much more pastoral. It took up the call of Pope John XXIII to present the doctrine of the faith in new ways to a changing and changed world. That changed world was more pronounced in both France and the USA than it was in Ireland at that time. Yet, as we will see in later chapters, changes were afoot in Ireland, though perhaps less pronounced.

¹³⁷ Eugene Bianchi, 'John XXIII, Vatican II and American Catholicism', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 387 (January 1970), p. 35.

¹³⁸ Chinnici, 'Reception of Vatican II in the United States', p. 477.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the meaning of collegiality and communion as debated by Vatican II. We then examined how these ideas were put into practice, structurally and otherwise, in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, among the bishops, priests and the laity. We did some comparative analysis with France and the United States of America and, importantly, we reviewed the number of vocations in Ireland and assessed how that affected the reception of the council under these headings.

In its everyday mission, the church needs structures and guidelines if it is to achieve its mission.¹³⁹ However, as Walter Kasper points out, the hesitant way in which the creation of collegial and synodal structures at various levels was followed up after the council, impeded the realisation of the possibilities for many.¹⁴⁰ This was evidenced by the *modus operandi* of the various bodies established, from the Synod of Bishops to the local Parish Councils. These bodies were consultative in nature and their usage in the practice of decision-making depended on the willingness of the pope or bishop to utilise them. As for the Episcopal Conferences, their emergence created national structures which coordinated the implementation of the conciliar reforms, but, as we have seen, often without an overall vision.

The response of the Catholic Church in Ireland in terms of acting on the requirements for collegial structures for bishops and priests was diligent and obedient. In terms of reception, the Irish bishops were the hierarchical receivers of the council which they dutifully implemented as directed. But the Irish bishops themselves and the wider church did not receive Vatican II in this respect because the Irish Episcopal Conference was not rooted in Vatican II, it was in existence to suit its own needs and it sought to continue to do that, without any overall vision for the church. In terms of governance, new structures were put in place to carry out, oversee and control the implementation of the council. Some of these structures did allow for forms of debate and consultation. The *mentalité* was juridical even if somewhat more pastoral than previously. In terms of the practice of synodality, a collaborative journeying together of the whole people of God to discern new ways forward, this did not materialise in Ireland. This was in contrast to other European countries such as Austria, the Netherlands, and Germany where national synods were held, or like in the Archdiocese of Cracow in Poland where a ten-year long synod took place.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Duffy, 'Reimagining the Church in Ireland', p. 119.

¹⁴⁰ Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission* (London and New York, 2015), p. 271.

¹⁴¹ See Faggioli, *Vatican II*, p. 8; Ó Riordan, 'The Synod of Bishops 1985', pp 143-5.

As noted above, while the number of missionary priests fell dramatically in the period concerned, the number of diocesan priests remained fairly static. This meant there were as priests around to carry out the pastoral work in every parish and to oversee governance. There was little of no pastoral planning because the need was not seen. The church in Ireland remained clerical. As for the theology underpinning collegiality and communion, the exposure of the Irish Catholic people to it would have been minimal. Again, it was foreign to most priests with the exception of those who took a particular interest in such matters.

As a result, collegiality and communion, as envisaged by the council, were experienced more in aspiration than reality, and only received sporadically in Ireland during the period under consideration. Consequently, there was a theological, governance and leadership deficit which was filled by a continuing clericalism and imbued with a territorial mindset on the part of both priests and many of the laity. All of these factors restricted the capacity of the local church at all levels to allow collegiality and communion, as practiced by the early church and envisaged by the council, to become a renewed reality. Such a renewal would become ever more critical for the church in the rapidly changing landscape of modern Ireland. The place of the church and the influence of Vatican II in this changing society will be the subject the next chapter.

Chapter Four

The Church and Modernisation: the Reception of *Gaudium et Spes* in Ireland

The Second Vatican Council set about a renewal of the Roman Catholic Church so that it could dialogue with the modern world in its mission of proclaiming the gospel. While the council placed considerable emphasis on Christian unity and reform of the liturgy, it was the desire to reach out to a vastly changed and changing world that marked the council's claim to a special place in the history of the twentieth century. Nowhere was this desire given clearer expression than in the debates on its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated at the final public session on 7 December 1965.

Vatican II was convened at a time of change in the world and in Irish society. When this change is considered alongside the unique place of the church in that society, the implications for the church in Ireland from *Gaudium et Spes* deserve attention. Consideration of this document should take account of the pastoral nature of the council itself and the fact that it spoke to a more global church, urging the local churches to reach out to the wider world. As has been noted already, the council occurred at a time of new political and economic relationships between Ireland and Europe and on the island of Ireland itself. Social, political and economic factors would interface with proclamation of the gospel and the results would inform the mission of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland in new ways.

This chapter focusses solely on the Republic of Ireland. In this chapter we will survey the background to *Gaudium et Spes* and the document itself. Having reviewed some of the changes and continuities of the Irish society into which it was received, we will examine the response of the Irish Catholic bishops to the document. In doing this, we will review some of the initiatives that flowed from the council under key headings, and assess how the new openness encouraged within the universal church after Vatican II shaped the contribution by the church in Ireland to the modernisation of Irish society, a contribution that was different from that of the pre-conciliar era.

Background to the pastoral document

Gaudium et Spes emerged at a time of disorder and tension in the world. This was highlighted by the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the possibility of nuclear war. It was also a time when minorities challenged discrimination and demanded civil rights and a period in world history when colonialism came to an end and new nations emerged, especially in Africa and Asia. *Gaudium et Spes* represented closely the pastoral vision that Pope John XXIII had for Vatican II, whose purpose was to ‘come to grips with the spiritual needs of the present time’.¹ In the Papal Bull convoking the council, the Pope spoke of the church witnessing a crisis in society and of humanity being ‘at the threshold of a new age’ that imposed ‘immensely serious and broad tasks’ on the church.²

Gaudium et Spes was more than a document written for members of the Roman Catholic Church. It was addressed to all of humanity. This aspect was highlighted in a very public way by Pope Paul VI on 4 October 1965, when, during the fourth session, he became the first Pope to travel to the USA and to address the United Nations General Assembly. By going to the United Nations, he was setting out a world mission for the church. The theologian Peter Hünemann adds, that through this visit, ‘an important step was taken in the *aggiornamento* of the church, which John XXIII had set as the task of the council’ and that Paul had ‘made visible what John XXIII had sketched out in his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*’.³ The entire trip was seen as a conciliar event, evidenced by the fact that when the Pope returned to Rome, he went directly to St Peter’s to report on it to the council. For its part, the council fathers, seeing Paul’s address to the UN as part of a dialogue with the world, decided that the text should be included in the council record of proceedings.⁴ Taken together with Paul’s earlier journeys to the Holy Land and India, the flying visit to the UN can be seen as a part of the beginning of an outreach that would be built on by his successors, notably John Paul II.

¹ Tanner, *Church and the Modern World*, p. 3.

² Pope John XXIII, Apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis*, dated 25 December 1961, no. 3 http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/it/apost_constitutions/1961/documents/hf_j-xxiii_apc_19611225_humanae-salutis.html. (accessed 18 January 2018)

³ Peter Hünemann, ‘The Final Weeks of the Council’, in Alberigo & Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, v, p. 391.

⁴ AAS, 57 (1965), pp 877-885. It is also worth noting also that the Irish government viewed the Pope’s one-day trip to New York as sufficiently significant to merit an official delegation to travel there as observers. The delegation was headed by the Taoiseach, Seán Lemass and included the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank Aiken, the Minister for Finance, Jack Lynch, the leader of Fine Gael, Liam Cosgrave and the leader of the Labour Party, Brendan Corish. See, *ICD* 1966, p. 755; *Irish Independent*, 6 Oct 1965, *Irish Press*, 6 Oct 1965.

Other conciliar documents which should be noted when considering the council and modern society in general are the Decree on Social Communications, *Inter Mirifica*, the Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate*. This was new territory for an ecumenical council, ‘a novelty in the history of councils.’⁵ Much of it was a far cry from the teachings of Pius IX (1846-78) whose *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864 condemned the idea that the pope ‘can and ought to reconcile and adjust himself with progress, liberalism and modern civilisation’.⁶

A survey of the document

Gaudium et Spes was the longest and one of the most important decrees of Vatican II. While other documents were heavily theological in content, *Gaudium et Spes* was considered to be primarily a pastoral document, one with the authoritative status of a constitution. Norman Tanner argues that its authority has grown, that it has retained its freshness. He concludes that this pivotal document on the church and the modern world ‘has perhaps more than any decree come to sum up Vatican II’.⁷ Joseph Ratzinger regards it as ‘one of [Vatican II’s] most important results’.⁸ Barbara Wall of Villanova University places it within the tradition of Catholic social teaching that was prevalent during the 1960s, emphasising ‘the inherent dignity of the human person, *imago dei*... that in a redeemed world all people have an inherent dignity given by God and that human life is ordained to fulfilment in the community’.⁹ Nonetheless, a number of theologians and council fathers, especially those from Germany – notably Karl Rahner – voiced criticism of *Gaudium et Spes* on the grounds that its theology was lightweight and notably optimistic, lacking a Christian realism about human existence.¹⁰ Yves Congar, who worked on the drafting of chapters one and four of the document, expressed regret that *Gaudium et Spes* ‘did not return more unreservedly to the categories “people of God” and “messianic People”’.¹¹ Despite this, the Brazilian cardinal Claudio Hummes argues that the document is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, that God acts in human history, citing the

⁵ Godfried Danneels, ‘The Ongoing Agenda: A Council Unlike Any Other’, in Gavin D’Costa & Emma Jane Harris (eds), *The Second Vatican Council: Celebrating its Achievements and the Future* (London, 2013) p. 27.

⁶ Pius IX, Encyclical Letter *Quanta Cura*, dated 8 December 1864, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm> (accessed 18 January 2018)

⁷ Tanner, *Church and The World*, p. 63.

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, (New York, 2009), p. 213.

⁹ Barbara E. Wall, ‘Introduction’, in *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 3, no. 2 (Summer, 2006), pp 225-6.

¹⁰ Karl Rahner, ‘Christian Pessimism’, *Theological Investigations*, xxii, (London, 1991), pp157-8 cited in Lane, ‘Keeping the Memory Alive’, p. 52.

¹¹ See Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church*, p. 103.

opening words of the document as ‘a profound sharing in the whole of human reality in the world’.¹² The document tried to cover a wide range of questions that were emerging in a fluid environment, one that would change radically in the decades following the council.

Gaudium et Spes focussed on humanity. The opening words evoke the human condition as the council saw it:

The joys and hopes and the sorrows and anxieties of people today, especially of those who are poor and afflicted, are also the joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties of the disciples of Christ, and there is nothing truly human which does not also affect them.¹³

The analysis here is very much a bottom-up approach. Thus it states that in order to discharge its function,

The church has the duty in every age of examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the gospel, so that it can offer, in a manner appropriate to each generation the constant human questionings on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related.¹⁴

The basic goodness of humanity is emphasised, as is its intrinsic link with the divine; that God is present in all that is truly human. The areas covered in this part of the document include human dignity (with special emphasis on the place of conscience),¹⁵ the human community, human activity in the world and the role of the church in the world, linking this with its understanding of the church as the people of God, set out in chapter 2 of *Lumen Gentium*.

In Part II of *Gaudium et Spes*, five ‘urgent problems’ are discussed.¹⁶ These include marriage and the family, culture, socio-economic life, life in the political community, and world peace. The latter area generated considerable debate in the context of the then ongoing Cold War, with the two world wars being within the memory and experience of a great many of the participants. The document looks forward to a time ‘when nations can agree to a

¹² Claudio Hummes, ‘Theological and Ecclesiological Foundations of *Gaudium et Spes*’, *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*, 3, no. 2, (Summer, 2006), p. 233.

¹³ GS 1.

¹⁴ GS 4.

¹⁵ GS 16, ‘Conscience is the most intimate centre and sanctuary of a person, in which he or she is alone with God whose voice echoes within them.’ In making this reference, the document echoes the words of Pope Pius XII in a radio message on 25 March 1952 concerning the formation of conscience among young people, see AAS, 44 (1952), p. 271.

¹⁶ GS 46.

complete ban on all war.’¹⁷ Our assessment of the reception of *Gaudium et Spes* in the church in Ireland will, where possible, use these five headings as a framework.

In the conclusion to *Gaudium et Spes*, the council highlighted the contribution that the church could bring to the world and encouraged the unity of the church in that endeavour. In view of its mission to spread the Gospel throughout the globe and to bring people together, the document concluded that the church ‘comes to be a sign of that kinship which makes genuine dialogue possible and vigorous.’¹⁸

Ireland’s Changing Society

The period from the end of World War II to the beginning of the 1960s was a difficult one economically for the Republic of Ireland. Between 1951 and 1961, net migration alone led to the loss of over eighty thousand people, against a natural increase of just fifty-three thousand in the same period. Despite programmes to expand health services and construct houses, there was no growth in either agriculture or manufacturing industry. The total number of people engaged in various industries fell from 1,272,038 in 1951 to 1,052,539 ten years later. Within these figures, the decline of agriculture, in terms of the numbers involved, is noteworthy, falling from 40.3% in 1951 to 25.9% in 1971.¹⁹ Taken together with an increase in the population of Dublin and other cities, this indicated a growing trend from a rural to an urban society.

Another area where change was to have a major impact was that of education, an aspect of Irish life of immense interest to the church. The formulating of a long-term plan for educational development in the country, in line with OECD guidelines to generate economic growth, included the creation of comprehensive schools in various parts of the country and the introduction of grant scheme for the building of secondary schools from 1964. However, the government’s reform of education also involved a policy of re-organisation of the primary and post-primary sectors, with amalgamation of schools in rural areas being a particular point of conflict. While the hierarchy did not oppose the scheme as such, Bishop Browne of Galway became a very vocal opponent of it. The plan went ahead and by 1973 over eleven hundred one and two-teacher primary schools were closed. The advent of free second-level education in 1968 was another outcome of the policies initiated and backed, albeit

¹⁷ GS, 82.

¹⁸ GS 92.

¹⁹ Central Statistics Office, Census Reports for 1951, 1961 and 1971, <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/censusvolumes1926to1991/historicalreports/> (accessed 18 January 2018)

cautiously, by Lemass and his ministers.²⁰ Walsh is adamant that ‘the radical reforms of the 1960s could not have been achieved without a dramatic change in political attitudes towards the role of the state in the educational sector.’²¹ Here was a sphere of influence, the control of which, would, in the decades ahead, pose a direct challenge to the base and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church in Irish society and the church’s relationship with the government. Walsh argues that the bishops met the reforms from an increasingly assertive Department of Education with ‘profound suspicion and hostility’.²²

Gary Murphy points out that of all the changes that took place in Ireland in the years 1945 to 1973, the economic ones were the most important. With the publication in 1958 of T.K. Whitaker’s first economic plan, entitled *Programme for Economic Expansion*, there was a gradual shift away from protectionism and towards free trade and foreign industrial investment.²³ Economic planning in an increasingly global environment was radical for the Ireland of the late 1950s. It provided the government and the various sectoral interests with new ways of achieving and monitoring progress. As noted in Chapter Two, one bishop saw this progress in terms of patriotism and the recovery of its human dimension. That same bishop, William Philbin, is credited by one economist as ‘an acknowledged source of inspiration’ for Whitaker in the writing of the first economic plan, and, as we have seen, he also made some of the more significant inputs at Vatican II itself.²⁴

The demographic changes and increased income levels (in part resultant from economic planning) led to shifts in consumer trends, with more people, especially younger people, able to spend more of their money. This new affluence created social mobility, changes in retail practices and greater more access to goods, many of which were now imported. By 1971, almost two-thirds of workers received a weekly or monthly wage and were not dependent on income from within the family. By 1965, average industrial earnings were over 90% higher than in 1953. Between 1960 and 1968, family farm incomes also rose by 52%. Rural electrification and rural water schemes also added to the removal of differences between urban and rural areas.²⁵ Car ownership more than doubled between 1957 and 1967. By then, an

²⁰ See John Walsh, ‘The Politics of Educational Expansion’ in Brian Girvin and Gary Murphy (eds), *The Lemass Era: Politics and Society in the Ireland of Sean Lemass* (Dublin, 2005), pp 146-65.

²¹ John Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion: The transformation of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland, 1957-72* (Manchester, 2009).

²² John Walsh, ‘Ministers, Bishops and the Changing Balance of Power in Irish Education 1950-70’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 38 (May 2012), p. 109; see, Ó Corráin, ‘Catholicism in Ireland’, p. 741.

²³ Gary Murphy, ‘From economic nationalism to European Union’ in Girvin & Murphy (eds), *Lemass Era*, p. 28.

²⁴ Finola Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche: Family change in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 154.

²⁵ Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, pp 130-1.

estimated 30 percent of urban dwellings and up to 38 percent of rural dwellings owned cars. All of this ‘played a crucial role in transforming shopping, leisure and communities.’²⁶

A key force for change in Ireland was television. Ulster Television was formed by the ITV network in 1959 and many homes on the east coast and in border areas had access to the BBC. In the Republic, the new television channel, Teilifís Éireann, was launched in 1961 and, like in other countries, it provided another important medium for the reception of the council both through its coverage of the event itself and as an outlet for discussion.²⁷ The advent of television in Ireland forced both the Irish Government and the Catholic Hierarchy to prepare for change. In 1958 a government commission was established to advise on the best options for the Republic of Ireland in terms of the new medium. Its report, published a year later, recommended that a state-run television service could be advantageous to the country. The bishops established their own Episcopal Television Commission.²⁸ McQuaid sent several Dublin priests to England, America and Holland to study television methods. Their reports highlighted how the bishops in those countries came to recognise the importance of religious programming and how they had prepared church personnel to be *au fait* with the necessary techniques.²⁹ This demonstrated that even in advance of Vatican II, and despite the Irish lack of preparedness for the council, there was a willingness to embrace the new medium and the technology accompanying it for the purposes of advancing the church’s mission.³⁰

The rise in population in the 1960s and the decline in agriculture as a source of employment highlighted the ongoing debate about the future of rural communities. The government was coming under consistent pressure to support farming families. At one level, this pressure was augmented by Pope John XXIII’s encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra*, in 1961 which highlighted the levels of migration from farms to cities and the consequent implications for rural communities. The document was a portend to *Gaudium et Spes*. The Taoiseach, Seán Lemass quoted the encyclical in several of his speeches and farm leaders often quoted from it too in support of their demands. Lemass also urged cabinet ministers to keep a copy of the encyclical on their desks,³¹ which, as Daly notes, suggests that ‘he saw no overt

²⁶ Ibid., pp 131-2.

²⁷ See O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?*, p. 1.

²⁸ See Robert J. Savage, *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-72* (Manchester 2010), p. 176.

²⁹ ‘Television Training for Priests – Report on Course in Manchester, 1959’; Thomas Fehilly to McQuaid, 8 November 1960; Joseph Dunn to McQuaid, 17 November 1960 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/XXVI.).

³⁰ See Kerry J. O’Hanlon, ‘The Catholic Church and Irish Television in the 1960s: The transformation of the Church’s image through the new medium’ (undergraduate thesis, University College Dublin, 2014).

³¹ John Horgan, *Seán Lemass: The Enigmatic Patriot*, (Dublin, 1997), p. 322.

conflict between economic development and an active role for the Catholic Church'.³² As Lemass' biographer John Horgan highlights, Lemass saw no difficulty in using papal encyclicals in the social area as influences on policy. He pointed out to a press conference in 1964 that the 'broad concepts of policy which have been laid down in encyclicals do in fact inspire the policies of Irish governments, but this is because we agree with them.'³³ This attitude reflected the view of Irish Catholics at the beginning of the 1960s. They were conservative and traditional and this informed their views of church and state. As Brian Girvin points out, if there were to be a conflict of church and state, people would 'side overwhelmingly' with the church.³⁴

The government came under pressure from the National Farmers' Association, which in 1966 led a nationwide protest culminating in a sit-in on the steps of Government Buildings in Dublin. There were campaigns to 'save the west' and to force the government to support new local food production projects which would augment farm incomes. Campaign groups and projects formed in places such as Achill and Charlestown in County Mayo and Glencolmcille in County Donegal. The Achill group, *Gluaiseacht Chearta Sibhialta na Ghaeltachta*, demanded civil rights for the people of the Gaeltacht. These organisations were led largely by church figures, such as James McDyer in Glencolmcille, and supported by bishops such as Lucey and Browne, giving an air of continuity rather than of change to the purpose of the groups. Their campaign was aimed not so much at protecting family farms – most of the agitators on these groups were not even farmers – but preserving the population in rural Ireland and in the west especially. This sense of preserving what was considered Irish was also evident from a letter presented to Boston's Cardinal Richard Cushing by Sinn Féin representatives in Galway when he came as papal legate to dedicate the new cathedral there in August 1965. The letter claimed to speak for 'the people who support the struggle for freedom, social justice and the preservation of a distinctive way of life'. Having outlined the effects of the depopulation of the western seaboard, it cautioned church leaders as to the potential outcomes:

We have felt it our duty to bring this to Your Eminence's attention because we realise that if the Church is not prepared to spend a greater amount of money and effort on improving the social and economic wellbeing of the people here, the time may not be far distant when there may not be enough people to support the cathedral.³⁵

³² Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 198.

³³ Cited in Horgan, *Lemass*, p. 322.

³⁴ Brian Girvin, 'Church, state and the moral monopoly' in Girvin & Murphy (eds), *Lemass Era*, p. 141.

³⁵ P. deBurca to Cushing, 13 August 1965 (GDA, Browne papers, B/6/ D/110).

Family size and the age at which people married were already changing during the 1960s. This had implications for economic and social planning also, not to mention the relationship with Catholic social thought. The improving economic circumstances of the country saw earlier marriages and a rising marriage rate, thus bringing Ireland somewhat into line with international trends. However, while Ireland's rate of births remained high by European standards, there was a noticeable fall beginning to emerge by the mid-1960s. For example, between 1966 and 1968 the number of births in the Republic fell by almost three percent. In the year ended March 1969, there were 4,400 fewer births than in the year ended March 1965.³⁶ People were marrying younger and deciding on the size of their families. Internationally, the availability of the contraceptive pill played a huge role in the debate on family planning, which by the 1960s was available in Ireland, not as a contraceptive but as a cycle regulator and therefore outside of the scope of the legislative provisions in the Republic. In the winter edition of the Jesuit journal *Studies* in 1964, the question of birth regulation was described as 'one of the most urgent questions facing the Church today' and there should be 'boldness to preach a planned parenthood.'³⁷

A new era in the movement for women's rights coincided with the period of the initial reception of the Vatican II reforms. The women's movement in Ireland had its roots in what is termed the 'first-wave feminism' of the mid-nineteenth century and in subsequent movements in the early decades of the twentieth-century. This was followed by what the Irish sociologist Linda Connolly describes as 'a period of abeyance' from 1922 until 1969.³⁸ In the 1950s, two organisations were dominant in representing women's interests in Ireland, namely the Irish Housewives Association (IHA), founded in 1942, and the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA), founded in 1910.³⁹ Nonetheless, societal changes during the 1960s, such as the diffusion of new feminist ideas and greater opportunities for open debate on questions previously considered out of bounds, enabled the building of a much wider base for the women's movement and the development of a much more comprehensive agenda. Tom Inglis contends that once women gained access to economic and political power from the 1960s onwards they were not dependent on the church. Consequently, he argues that since the church lost control of women, 'then one of the pillars, if not the foundation of what has held the Church above

³⁶ Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 144.

³⁷ Joseph Fuchs, 'The Pill', *Studies*, 53, no. 212 (Winter 1964), p. 352.

³⁸ Linda Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement: From Revolution to Devolution* (Dublin, 2003), p. 71.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 71-86; see Hilda Tweedy, *A Link in the Chain: the story of the Irish housewives association 1942-1992* (Dublin, 1992); Diarmaid Ferriter, *Mothers, Maidens and Myth: A History of the Irish Countrywomen's Association* (Dublin, 1994).

modern Irish society begins to crumble and decay.⁴⁰ In 1968, as a result of several international congresses, an *ad-hoc* committee on women's rights was formed by a number of women's organisations and trade unions. This led to the establishment in 1970 of the Commission for the Status of Women by the Irish government. 1970 also saw the formation of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement. The increased focus on questions of direct interest to women was aided by international developments in the United Nations and the European Economic Community as well as by a keen interest in the media.⁴¹ Some analysis of the women's movement at this time divides it along lines of two ideological branches – women's rights and women's liberation.⁴² The former concentrated on extending equality to women through legal reforms and anti-discrimination policy. The latter sought more radical change, focussing on the 'transformation of basic social institutions (including family, sexuality, religion and education)'.⁴³ It was this radical sector which would lead the debate and action surrounding the campaign for reproductive rights in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, the Ireland into which *Gaudium et Spes* arrived was already on the 'edge of the volcano' referred to in Chapter One. While the period did not see a social revolution for women, the 1970s saw the consistent extension of women's rights, enacted in a broad range of legislation that addressed areas such as employment, inheritance and maternity.⁴⁴

Generational change played a key role in the 1960s and in the decade following Vatican II. While the Fianna Fáil party remained in power for most of the period under review (it was replaced by a Fine Gael-Labour coalition from 1973 until 1977), there was a significant shift to a younger generation of politicians. This, together with societal change, meant that legislation on matters such as censorship was relaxed.⁴⁵ Free second level education was announced by the Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley in September 1966.⁴⁶ In 1964, Fine Gael TD, Declan Costello brought forward a policy document entitled *Towards a Just Society*, which, when it was eventually (even hurriedly) accepted by the party, became part of their unsuccessful election platform in 1965.⁴⁷ The new policy advocated increased state

⁴⁰ Inglis, *Moral Monopoly*, p. 213.

⁴¹ Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 91.

⁴² See Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism* (New York, 1971).

⁴³ Connolly, *The Irish Women's Movement*, p. 91.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 89-110; see Linda Connolly and Tina O'Toole, *Documenting Irish Feminism: The Second Wave* (Dublin, 2005), pp 21-52; Ferriter, *Ambiguous Republic*, pp 657-79.

⁴⁵ Michael Adams, *Censorship: the Irish experience* (Alabama, 1968).

⁴⁶ See Walsh, 'Educational Expansion' pp 146-65.

⁴⁷ Ciara Meehan, *A Just Society for Ireland? 1964-1987* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp 42-50.

involvement in economic reform, healthcare – including mental health, and youth policy, including a commitment to end the housing of youths in institutions.

Writing in 1983, Tom Barrington of the Institute of Public Administration spoke of the lack of intellectual preparedness in Ireland for economic and social change. With regard to government he said that the ‘great engine found itself operating in a vast intellectual scrubland in which, for a whole generation, virtually no cultivation had taken place’.⁴⁸ This ‘intellectual scrubland’ was similar to the terrain of the church into which the theological aspects of the council were received. Would the church’s call to action on the social and political front be any different?

The Church in Ireland– The Reception of *Gaudium et Spes*

While Ireland did not have the experience of the intellectual debates that accompanied much of the pre-Vatican II period on the continent, there was change in the church and in wider society. While the 1968 ‘student revolution’ in Europe (and the USA) had very minimal expressions in Ireland, there was an growing propensity to challenge authority, particularly among younger people. Archbishop McQuaid’s assertion in 1965 that Vatican II ‘would not disturb the tranquillity of your Christian lives’ was to be tested, especially under the heading of social and cultural change. Just as population increases indicated improved economic status and pointed towards changed social conditions, analysis of the same figures also shows that the numbers refusing to be identified with the Roman Catholic Church or any religion rose sharply from 0.2% of the population in 1961 to 1.9% in 1971.⁴⁹ This was still a remarkably low level and was only one measure of change. The increased debates, perhaps more muted by European standards, presented a challenge to church authority on social matters. But as Mary Daly states, there is a danger that we can overstate the extent of the challenge. She argues that for a time in the 1960s ‘it appeared that the church and the wider society would march arm in arm towards a modern and consensual future, marked by greater tolerance, less censoriousness and a shared commitment to social and economic progress.’⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cited in Joy Rudd, ‘No Cultivation in the Scrubland’, in *Books Ireland*, no. 75 (July-Aug 1983), p. 131; see Frank Litton (ed.), *Unequal Achievement: The Irish Experience 1957-1982* (Dublin, 1983).

⁴⁹ Brendan Walsh, ‘Trends in the Religious Composition of the Population 1946-1971’, *Economic and Social Review*, (1974), pp 543-55.

⁵⁰ Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 191.

Speaking to newly-ordained priests in St Patrick's College, Maynooth in June 1967, Cardinal Conway told them that they were going into a world that was passing through one of the most remarkable periods in its history. He urged priests to be positive towards the world so that they could preach the gospel in it with effect, saying

...it is important that you, young priests, should strive to understand the world of today, that you should adopt a positive approach to its achievements and, indeed, to many of its values; that you should recognise its concern for social justice and its passionate quest for sincerity and truth in human relations, that you should share its elation at its triumphs, its *Gaudium et Spes*. It is only by such a positive approach, recognising all that is healthy and good and wonderful in the modern, that you can hope to penetrate the minds of those over whom it exercises such a fascination and effectively preach the Gospel to them.⁵¹

He warned, however, against any dilution of the Gospel 'in order to catch the ears of listeners' and to faithfully reflect the 'teachings and attitudes' of Vatican II. His emphasis was very much on reception 'by directives' highlighting that '*aggiornamento* is a much deeper thing than putting the Mass into the vernacular or the redesigning of churches. It involves, above all, a deep spiritual renewal, a readjustment of attitudes, a developed capacity to relate the unchanging Gospel to the circumstances of the modern world', acknowledging that such changes could not come about overnight.⁵²

How was the new sense of the church in society realised in terms of the reception of the council in Ireland? We will now review that reception in terms of the five areas set out by *Gaudium et Spes*.

Marriage and family

Aside from the question of birth control, which was excluded from the effective consideration of the council and made the subject of a separate encyclical letter in 1968, the main strands of thought in the chapter on marriage and family life were well received. As Tanner, notes, the details of the teaching on the subject are largely traditional, yet the 'positive tone towards marriage has enabled the Catholic Church to stay in touch with its own members as well as to speak meaningfully on the relevant issues to the wider world...'.⁵³

⁵¹ *ICD 1968*, pp 798-801.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Tanner, *Church and The World*, p. 74.

The 1960s represented a period of change regarding the perception of family life in Ireland inasmuch as marriage and family became subjects of more public conversations. Journalist Dorine Rohan, in a survey of women contained in her work *Marriage, Irish Style*, recorded that at the end of the 1960s women were more eager to talk about their expectations and experiences of marriage and how they coped with the lack of financial independence, respect and fulfilment. She concluded that their fears about leaving unhappy marriages had more to do with economic factors than moral or emotional considerations.⁵⁴ These considerations, especially concerning the inheritance rights of deserted wives, influenced the changes in succession law, which were finally enacted in 1965.

The increasing rate of marriage desertion and separation also influenced the Catholic bishops in establishing a marriage advisory service, established initially in Belfast in 1962.⁵⁵ The advisory service came to Belfast from Britain where it developed in the years after World War II. From Belfast it spread to Cork, Kilkenny and Limerick, before a dedicated service was established in the Archdiocese of Dublin in 1968. Its aim was to give couples advice on such matters as planned parenthood and how to prepare household budgets.⁵⁶ In November 1969, at their special planning meeting for the decade ahead, the bishops decided that a newly-established commission for pastoral affairs would give specific attention to the promotion of marriage preparation, to be delivered by lay and clerical teams throughout the country.⁵⁷

The question of marriages that had broken down, or where a husband had abandoned his responsibilities and fled the country, was a growing issue which was raising concerns in a public way not previously experienced in Ireland. Ironically, the question of divorce was raised in 1965, using Vatican II as a pretext, particularly the Declaration on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*. Taoiseach Seán Lemass asked the Minister for Justice, Brian Lenihan, to investigate if the freedom of conscience which the council sought to recognise could allow for the introduction of divorce for those whose religion tolerated it.⁵⁸ Despite a rebuff to Lemass on the matter from sources close to McQuaid, this matter was to be the subject of debate at an informal Oireachtas committee on the Irish Constitution, set up in September 1965 and which concluded its work by December 1967. In its final report, the committee unanimously

⁵⁴ Dorine Rohan, *Marriage Irish Style*, (Cork, 1969), p. 29, see, Ferriter, *Transformation*, p. 571.

⁵⁵ Philip E. Leonard, *Like Ministering to Like: The Origins and Growth of ACCORD The Marriage Counselling Service in the Catholic Church in Ireland* (Dublin, 1999).

⁵⁶ *ICD 1969*, p. 732.

⁵⁷ 'Minutes of General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 24/28 November 1969' (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/99).

⁵⁸ Lemass to Lenihan, 25 September 1965 (NAI, DT 97/6/364).

recommended change to article 41 of the constitution, which contained the ban on divorce. It suggested that people seeking a dissolution of marriage and who did not belong to the Roman Catholic Church should not be restricted by a law which was in place because of the teachings of that church. It also cited the obstacle that the existing provision created in terms of achieving a united Ireland and that the constitution was framed for such an Ireland, one where Roman Catholics would not have an overwhelming majority. The proposed new formulation of the article was:

In the case of a person who was married in accordance with the rites of a religion, no law shall be enacted providing for the grant of a dissolution of that marriage on grounds other than those acceptable to that religion.⁵⁹

The grounds were exceptionally narrow and gave way to confessional identity in that Catholics would be excluded unless the church changed its teaching on the matter; as such their membership of the church would take precedence over their citizenship. However, as Girvin puts it, it showed that, in the eyes of legislators, ‘Vatican II provided space where alternative solutions to moral problems could be developed’, adding that ‘the committee was confident that “the whole tenor of the Council Documents” especially the Declaration on Religious Freedom, established a new relationship between church and state and also in respect of non-Catholic churches.’⁶⁰

However, the report drew a sharp response from the bishops. Conway described it as ‘a radical and far-reaching break with our national traditions’, adding that once divorce was introduced it would ‘only be a matter of time till it is extended to apply to everybody.’⁶¹ He stated that the bishops had not been consulted on the matter and found this to be unusual, compared to the practices of similar bodies in other countries and he also stated that most Protestants would not support divorce. This latter point was echoed by Presbyterian clergyman and academic, Terence McCaughey. However, he added that the position in the Republic of Ireland with regard to divorce and contraception was ‘lamentable and not in accordance with

⁵⁹ Oireachtas Éireann, *Report of the Committee on the Constitution, December 1967* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1967), no’s. 123-4, < <http://opac.oireachtas.ie/AWDData/Library3/Library2/DL005495.pdf> > (accessed 18 July 2017).

⁶⁰ Brian Girvin, “‘Lemass’s brainchild’: the 1966 Informal Committee on the Constitution and change in Ireland, 1965-73, *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxviii, no. 151 (May 2013), p. 416.

⁶¹ *Irish Independent*, 15 Dec. 1967.

the presence of Christ in the world', adding that in Christ's own life his presence was a pattern of service and self-giving rather than one of legislating.⁶²

Due to the decision of the Lynch government to pursue a referendum on electoral reform, the report of the committee was shelved. The question of marriage breakdown and renewal of family law continued to be debated during the 1970s and beyond, but as Daly points out, by the early 1970s the argument in favour of introducing divorce was outweighed by the question of marital desertion. It 'was described as "Divorce Irish style"', with changes in British law bringing the matter to the fore.⁶³ By 1979, a survey on marriage and sex in Ireland carried out for the magazine *Magill* suggested that that twenty thousand marriages in Ireland had broken down and that sixty thousand unmarried people were cohabiting as partners.⁶⁴ Five years earlier, the Council for Social Welfare of the Irish Bishops' Conference wrote to the Minister for Justice seeking changes in Irish family law. In the preface to their report, Bishop Peter Birch of Ossory said that family law had much in it that was harsh and unchristian. It should reflect 'the love, respect and understanding which we all hold for that institution.'⁶⁵

Another question, which some commentators see as being a barometer for the reception of Vatican II was that of contraception or birth control. It was not a council outcome *per se*, but the reaction to the publication of *Humanae Vitae* by Pope Paul VI in August 1968 was more an indication of the declining regard for the traditional authority of church leaders and their exposure to modern life. As Vincent Twomey puts it: '[w]hen the winds of change after Vatican II had blown down the thin barriers erected around it by "traditional" Irish Catholicism, the Catholic Church was exposed to the raw winds of modernity and post-modernity.'⁶⁶ Irish bishops had made known their views in advance: no change should be made to the church's teaching on the subject. On 14 October 1966 Conway had a private audience with Pope Paul VI.⁶⁷ Two weeks later, he wrote to Bishop Michael Browne of Galway on the subject, stating that at that audience he had raised the question of birth control in the light of what bishops perceived as a campaign to relax church law on the matter. In a part of the letter marked 'strictly confidential', he recorded his conversation with the Pope:

I spoke very strongly to the *Summus Pontifex* on the subject of '*controllo di nascita*' two weeks ago. I got the impression he welcomed my views. I ended up by saying 'They will ask "Where

⁶² *Irish Independent*, 16 Dec. 1967. Rev McCaughey was addressing a symposium organised by the Dublin branch of *Tuairim* on the subject of 'Authority and Freedom in a Democracy – the Churches in Ireland'.

⁶³ Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 184.

⁶⁴ *Magill*, April 1979, p. 14.

⁶⁵ *ICD 1975*, p. 672.

⁶⁶ D. Vincent Twomey, *The End of Irish Catholicism?* (Dublin, 2003), p. 40.

⁶⁷ *Irish Press*, 15 Oct. 1966.

was the Holy Spirit at the time of *Casti Connubi* – in Rome or in Lambeth?” and he clearly took the point.⁶⁸

On 12 November Conway again wrote to Browne stating that he had followed up his papal audience with a long letter to the Pope, sent at the Pope’s request. Conway was confident that there would be no change in the legislation governing the question, adding that he was more than ever convinced ‘that a change would be a disaster’.⁶⁹

The general tone of the Irish episcopal pronouncements on the subject were authoritarian and deferential to the Roman authority. As the newspaper *Hibernia* put it, there was ‘no real change in the style of exercise of church authority in Ireland since the Vatican Council’ and the attitude to the encyclical was evidence of this.⁷⁰ With regard to the laity, a number of intellectuals and specialists in medicine met for a conference on the encyclical in Co. Wexford in September 1968 and the outcome of their deliberations was published in *The Furrow*. It said that the encyclical created a number of difficulties for people in respect of contraception itself and also with regard to the way authority was practised in the church. It commented on ‘the genuine and widespread crisis of conscience aroused in Ireland among people in all walks of life’ and called for the establishment of a study group on the question, a request that was ignored by the hierarchy.⁷¹ There was no recognition of the special position of the laity in this regard.

By 1977, Irish families, though still largely solid in the traditional sense, were experiencing changes brought about by modern culture. The culture of Irish society, to which the council’s document on the church and the modern world had been addressed, was already changing. For example, in 1974 it was claimed in Seanad Éireann that more than 38,000 women were using the contraceptive pill, which equalled approximately one-third of married women aged twenty to thirty-four.⁷² A landmark court case – the McGee case - in 1973 resulted in a Supreme Court ruling that the ban on contraceptives in the Republic of Ireland was unconstitutional. During the 1970s several attempts were made to legalise the sale of contraceptives. By the end of the 1970s, legislative changes came into force, albeit in a very restricted way.

⁶⁸ Conway to Browne, 29 October 1966 (GDA, Browne papers, B/11/D/237). *Casti Connubi* was an encyclical letter on marriage dated December 1930, by Pope Pius XI.

⁶⁹ Conway to Browne, 12 November 1966 (GDA, Browne papers, B/11/D/237).

⁷⁰ *Hibernia*, Sept. 1968.

⁷¹ Cited in Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 210.

⁷² *Seanad Éireann Debates*, 77, col. 208, 20 February 1974.

Overall, the worldview envisaged by the Second Vatican Council through *Gaudium et Spes*, was being tested as far as marriage and the family was concerned. Continuity and change were having an increasingly uneasy coexistence.

Culture

Vatican II itself was a cultural event in terms of the world attention that it commanded and the international representation and participation that it evoked. The willingness of the council to open the church up to modern society is one of the principal hallmarks of Vatican II. Tanner argues that even the use of the word ‘culture’ in the documents and an acceptance of its broader definition was an innovation.

Acceptance of this broader and more secular definition of culture was symptomatic of the council’s recognition of the wider world and many of its values. Gone is the attempt to promote an exclusively Catholic or Christian culture. The role of Catholics is rather to participate in and to act as a leaven within the many cultures of the modern world.⁷³

Gaudium et Spes recognised men and women as the authors of culture. It went on to note that there was ‘a continual increase in the awareness of autonomy as well as of responsibility which is of the greatest significance for the spiritual and moral maturity of humankind’.⁷⁴ The council was a means of helping the church to catch up with the world as it was in the 1960s, no easy feat and one which Tanner says is easy to overlook.

In Ireland, there were calls for greater involvement of every individual in the life of the community. But the vision was narrow. Conway called for the establishment of clear national objectives. In the field of culture, for example, he hoped that Ireland could ‘do something better than some of the forms of contemporary popular culture, which seemed to reflect decay rather than life.’ Employing very traditional rhetoric, he also questioned the kind of society Ireland might become, urging caution regarding outside cultural influences, thus reflecting a reticence to change akin to the views held by some groups in the west and in rural areas. Conway asked:

What kind of society do we want to create? Just an affluent society? An imitation of other societies around us [] – or a society which will be fully abreast of the world of today and at the same time will draw its vital strength and nourishment from our own history and traditions and, above all, from the Gospel of Jesus Christ?... We will not, please God, make the mistake of taking

⁷³ Tanner, *Church and the World*, p. 75.

⁷⁴ GS, 55.

our headlines ready made from other countries whose basic convictions about life and its meaning are radically different from ours. Here at least we can be true to ourselves.⁷⁵

The sense of foreboding that Conway projected was giving way to one that was more willing to unpack Vatican II to Irish needs. Following the council the various journals such as *The Furrow* and *Doctrine and Life* published increasing amounts of articles on the council, to a very high standard. John Horgan has studied the extensive archives of *The Furrow* and concludes that claims of a journal circulation of 9000 and a readership of 25,000 are probably accurate, though he believes the estimate of the readership was on the low side. He notes that many of these copies went to missionaries, for whom it was a lifeline.⁷⁶ From 1970 *Doctrine and Life* also published a quarterly magazine called *Scripture* in which the readings for Mass were reflected on. The Redemptorist magazine *Reality* also became a major outlet for people to discover the vision and promise of the council.⁷⁷ The significance that such periodicals and journals could make in a changing cultural milieu was the subject of a conference in Carlow in December 1966. The editor of *The Furrow* told the conference that there was a danger that sections of the religious press might, ‘through timidity and fear of the times we live in’, be afraid to face actual problems. Such a stance would not be justified by any notion of loyalty to [Church] authority, he said. At the same conference, Áine McEvoy, a scriptwriter with *Telefís Éireann*, stressed the need for better and more professional editing. She also suggested that ‘the species “the simple faithful” at whom religious magazines in the past were aimed was now extinct’. McEvoy highlighted the need for lay writers to be allowed communicate with the laity in the contemporary idiom of magazines today.⁷⁸

Denis O’Callaghan notes that in the 1960s Irish society had become a more open one ‘where control of what people thought and believed was no longer possible’, adding that while bishops might have continued to write pastoral ‘but to little effect’.⁷⁹ O’Callaghan was one of many theologians, among others, who travelled the country delivering talks at various meetings and seminars on the council documents and in order to explain and debate the effects of the council generally. In this he was joined by Kevin McNamara and another Maynooth theologian, Enda McDonagh, a theologian who specialised in moral theology. He believed that

⁷⁵ *Irish Press*, 28 Feb. 1966.

⁷⁶ John Horgan, ‘The Furrow: navigating the rapids, 1950-77’ in Mark O’Brien & Felix M. Larkin (eds), *Periodicals and Journalism in Twentieth-Century Ireland: Writing Against the Grain* (Dublin, 2014), p. 177.

⁷⁷ See *Irish Times*, 7 Nov. 2016.

⁷⁸ *ICD* 1968, p. 720.

⁷⁹ O’Callaghan, ‘The Challenge for Irish Catholicism’, p. 495.

the various branches of theology (dogmatic, moral and scriptural) needed to come together to form an integrated theology.⁸⁰ Many of these gatherings were for priests but some were for priests, religious and lay people. Joseph Duffy recalls attending such gatherings in Newry where priests from a number of the northern dioceses came together. He recalls the excitement and the sense of something new, of a local church that was receiving a boost of new energy. But, he was fearful at the time that the lack of prior theological formation was limiting the possibilities for priests.⁸¹ John Horgan recalls speaking at such gatherings where he was joined by priests from various religious orders and, quite often, a Church of Ireland minister from Kerry, Canon Charles Gray-Stack, who was a well-known ecumenist. Horgan recalls that the religious order priests were more willing to take part in such meetings as they were not under the direct control of the bishops. He also recalls a layman from Galway Jack Peters, who organised regular gatherings of laypeople, including academics from University College Galway to discuss theology in the light of the council. On one occasion Peters and his group invited Bishop Browne to attend one of their meetings. Browne accepted the invitation and addressed them in full ‘*ex-cathedra*’ style after which ‘he was virtually pulled apart limb by limb and challenged severely’ on his arguments. Some weeks later Browne invited Peters to visit him and, ‘after a generous measure of whiskey’ asked him ‘what makes you and those people tick?’ Horgan says that Browne was taken aback that there were people in his own diocese who could have a level of interest and intellect in theology.⁸²

The importance of faith and culture being in dialogue was also highlighted in the years following the council in terms of the debate, conducted largely among academics, surrounding the introduction of theology into universities. Just as the council finished in 1965, an editorial in the Dublin journal *Hibernia* claimed that in the light of Vatican II,

it should not any longer be necessary to prove the desirability and necessity of theological education for university people, still less its necessity for sisters, brothers and lay leaders on whom so much of the religious education of our young people depends.⁸³

This challenge was never adequately taken up. The Irish Universities Act of 1908, as part of the settlement of the long-running universities question between the British government and the Irish Catholic bishops, stipulated that no funds were to be used for the provision of theological teaching in any of the constituent colleges of the National University of Ireland.

⁸⁰ For an overview of McDonagh theology and Vatican II, see Charles E. Curran, ‘The Risks of Theology: Enda McDonagh and Vatican II’, *The Furrow*, 57, no. 7/8 (July-August 2006), pp 410-23.

⁸¹ Interview with Bishop Joseph Duffy, 5 January 2018.

⁸² Interview with John Horgan, 1 November 2018.

⁸³ Cited in Rafferty, ‘Catholic Church in Ireland and Vatican II’, p. 17.

The Catholic hierarchy, which had insisted on that provision, endowed a diploma course for theology in University College Dublin and a chair of theology in University College Cork following the council. During 1964-5, over six hundred students attended these courses, most being nuns.⁸⁴ New academies, such as the Mater Dei Institute for Education and the Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, came into being during the years following Vatican II. These were independent, targeted particular groups of students and did not form part of a wider strategy to place theology at the heart of a university education. There was also an emphasis on the part of the bishops to protect Maynooth and, in the case of Dublin, Clonliffe. McQuaid had Clonliffe linked to the Angelicum University in Rome to protect its status. The major universities on the continent, such as Tübingen, Munich, Fribourg, Leuven and Strasbourg, all played a central role in the development of the theological contributions to Vatican II and the movements that preceded it. In 1966 J.P. Mackey went to the heart of the analysis that this thesis makes about theological formation in Ireland. He maintained that the ‘bonds of content between theology, philosophy, literature, history and even some aspects of science are too close to be ignored by any institution that presents an objective and an integral system of knowledge’. Moreover, he called for theology in the universities ‘devoted mainly, if not exclusively, to laymen... so that the ideal of deep intellectual conviction in the Catholic lives of our laity might at last be realised. We cannot rely for very much longer on our traditional loyalty or on our native tenacity’.⁸⁵ Patrick Masterson, a lecturer in Philosophy at University College Dublin, in December 1966 struck a similar note when he claimed that theology was no longer being viewed as a subject which almost exclusively was the concern of priests and religious but was considered a matter of vital concern to every Christian. The greater the interest in theology among ordinary people, he argued, the more effectively the gospel would be brought to bear on the problems of social justice, poverty, war and so on.⁸⁶

The admittance of lay students to Maynooth in 1967 and, moreover, the wider development of a new university and campus there, was an example of an attempt by the church in Ireland to engage with society through education and thereby influence the ongoing formation of culture. The plan was that this would lead ultimately to the emergence at Maynooth of a small but vital unit of the Irish university sector.⁸⁷ Speaking at the conferring ceremony in November 1968, the President of St Patrick’s College Maynooth, Jeremiah

⁸⁴ J.P. Mackey, ‘Theology in the Universities’, *The Furrow*, 17, no. 2 (February 1966), pp 92-108.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 93, 108.

⁸⁶ *ICD 1968*, p. 726.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 747.

Newman, said that the college sought to produce what he called ‘a lay-clerical relationship of a new kind that will benefit both religious and secular life alike not only in the closing decades of our own fading era but in the exciting perspectives of the 21st century towards which all planning today has to be directed.’⁸⁸ However, the Maynooth experiment did not have the longer-term results it initially promised. Fifty years elapsed before theology finally found a place in the life of universities in Ireland. By then, the divide between faith and culture in Irish society had widened to such an extent as to be virtually incomparable to the Ireland of the 1960s.

While having theology in the universities may not have averted the crises of the decades following the council, it would have prepared the church to be in a better place to handle them. The apathy with which the bishops approached the question indicates a continuing disregard for theology and its place in the life of the wider church. This was the same approach that hampered Ireland’s preparation for and participation in the council; it was the same approach, with minor exceptions, that impeded the potential of the church in Ireland to renew itself in its aftermath and allow a true *aggiornamento* to happen. In 1982, Archbishop Dermot Ryan of Dublin reported to Rome that there was an increasing awareness ‘among the educated laity of their responsibility, particularly with regard to media presentation of views and opinions’ that were contrary to church teaching. He admitted that more needed to be done ‘to educate lay people to become informed, articulate and committed’ people for the church.⁸⁹ The place of theology in the public square was still not acknowledged or furthered.

Television and communications generally was a crucial space in the years following the council. Following the council, in 1967, the bishops established the Catholic Communications Centre at Booterstown, County Dublin. Pope Paul VI, in a message to mark its opening, stated that the new centre showed ‘the readiness of the church in Ireland to embrace the challenges of Vatican II in the Social Communications area.’⁹⁰ Another development was the establishment of the Catholic Press Office in 1974.

Television was one area where the divide between faith and culture was made visible. The medium was instant and this often proved to be challenging for individual bishops and for the church as a whole. Programmes such as the *Late Late Show* provided a new forum for discussing questions which were previously ‘off-limit’ for Irish people. Nonetheless, such

⁸⁸ *Cork Examiner*, 7 Nov. 1968.

⁸⁹ ‘Dublin Quinquennial Report 1982’, p. 29.

⁹⁰ *ICD 1968*, pp 777-80.

programmes enabled people to voice their experiences of family life and the resultant impact on their relationship with the Catholic Church as well as the expectation of change.⁹¹ Irish people learned about Vatican II through the television and the coverage was less bland than that which they had been used to. Opportunities to bring priests and political activists together were presented through television discussions on social questions, even allowing them to appear together in a way that would have been unthinkable a decade earlier. For example, in May 1968, a religious magazine-type programme *Outlook*, hosted by Dominican priest Austin Flannery discussed the housing crisis. The panel included a Jesuit priest, two members of Sinn Féin and the secretary of the Irish Workers Party, which as Fuller notes, was the official Irish Communist Party.⁹² The days of pastoral letters condemning communism were not far behind, yet television enabled the kind of discussion that Vatican II envisaged to take place in full view of Irish people.

Socio-Economic Life and Political Community

The modern Roman Catholic Church's tradition of teaching on matters associated with social and economic matters (and the political community) draws from the 1891 encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*, by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). Insofar as these areas of life are concerned *Gaudium et Spes* approached the issues from a largely western perspective and did not look to a new world order, urging Catholics rather to 'do the best they can in circumstances that are recognised to be fragmented and imperfect.'⁹³

Gaudium et Spes and *Dignitatis Humanae* both backed away from the notion of the Catholic state. The foundational basis of *Gaudium et Spes* is the human person, giving individual witness to in the workplace, in the family and in public life. How did the church in Ireland respond to this?

In earlier chapters we noted how priests showing an interest in the economic and social life of their communities, especially in urban areas. The appointment of Eamon Casey as Bishop of Kerry in 1969 was viewed by some a sign of a more socially conscious hierarchy emerging. While many in the news media focussed on Casey's experience in social work,

⁹¹ See, Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 147. In October 1966, the broadcaster and journalist Michael Viney conducted interviews with several mothers on the question of large families, some of whom told of absolution being withheld in confessions due to their use of contraception. But the expectation from the panel was that the Pope 'may well take this whole issue a big step further'.

⁹² Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 134.

⁹³ Tanner, *Church and the World*, p. 78.

especially housing and emigrant chaplaincy, Conway was always keen to emphasise that the sacramental role of the priest should not be eclipsed by too much emphasis on community. Speaking to students at prize-giving in Maynooth in 1968, he said a priest was not ‘a professional do-gooder’ who when presiding at the celebration of Eucharist is just like ‘the chairman of a community meeting.’⁹⁴

In November 1969, during the ‘think-in’ on the role of the bishops and the church in the 1970s, the participants declared that they wished that ‘the Church, including bishops, priests and laity, be seen to be sensitive to and concerned with all human needs and involved in so far as this is possible in alleviating them.’ This, they believed, would give expression to the ‘new conscience for our times’ which Vatican II and Pope Paul’s recent encyclical letter on development and progress called for.⁹⁵ To effect this, the bishops established a National Council for Social Welfare, headed up by Casey. This council had the function of advising the hierarchy with regard to social welfare, the coordination between state services and voluntary welfare organisations and the identification of areas not being catered for. Dioceses and, where feasible, parishes were encouraged to devote more resources, including personnel, to this area. In addition, a Commission for Justice and Peace was established in October 1969. Its primary concern was to promote the ideals set out by Pope Paul in the encyclical letter on the development of peoples, already referred to. The commission was mandated to educate public opinion on the needs of the under-developed countries. The initial membership included the Chief Justice and future President of Ireland Cearbhall Ó Dalaigh, diplomat F.H. Boland, and the Governor of the Central Bank, T.K. Whitaker.⁹⁶

More locally, Bishop Peter Birch had established in 1963 an umbrella group in Kilkenny – Kilkenny Social Service Council - to coordinate existing social services and identify gaps. He modelled the new structure on a similar partnership between church and state in Belgium. This new group was open to people of all religious denominations and several hundred volunteers participated. Services provided included meals for the elderly, housing and support for travellers and a school for mentally handicapped children. By 1966, the then Taoiseach Jack Lynch was describing Kilkenny Social Service Council as a model for other

⁹⁴ ‘Address at Maynooth Distribution of Prizes, 16 June 1968’ (COFLA, Conway papers, File 18/8).

⁹⁵ ‘Minutes of General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 24/28 November 1969’ (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/99). The encyclical referred to was *Populorum Progressio* concerning the development of peoples, dated 26 March 1967.

http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html (accessed 18 January 2018)

⁹⁶ *Irish Independent*, 9 Oct. 1969.

communities.⁹⁷ Daly notes that by 1971 there were twenty-seven Social Service Councils around the country, plus thirty-two others focussed on services to the elderly.⁹⁸ The vast majority of these had some degree of church involvement, often including churches other than the Roman Catholic Church and many of the active participants were young people.

State involvement in social questions had been problematic in terms of church-state relations in the Republic of Ireland. The handling of the Mother and Child Scheme controversy of 1950-51 was still live in the political memory in 1965. However, Vatican II became an important juncture in this regard. As the Maynooth sociologist Liam Ryan points out, a turning point came with *Mater et Magistra* where ‘we are in the world of the Welfare State, with the pope inviting it to provide for people in a manner that would have seemed an infringement of human rights a decade earlier.’⁹⁹ In 1974, almost ten years after the publication of *Gaudium et Spes*, Frank Cluskey, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Welfare and a Labour Party politician (and future leader) quoted approvingly from a statement on social policy of the Council for Social Welfare that ‘...the principle of a guaranteed income related to the cost of living index, for each household, whatever the circumstances, ought to be accepted.’¹⁰⁰ Kennedy says that this was a defining moment in social policy ‘as emphasis was now firmly placed on the right to a minimum income guaranteed by the state’, as opposed to the previous position enshrined in the constitution, with its emphasis on the right to provide for one’s own livelihood.¹⁰¹ It should be noted, however, that Catholics in Northern Ireland had been living with of the benefits of the British welfare state since the late 1940s, without any degree of opposition from their bishops. This highlights the differing contexts and the various levels of influence wielded by bishops north and south of the border.

One of the features of the decade following Vatican II was the emergence of a number of charitable organisations, focussed on Third World development. In October 1969, the Irish Catholic bishops established a fund named *Trócaire* through which funds for underdeveloped countries would be channelled. At their June meeting in 1972, they decided to set up a committee, chaired by Casey, to establish the structures needed for the distribution of

⁹⁷ Stanislaus Kennedy, *The development of Kilkenny social services 1963-1980: Who should care?* (Dublin, 1981), pp 16-18, 33-4. See Michael Ryan (ed.), *The Church and the Nation: The Vision of Peter Birch, Bishop of Ossory 1964-1981* (Dublin, 1993); Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 207.

⁹⁸ Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, pp 207-8.

⁹⁹ Liam Ryan, ‘Church and Politics: the last twenty-five years’, *The Furrow* 30, no. 1 (January 1979), pp 3-18.

¹⁰⁰ Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche*, p. 203. The document to which Cluskey referred to, ‘A Statement on Social Policy’, was produced in 1972 by a working party of the Council for Social Welfare.

¹⁰¹ Kennedy, *Cottage to Crèche*, p. 202.

assistance from this fund and to appoint a full-time chief executive of the fund. The first Lenten collection for Trócaire was held nationally in 1973.¹⁰² Trócaire was to have lasting success due in large measure to Casey's input from the start. Ferriter says that he was seen by some on the political left as 'a huge breath of fresh air in terms of his espousal of social justice, not just in Ireland but in the third world as well'.¹⁰³

Another matter flowing from *Gaudium et Spes* was the relationship between the church and the political community. The informal Oireachtas committee, referred to earlier, reviewed the 'special position' of the Roman Catholic Church as enshrined in article 44.1 of the 1937 Constitution. Its report, issued in December 1967, took particular note of the Vatican II documents, particularly the Declaration on Religious Liberty and its emphasis on freedom, tolerance and pluralism. The committee recommended that the article be deleted and supported this recommendation by referring to the writings of the Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray who had a significant input to the declaration. The committee added that, based on its study of the documents and the commentaries on them, 'the Catholic Church does not seek any special recognition or privilege as compared with other religions and that her primary interest is to see that citizens enjoy equal freedom in the practice of their religion, whatever it may be'.¹⁰⁴ The article was deleted following a referendum in December 1972. In advance of the referendum Cardinal Conway famously stated that he 'would not shed a tear' over the loss of the article. Daithí Ó Corráin highlights the fact that Church of Ireland leaders did not have a major problem with Article 44, noting that in a paper on religious liberty prepared for the 1960 Lambeth Conference of churches in the Anglican communion, Archbishops McCann of Armagh and Simms of Dublin 'quietly praised' the provision.¹⁰⁵ As Ó Corráin observes however, the deletion of the special position would be 'the least complicated area of change' during the years ahead, as the constitution became the *locus* of many questions of debate concerning the

¹⁰² 'October Conference of Bishops 1972 – Submission Concerning Trócaire' (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/103).

¹⁰³ Ferriter, *Ambiguous Republic*, pp 431-2. For an overview of the contribution of Vatican II to the church's acceptance of human rights as a mode of ethical discourse, see Ethna Regan, 'Vatican II and Human Rights: From Religious Freedom to Frontline Advocacy' in Lane (ed.), *Vatican II in Ireland*, pp 153-76.

¹⁰⁴ Oireachtas Éireann, *Report of the Committee on the Constitution, December 1967* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1967), no. 138, < <http://opac.oireachtas.ie/AWData/Library3/Library2/DL005495.pdf> > (accessed 18 January 2018); references to the Vatican II documents were also made in a speech in Seanad Éireann by Senator John Kelly on 3 November 1972 during the debate on the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution Bill to remove the special status of the Roman Catholic Church, <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/seanad/1972-11-03/4/?highlight%5B0%5D=vatican&highlight%5B1%5D=ii&highlight%5B2%5D=vatican&highlight%5B3%5D=ii> (accessed 18 January 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Daithí Ó Corráin, 'Articles 41 and 44: Minority Religious Opinion 1937-1980' in Eoin Carolan & Oran Doyle (eds), *The Irish Constitution: Governance and Values* (Dublin, 2008), p. 57.

relationship of church and state, the family and the role of women in society – especially in the decades following Ireland’s entry into the European Economic Community in 1973.¹⁰⁶ Vatican II had played its part in opening up such opportunities. As Ó Corráin notes, ‘the Second Vatican Council and changing societal values coalesced in the late 1960s to create a more questioning atmosphere.’¹⁰⁷

World Peace

The impact of Vatican II in Ireland and, in particular, its concern for world peace were largely limited to the church’s response to violence in Northern Ireland. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, the increased level of ecumenical encounters, particularly after the establishment of the Ballymascanlon Inter-Church meeting in 1973, allowed all the churches to address jointly the question of violence, through a dialogue made possible, in part, by the ongoing reception of Vatican II. The creation of a universal World Day of Peace by Pope Paul VI, beginning on 1 January 1968, provided an opportunity for churches and political leaders to reflect and pray together around this need. Another public example was when, on 4 December 1976, at the height of the troubles, more than twelve thousand people, including the four main church leaders, took part in a peace rally on the banks of the River Boyne in Drogheda.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the establishment of the Commission for Justice and Peace in 1969 provided a forum through which the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland could make some impact on matters affecting human rights, justice and peace at international level. The third general session of the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome in October 1971, had as one of its themes ‘Justice in the World’. Cardinal Conway used the opportunity to condemn the use of violence and physical force against prisoners held without trial so that the civil authorities could obtain information.¹⁰⁹

Changes in attitudes and beliefs – the failure of Mulranny

Vatican II happened at a time of change in culture in the world and in that respect, Ireland was not exempt. Irish Catholic culture was being changed through the interaction of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰⁸ *ICD 1978*, p. 344.

¹⁰⁹ *ICD 1972*, p. 738.

several forces: political, economic and social. Another force for change was the re-orientation of Catholic theology. As Fuller points out, change

takes place at the nexus of the world of ideas and lived culture. Theology was influenced over a period of time by new ideas, which were attempting to understand people in the circumstances of their lives and the historical era in which they lived.¹¹⁰

This cultural change came late to Ireland and its arrival coincided with that of Vatican II. Given the heavy influence of Catholic life on society, changes in attitudes were to be expected. In 1974, the Mulranny Report stated that ‘the main thrust of the Irish Church over the next five years should be the implementation of the principle of the involvement of the laity in the spiritual mission of the Church.’¹¹¹ How did Irish Catholics understand their ‘spiritual mission’ as part of the church?

From the 1960s there was research evidence of changes in religious belief among Irish people, particularly those who were better educated and those living in urban areas. A survey of Dublin Catholics in 1962 by an American Jesuit, Bruce Biever, found that while 88 per cent of those questioned agreed that the church was a force for good, some 83 per cent of those who had completed secondary education disagreed.¹¹² Biever pointed to the problems ahead – that as people became more educated they would demand more sophisticated responses to their questions in a modern society.¹¹³ The attitude of the hierarchy towards the ‘simple faith’ of the people would not carry weight in an Ireland of increasing opportunity and wider horizons.

A decade and a half later, this decline in the place of church teaching in people’s lives was confirmed by another survey of Dublin adults in 1977, this time by the Jesuit sociologist Mícheál Mac Gréil. It showed, for example, that 63 per cent disagreed that contraception was always wrong, 43 per cent agreed that homosexuality should be decriminalised and 46 per cent agreed that priests should be allowed to marry.¹¹⁴ These trends mirrored the growing social liberalisation of Irish society in line with economic change. The voice of church leaders was increasingly being heard but not heeded. But were the voices and views of the laity being listened to by the church leaders?

In advance of the Mulranny meeting, the bishops were, in the words of one the participants, Cahal B. Daly, ‘better equipped for the gathering’, thanks to sociological research

¹¹⁰ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 233.

¹¹¹ Mulranny Report, section 1.1.3

¹¹² Bruce Biever, *Religion, Culture and Values: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Motivational Factors in Native Irish and American Irish Catholicism* (New York, 1976), pp 226-7.

¹¹³ Ó Corráin, ‘Catholicism in Ireland’, p. 750.

¹¹⁴ Mícheál Mac Gréil, *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ireland: Based on a Survey of Intergroup Attitudes of Dublin Adults and Other Sources* (Dublin, 1977), p. 411.

data about the actual state of the Catholic Church in Ireland.¹¹⁵ What they were equipped with was a four-volume sociological study commissioned by the Catholic Communications Institute of Ireland into religious practices and attitudes nationally during the year 1973-4. While it confirmed that Ireland had the highest Mass attendance rate in Western Europe, with 90 per cent observance, it was clear that younger people were drifting away. It showed that 30 per cent of those people aged 21 to 25 had abandoned weekly Mass attendance and the fulfilment of the annual sacramental obligation. It also highlighted that while Mass attendance in general was high, the reception of Holy Communion was only taken up by 28 per cent of people.¹¹⁶ The research noted that this gap might indicate that the increased numbers coming to Holy Communion might be misleading and induce false security. The researchers also informed the bishops and other readers that Irish religious practice was ‘sustained to an inadmissible extent by rule and law, social custom and a sense of duty, rather than by personal commitment of mind and heart’.¹¹⁷ These results provided further indications of a lack of interiorisation of the faith and an impoverished understanding of (or belief in) Eucharist as well as a continuing link in the Irish psyche between sin, confessions and communion – which is discussed in chapter six.

The bishops had detailed research together with insights from a series of consultations, the input of priests and laypeople at their meeting and the framework for a pastoral plan, albeit in aspirational terms. This could have been at least a foundation to work from. They may have been well equipped, to use C.B. Daly's phrase, but the work was not done. One has to question, therefore, the commitment of all the bishops in Ireland at this time to finding an authentic space for the church and its mission in modern Irish society, in a manner where it could dialogue authentically and purposefully in the public square. While Cardinal Conway was clearly interested in at least reflecting on questions of this kind, it is doubtful that the bishops as a whole took the questions seriously. Indeed their commitment even to having such a research assessment carried out is questionable too, as evidenced by the comment by Cahal B. Daly that securing the budget for it had been a problem at episcopal conference meetings and that it was only Conway's persistence that succeeded in having it eventually approved.¹¹⁸ The failure to deliver on the promise and potential of Mulranny was a missed opportunity for the Catholic

¹¹⁵ Daly, *Pilgrim Journey*, pp 378-9.

¹¹⁶ Ó Corráin, 'Catholicism in Ireland', p. 751.

¹¹⁷ Cited in Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 121.

¹¹⁸ Daly, *Pilgrim Journey*, pp 378-9.

Church in Ireland to renew itself by engaging purposefully and pastorally with a changing Irish society.

International comparisons

On the international stage, these years – and 1968 in particular - mark a watershed in terms of the shift towards individualism and away from deference towards authority. In Britain, a society where Catholicism is seen as being on the margin, the measure of the church in the modern world have to made at the level of the local, the communal and the personal. There were those who saw the council as an opportunity for a more left-wing approach. In December 1966, a Catholic theologian and *peritus* at the council, Charles Davis, publicly left the priesthood and the church. Stating that he left for personal reasons, he claimed that the church was out of harmony with the thinking, needs and aspirations of modern Christianity and that it was more interested in preserving power. One of Davis' colleagues, Herbert McCabe, editor of the journal *New Blackfriars*, claimed that the church was insecure in secular matters, being concerned more with power but that such a position represented the bishops more than any other part of the church. McCabe's subsequent suspension from ministry highlighted the hardline authoritarian approach taken by English bishops.¹¹⁹

When *Humanae Vitae* was published in 1968, there were swift and varied reactions in Britain. The once conservative newspaper *The Tablet* came out with a dissenting statement in relation to the encyclical. A plethora of letters appeared in other newspapers, including some from priests. On the other hand, a number of bishops took a strongly authoritative line, including Archbishop Cyril Conrad of Southwark. He suspended priests who spoke out against the pope's ruling and went so far as to declare that if people were 'not willing to live in a church that is autocratic, the obvious thing is to get out.'¹²⁰ Cardinal Heenan saw the row over *Humanae vitae* as the symptom of a wider disorder in the church. He charged that 'selective theology under the name of pluralism' was being used to attack all things seen as 'ancient' and 'true' and that anything historical was being looked upon as 'primitive' and 'medieval'.¹²¹

In France, the church exists in a society where there is separation of church and state. In the aftermath of the council the French bishops were keen not to be triumphalist and not to compromise with the temporal order. Instead, they projected the message of a church of service,

¹¹⁹ For an account of the Davis and McCabe cases, see Corrin, *Catholic Progressives*, pp 302-16.

¹²⁰ *Herder Correspondence*, Oct 1968, p. 292.

¹²¹ Cited in Corrin, *Catholic Progressives*, p. 164.

a church of the poor. It is said that this approach worried President Charles de Gaulle, who feared the impact of the church taking a more revolutionary stance in French society.¹²² This fear was heightened in May 1968, when during the student riots, the Archbishop of Paris and President of the French Episcopal Conference Cardinal Marty declared that ‘God is not conservative’, before criticising court decisions against anarchists who had broken chairs in the church of Sacré-Coeur de Montmartre. Over the following years, the stance of the French church on matters such as immigration, unemployment and opposition to the death penalty projected a vision of encounter with the modern world. At the same time, there were internal tensions with the sizeable conservative cohort in the French church who followed the lead of Archbishop Lefebvre, who opposed new thinking in areas such as religious freedom.¹²³ Their opposition to Vatican II was born out of their royalist and conservative origins. Therefore, in France, the birthplace of *ressourcement* and one of the countries that provided the springboard for much of Vatican II, there was the tension that mirrored the culture wars that would mark much of the reception of the council during the decades ahead. Apart from the internal tensions of the church, the cultural changes in society were being reflected in the political order. According to the former rector of the Catholic University of Lyon, Gérard Defois, the changes in legislation concerning sexual morality in the 1970s, during early years of the presidency of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing heralded a second separation of church and state in France. Church leaders voiced their opposition but politicians decided that they could not impose on all French people the particular moral code of the church. Defois states that

The debate was bitter and while some regretted that the bishops were not firmer in supporting their uncompromising position, the majority of parliamentarians and the government supported the liberalization of morals. The Church could only appear to be outvoted and discredited by the state, and its influence was publicly diminished, so prevalent was the idea that it was necessary to change, move forward, and acquiesce with modernity, even if individuals individually distinguish morality from the law made for the greatest number.¹²⁴

Thus the Roman Catholic Church became marginalised not because of political opposition to it but because institutionally it was considered a cultural minority in French society. This fate

¹²² Gérard Defois, ‘En France’ in Denis Maugeness (ed.), *France-Allemagne: Eglises et Société du Concile Vatican II à nos jours* (Paris, 1988), p. 12.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 13.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp 13-14; ‘Le débat fut âpre et si certains regrettaient que les évêques n’aient pas été plus fermes pour appuyer leur position intransigeante, la majorité des parlementaires et le gouvernement soutinrent la libéralisation des mœurs. L’Eglise ne pouvait qu’apparaître alors mise en minorité et déconsidérée par l’état. Son influence en fut publiquement amoindrie, tant était prédominante alors l’idée qu’il fallait changer, avancer et marcher dans la ligne d’un acquiescement à la modernité, quitte à ce qu’individuellement des citoyens distinguent la morale de la loi faite pour le plus grand nombre.’

was to await the church in Ireland, though not until several decades following the council, due to the influence that it still wielded.

With regard to attitudes and practices, the levels of church practice among Catholics in France fell from 37 per cent in 1948 to 20 per cent at the beginning of the 1970s. In terms of rites of passage, the rate of baptism there fell from 91 per cent of new-born children in 1958 to 71 per cent in 1978. The number of marriages celebrated in church in France fell from 79 per cent in 1954 to 64 per cent in 1980.¹²⁵ Similar analysis in England and Wales shows the number of baptisms falling by 38 per cent between 1960 and 1980 (from 123,430 to 76,352). The number of marriages celebrated in church fell from 46,480 in 1960 to 31,524 in 1980. In 1960, 50 per cent of marriages celebrated in churches in England and Wales were mixed marriages, by 1980 this percentage had dropped to 34.¹²⁶ Whether through a sense of commitment or conformity, the levels of practice in Ireland were more settled during the period under review, even though ‘the signs of the times’ were revealing that significant changes lay ahead as Ireland embraced a modern era.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the modernisation of Ireland and the contribution made to it by the Roman Catholic Church, particularly in the light of Vatican II and, especially, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*. It has highlighted the changes that were happening in Ireland around the time of the council and during the decade which followed it. These changes were accompanied by a shift in emphasis within the church, especially in its theology, which empowered it to look outward, to dialogue with and to ‘examine the signs of the time in the light of the gospel’; to be a sign of *aggiornamento*.

During the period under consideration, modest but significant steps were taken to give the church in Irish society an image that showed it in a less authoritarian light; that enabled it to look and reach outwards, especially in areas of social justice. This occurred at a time of increasing urbanisation and industrialisation, of increasing influences from outside, when secular ideas were more to the fore than hitherto. Nonetheless, change and continuity co-existed both in Irish society and in the church. Social change was gradual. In some instances, changes such as those regarding the provision of social welfare or the special position of the

¹²⁵ Foro, ‘Paul Vi et La France’, p. 204.

¹²⁶ Hornsby-Smith, *Changing Parish*, p. 3.

Roman Catholic Church, came accompanied by a justification rhetoric which drew on Vatican II. In other cases, those seeking reforms tried to invoke Vatican II as a lever to justify social change, only to be stymied or delayed. The abandoned attempt to provide for divorce in the mid-1960s is a case in point.

Economic and social modernisation was a crucial factor in bringing about change in Irish society from the 1960s. Vatican II occurred at the same time. As Dermot Keogh points out, church men and women had contributed to the new dialogue that was happening.¹²⁷ Here again, the role of the Catholic press and especially journals and periodicals was important. The role of television was massive and some Catholic personnel played a role there in helping to shape the debates. But, as we have seen, attitudes were slowly changing. People were questioning things in ways that did not happen previously. The relationship between priests and the people was beginning to change, as was that between church and state, especially in education. In this, the church was led with ‘caution and sensitivity’ by Cardinal Conway.¹²⁸ But the balance was changing, ‘inducing culture shock among many clergy and laity, even while it came as liberation to others.’¹²⁹ Seán Lemass recognised that economic change would have significant social consequences. He told one journalist that ‘contraception and divorce would be legal by the end of the century and that Ireland would be both materialist and prosperous.’¹³⁰ The reality was that as Irish society changed, the capacity for the bishops to influence that society lessened. They were reduced to being a lobby group, to using less dogmatic and more pastoral tones and to come to terms with the challenges of renewing the church in a changing Ireland. Their failure to further the work on what they discussed at Mulranny in 1974 was a missed opportunity. The fact that they were well equipped with detailed information, that they had themselves commissioned, and which highlighted the shifts in attitudes and beliefs among their own people, makes their inaction look negligent and irresponsible. The criticism by some later commentators seem justified in this respect.¹³¹

The reception of *Gaudium et Spes*, indeed the very subjects of the document were beyond the capacity of the Irish Hierarchy to manage or control. Much of what emerged in Ireland was brought about by economic, social and political change to which the bishops could only react. Yet, the call to ‘genuine’ and ‘vigorous’ dialogue contained in *Gaudium et Spes*

¹²⁷ Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, p. 270.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹²⁹ Lee, *Ireland*, p. 655.

¹³⁰ Brian Girvin, ‘The Lemass Legacy and the Making of Contemporary Ireland 1958-2011’ in Alvin Jackson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History* (Oxford, 2014), p. 728.

¹³¹ For example, see Rafferty, ‘The Catholic Church in Ireland and Vatican II’, pp 23-5.

and which Vatican II represented, was in itself a contributing factor to the more open intellectual and cultural environment in which change was both understood and received in Ireland. In this way, Vatican II contributed to the gradual opening up and transformation of society in the Republic of Ireland in ways that are not often recognised.

The change and dialogue made possible by both the council and the political and social realities, especially in Northern Ireland, is also reflected in the next chapter, on ecumenism.

Chapter Five

Vatican II and Ecumenism: a Critical Challenge for the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland

Introduction

The question of church unity lies at the heart of the work, words and vision of Vatican II. When Pope John XXIII announced his intention to call a council in 1959, he stated that he saw dialogue with other Christians and the question of church unity as central to its work. A key indicator of the place of ecumenical encounter was the invitation to other Christian churches to send observers to Vatican II and, importantly, the response of those churches in both taking up the invitation and making a significant contribution to the work of the council. In the years following the council, several initiatives were taken at both the highest levels of the churches and also locally. The reception of the ecumenical dimension of the council must therefore be measured in terms of the outcome of inter-church relations internationally and nationally, particularly during the first ten years following its conclusion.¹ From an Irish point of view, ecumenical considerations were important, given the historical and contemporary impact of religious division on the political and social development of the island of Ireland. The reception of the council and its implications for inter-church relations locally had a special significance in Ireland.

In addition to archival research, this chapter will draw from some of the scholarly work already undertaken in this area. The present chapter will seek to show that while significant progress was made in the area of ecumenism in Ireland, the lack of theological engagement on the subject in the pre-conciliar period, combined with a hesitancy on the part of church leaders (as the hierarchical receivers) to confront major issues of concern, meant that the potential of the council and its aftermath was more restrained in Ireland. Set against this, of course, was the political, social and cultural environment of the Ireland of the 1960s and 1970s, all of which informed the mind of the receiving community and, simultaneously, accelerated the ethical imperative of ecumenical dialogue.

The present chapter will first examine the myriad of definitions of ecumenism. Secondly, it will trace the origins of the ecumenical movement and its history internationally over the course of the twentieth century. Thirdly, it will examine the attitude of the Roman

¹ See René Girault, 'The Reception of Ecumenism', in Alberigo, Jossua & Komonchak (eds), *Reception of Vatican II*, p. 144.

Catholic Church towards ecumenism and inter-church dialogue in the decades prior to the council and then outline how Vatican II made decisive changes which subsequently re-defined its outlook towards other churches and its relationship with them in the post-conciliar period. Fourthly, the reception of the teaching of Vatican II will be examined for Ireland, with specific reference to mixed marriages, joint prayer and inter-church dialogue in the period up to the death of Cardinal Conway in 1977.

What is Ecumenism?

In the context of Christianity, ecumenism is understood ‘to be concerned with articulating and sustaining the intrinsically interconnected realities of unity and diversity in Christian identities’.² More precisely, the Roman Catholic Church’s understanding of its involvement in ecumenism is based on a vision of ‘the church as one, recognising separated sisters and brothers as somehow participating in the reality of Christ’s mystery on earth through their faith and sacramental life’.³ In his 1995 encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II defined ecumenism as being ‘directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow towards full communion in truth and charity’.⁴ The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that Christ bestowed unity on the church from its beginning and that efforts to ‘maintain, reinforce and perfect the unity’ willed by Christ is part of the church’s mission.⁵ Further, it states that the objective of reconciliation of all Christians is one that ‘transcends human powers and gifts.’⁶

Once again, John Paul uses the term ‘communion’, a concept rooted in the vision of Vatican II. From an ecumenical viewpoint, this communion is based on Scripture, where Jesus prays to God the Father ‘that they may be one as we are one’ (John 17.22). The Cambridge historian, Gillian R. Evans, notes that even when churches are divided ‘an invisible communion or *koinonia* remains because those who do indeed truly belong to Christ in their own communities must also truly belong to one another even outside those communities.’⁷ Thus,

² Andrew Pierce, ‘The Ecumenical Church of Vatican II’, in Lane (ed) *Vatican II in Ireland*, p. 200.

³ Jeffrey Gros FSC, ‘Ecumenism’, *NDT*, p. 317.

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, Encyclical Letter on commitment to ecumenism, 25 May 1995, no. 14, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html> (accessed 18 January 2018)

⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereinafter referred to as CCC) (Dublin, 1994), no. 820.

⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 822.

⁷ G.R. Evans, *The Church and the Churches: Towards an ecumenical ecclesiology* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 296.

terms such as ‘imperfect communion’ and ‘degrees of communion’, come into focus, as noted in more recent ecumenical studies.⁸

The Historical Origins of the Ecumenical Movement

Modern ecumenism within the Roman Catholic Church takes its charter and overall direction from the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, adopted by Vatican II on the same day in November 1964 on which it also adopted the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, a document with which it is closely linked in terms of ecclesial self-understanding. However, to appreciate fully the dynamic that ecumenical activity unleashed in the church following Vatican II, it is necessary to review briefly the origins of modern ecumenism, with particular reference to the twentieth century.

Paul D. Murray contends that renewed Catholic interest in ecumenism ‘had its origins in the nineteenth-century missionary activities of the Protestant churches and the performative contradiction this disclosed between the Gospel being proclaimed and the reality of Christianity’s own multiple structural divisions and unreconciled differences’.⁹ Indeed, the roots of the ecumenical movement may be traced back to the late-eighteenth century. Some theologians, such as the American, George H. Tavard, attributes its origins to the improved relations between Calvinism and Lutheranism, as well as a renewed emphasis on what he calls ‘German pietism’ in the latter years of the 1700s. This pietism, Tavard argued, was ‘only a manifestation of a very widespread evangelical renewal’ which gave rise to Methodism in England and then ‘stirred up’ French Calvinism in the 1830s.¹⁰ In England, Anglicanism too was challenged to return to the sources. This challenge was led by groups such as the Tractarians and the Oxford Movement in the first half of the nineteenth-century.¹¹ Among those closely associated with such initiatives was the Anglican priest, poet and theologian, John Henry Newman (1801-90), who advocated for Anglicans to return to the biblical, patristic and liturgical sources of the Christian faith. Further, Tavard argues that ‘Newman and his friends

⁸ See, *Church as Communion, An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (London, 1991), pars. 2, 30.

<http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-comm-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19900906_church-communion_en.html>

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105242/ARCIC_II_The_Church_as_Communion.pdf> (accessed 18 January 2018)

⁹ Paul D. Murray, ‘Vatican II: On Celebrating Vatican II as Catholic and Ecumenical’, in D’Costa & Harris (eds), *The Second Vatican Council*, p. 91.

¹⁰ George H. Tavard, *Two Centuries of Ecumenism* (London, 1960), p. 24.

¹¹ See Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays*, (3rd ed., Cambridge, 1995).

elaborated a theology of the Church which was at the same time a theology of unity.¹² Newman, who was received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 and was elevated a cardinal in 1879, wrote of his fervent wish and daily prayer for unity.¹³ In England, an organisation known as the Association for the Promotion of the Unity of Christendom, was formed in 1857. It was composed mostly of Anglicans as many Catholic bishops there were opposed to it.¹⁴ Nonetheless, various personal contacts and friendships ensured that the movement for unity was kept alive.

A product of the ecumenical movement was the octave of prayer for Christian unity. This was initiated in the USA in 1908 by two Anglican priests, Paul Wattson and Spencer Jones and it spread to Scotland two years later when a multi-denominational Protestant missionary conference was held in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh missionary conference was significant in that it began a twentieth-century Protestant journey towards greater unity and cooperation and it contributed greatly to the growth of the annual Octave of Prayer for Christian unity. In 1909, a Belgian Benedictine monk with a strong interest in liturgical renewal and ecumenism, Lambert Beauduin, was asked by Cardinal Joseph Mercier of Malines-Brussels to take part in a series of conversations on the subject of church unity. These unofficial meetings between Catholic and Anglican theologians, known as the Malines Conversations, continued until 1926. They provided a platform for greater understanding among those taking part in them. In 1925, Dom Beauduin established the abbey of Amay-sur-Meuse in Belgium, dedicated to renewing spirituality in worship. It was also dedicated to building unity and developing relations with Christians in the east and, later, with Anglicans, Lutherans and the reformed churches of the west.

In 1932, Paul Couturier (1881-1953), a French priest, visited Amay-sur-Meuse while on retreat. It had a formative influence on him and he subsequently devoted his priestly life to the promotion of Christian unity, emphasising the need for spiritual union, and a more focussed universal prayer so that all could come to understand the depths of each other's traditions. In 1937, he was instrumental in the establishment of an ecumenical group consisting of French-speaking Swiss Protestant pastors and Catholic priests from Lyon, known as the Groupe des Dombes. It quickly became a forum not just for spiritual reflection but in-depth theological

¹² Tavard, *Two Centuries*, pp 41-2.

¹³ John Henry Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (New York, 1956), p. 225; see Ian Kerr, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford, 2009).

¹⁴ Paul Renyard, 'The Invisible Monastery: Ecumenical Friendship and Prayer for Unity', in Mark Woodruff (ed.), *The Unity of Christians: The Vision of Paul Couturier*, special edition of *The Messenger of the Catholic League*, October 2003-February 2004 (London, 2005), p. 10.

discussion, aided by the recently-published works on ecclesiology by Congar and de Lubac.¹⁵ At Christmas 1940, Couturier met with the Swiss pastor Roger Schutz, the founder of the ecumenical Christian community of Taizé.¹⁶ Schutz regarded him as ‘having the role of John the Baptist, the prophet and more than prophet of the ecumenical age.’¹⁷ During part of the German occupation of France, Couturier was imprisoned by the Gestapo and suffered ill-health which accompanied him until his death in 1953. Nonetheless, he continued to promote the Week of Prayer or Octave for Christian Unity in his native Lyon. One commentator has written of him that his influence on the development of the Week of Prayer was profound and that the decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II could well have been written by him.¹⁸

Another French figure who played a pivotal role, already referred to, was the Dominican Yves Congar. Congar identified a link between ecumenism and unbelief in the world, which he attributed to be a result of the divisions in Christianity. He saw ecumenism as being critical for the future of the Roman Catholic Church in a world that was increasingly hostile to faith. Ecumenism could contribute, he believed, to a wider ecclesiological response that the council was offering.¹⁹

Ecumenism and Catholicism

At Vatican I, the Christian churches had been invited to ‘return to church unity’, an invitation they shunned. Andrew Pierce points out that from the latter years of the nineteenth century a number of Catholic writers were expressing concerns that Catholicism was being overly identified with anti-Protestantism, something that was consolidated by post-Tridentine teaching. He argues, therefore, that a new balance was required.²⁰

In 1916, Pope Benedict XV placed the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. However, the emphasis placed on it was one of praying for those of other churches to ‘return home’ to communion with the successor of St Peter, the pope. This was different to the stance taken by Couturier. In fact, as late as the middle of the twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church had still not taken any official part in the

¹⁵ Catherine E. Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes: A Dialogue of Conversion* (New York, 2005), pp 36-7.

¹⁶ For more information on the Taizé community and its ecumenical work, see https://www.taize.fr/en_rubrique8.html (accessed 18 January 2018)

¹⁷ Geoffrey Curtis, *Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ* (London, 1964), p. 252.

¹⁸ Teresa Burke, ‘The Abbé Paul Couturier, Pioneer of Spiritual Ecumenism’, in Woodruff (ed.), *Unity of Christians*, p. 7.

¹⁹ See Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church*, p. 37.

²⁰ Pierce, ‘The Ecumenical Church of Vatican II’, p. 199.

ecumenical movement. On the contrary, the 1917 *Code of Canon Law* forbade Catholics from sharing in meetings with other Christians and, in particular, from sharing in their rituals or services.²¹ This position was further embedded in an encyclical of Pope Pius XI entitled *Mortalium Animos* (1928) in which he stated:

It is clear why this Apostolic See has never allowed its subjects to take part in the assemblies of non-Catholics: for the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it.²²

At the social and local levels, such a position created problems for Catholics. It also had political implications, especially in countries like Ireland. The ban on Catholics taking part in any ‘assemblies’ with other Christians was one thing, but the imposition of a ban on attending weddings and funerals went to the core of local society where the churches were most visible and active. The political implications were highlighted starkly in 1949 at the funeral of Ireland’s first President, Douglas Hyde. Pictures show the then Taoiseach, John A. Costello, and other members of the Government standing outside St Patrick’s Cathedral while the Church of Ireland service was underway.²³

Added to the afore-mentioned juridical and canonical positions was the 1907 decree *Ne Temere* of Pope Pius X (1903-14). This decree stipulated that a marriage between a Catholic and a member of another Christian denomination was not invalid but irregular. In order to be granted a dispensation of the impediment, the other Christian partner had to make a promise in the presence of the parish priest that any children of the marriage would be baptised and brought up as Catholic. This stemmed from the Roman Catholic Church’s assertion that it was the one true church. The penalty for non-compliance by the Catholic party was excommunication. In addition, the *Code of Canon Law* forbade the celebration of mixed marriages in consecrated buildings and such weddings were, therefore, conducted in the sacristy or elsewhere.²⁴ In Ireland, this was a particularly contentious issue as it adversely

²¹ *The Code of Canon Law* dated May 1917, canons, 1258, 1325.

²² Pope Pius XI, *Mortalium Animos*, Encyclical Letter on Fostering Religious Union, 6 January 1928, no. 10, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html> (accessed 16 July 2017)

²³ See, Brian Murphy, *Forgotten Patriot: Douglas Hyde & The Foundation of the Irish Presidency* (Cork, 2016), pp 251-3. One of the reasons why Hyde had been an agreed candidate for the presidency in 1938 was his religious background. His election was intended to send the signal to Northern Ireland and to the wider world that the new Irish state was non-confessional and inclusive. His funeral showed how the church and its laws projected a much narrower focus than that of the constitution, which Hyde was the custodian of, and demonstrated the insensitivity that the application of such a law could create.

²⁴ *Code of Canon Law* dated May 1917. Canon, 1094. This was replaced by a *votum* in November 1964 and by a new Instruction in March 1966 which still retained Canon 1094, subject to an appeal to the Holy See. The

affected inter-church relations. This, together with the interpretations of the Catholic nature of the state as expressed in the 1937 constitution, was to lead to two very high profile examples of stand-off based on religious difference – the Tilson case in 1950-1 and the Fethard-on-Sea boycott in 1957. These two events, particularly the latter, were to poison relations between the churches for decades.²⁵ As we will see later, the question of mixed marriages was a key indicator in the receiving of the council over the decades following 1965.

Into the 1940s and early 1950s the official position of the Roman Catholic Church remained the same, although expressed in a more nuanced and friendly manner. In 1948, Rome refused to join the newly-formed World Council of Churches – a worldwide fellowship of churches seeking unity.²⁶ However, in 1949 a document entitled *Ecclesia Catholica*, issued by Rome, gave guidance to local bishops on the conduct and supervision of meetings or conferences of Catholic clerics and representatives of other faiths. While noting that the Roman Catholic Church did not take part in such congresses, it stated that, subject to ecclesial approval, Catholic participation in them was not absolutely forbidden, nor was the joint recitation of the Lord's Prayer.²⁷ While James M. Oliver, a canon lawyer and priest from Philadelphia, sees this document as a significant turning point in the practice of the Holy See, Catherine Clifford argues that the shift by the Vatican's Holy Office on the matter might be considered a fruit of the work of the Archbishop of Lyon, at the behest of Paul Couturier.²⁸ Couturier's biographer, Geoffrey Curtis, sees the shift as one of the Roman Catholic Church recognising the impulse of the ecumenical movement, without abandoning its claim to be the one true church.²⁹

By 1960, Pope John XXIII, aware of the momentum for change, and bringing his past experiences as a diplomat to bear (including an important sojourn after the war as Nuncio to

celebration of marriage rites and blessings (including a sermon) was to be permitted, subject to the local ordinary and other Christian ministers were permitted to be present. See, *The Tablet*, 26 March 1966 <<http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/issue/26th-march-1966/10/4666>> [Accessed: 18 January 2018].

²⁵ For an account of these cases see, Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, pp 184-8; Gerard Hogan, 'A fresh look at Tilson case', in *Irish Jurist*, 33 (1998), pp 315-16; Kurt Bowen, *Protestants in a Catholic State: Ireland's Privileged Minority* (Dublin, 1983), pp 43-4; Ruadhán MacCormaic, *The Supreme Court: The judges, the decisions, the rifts and the rivalries that have shaped Ireland* (Dublin, 2016), p. 69.

²⁶ This organisation is governed by an assembly which meets every eight years. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member but co-operates with the organisation in a number of ways through a joint working group. See, <<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us>> (accessed 18 January 2018).

²⁷ Instruction of the Holy Office, *Ecclesia Catholica*, dated 20 December 1949 <<http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfecum.htm>> (accessed 18 January 2018).

²⁸ James M. Oliver, *Ecumenical Associations: Their Canonical Status with Particular Reference to the United States of America*, Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Diritto Canonico 39 (Roma, 1999), p. 34; Clifford, *The Groupe des Dombes*, p. 44.

²⁹ Curtis, *Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ*, p. 248.

France), set out to steer the church on the path of unity through dialogue.³⁰ In 1960, he established a secretariat for Christian Unity in Rome. This was headed up by two men who would go on to contribute significantly in this area – the German Cardinal Augustine Bea (1881-1968) and the Dutch Cardinal Johannes Willebrands (1909-2006). Another key figure at the new office was the Belgian bishop, Emile De Smedt of Brugges. It was at the Second Vatican Council however, that the official Catholic position and attitude would undergo quite revolutionary change, from which flowed new initiatives and practices that embraced the ‘sign of the times’.

Vatican II: the key ecumenical shifts

The era of ecumenical dialogue that flowed from Vatican II can be predicated on three key factors, namely, the presence of observers at the council, the decision of the council’s participants to embrace the return to sources, including scripture, and, significantly, the actual adoption by the council of a new understanding of the church and of ecumenical dialogue.

Turning first to the presence of official observers from over thirty Christian churches at the council, it may be noted that their attendance at and listening to the debates, and reporting on them to their ecclesial communities, was a significant departure. Moreover, even though they were unable to take part in the debates, they facilitated and encouraged dialogue. As Girault puts it, their presence ‘compelled the bishops to recognise the existence of the other churches...’.³¹ The second factor, namely the return to the sources, emerged from one of the key decisions made early on in the council concerning the central place of scripture in the tradition of the church. A preparatory draft of what was to become the Constitution *Dei Verbum* was rejected by the council fathers in November 1962 because it spoke of scripture and tradition being two distinct sources of revelation. The council discerned and proclaimed that there is one source, namely scripture as read in the light of the church’s tradition. Girault comments that this decision marked the end of the counter-reformation.³² Others will, of

³⁰ For more on the background of Pope John XXIII influenced his desire for and approach to Christian unity and its role in the council, see Peter Hebblethwaite, *John XXIII: Pope of the Council* (London, 1984), pp 370-86.

³¹ Girault, ‘The Reception of Ecumenism’, p. 138. See Michael Hurley, ‘Ecumenism and Conversion’, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 31, no. 2 (June 1964), pp 132-49. It concerns the change in emphasis, from seeking conversion to wider dialogue with those from other Christian communities. This would be confirmed in 1969 when the new Directory recognised the validity of all baptisms.

³² See Yves Congar, *Le Concile Vatican II: Son Eglise, Peuple de Dieu et Corps du Christ*, Théologie Historique, 71, (Paris, 1984), p. 58. Congar’s comment on this is: ‘it is to this action that Vatican II owes its greatest ecumenical influence.’

course, argue that the entire council brought the period of the counter-reformation to an end, but the council's decision regarding the place of scripture in the life of the church (including in its liturgy) and its invitation to all people to study scripture, were important factors in shaping the path to ecumenical dialogue. The return to the sources, brought biblical study and ecumenical dialogue into a renewed coexistence. The third factor was the adoption of *Lumen Gentium* and the Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*. This is not so much based on their respective actual adoptions but on the way in which they re-defined some understandings of the church and how, through their impact, they empowered and encouraged ecumenical dialogue. As the Anglican observer John Moorman later observed, Vatican II was a council of reform but 'it turned out to be in the end a council of ecumenism, so bringing Rome into the Ecumenical Movement where it had never been before.'³³

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, sees the Roman Catholic Church as 'linked in a very close way with all the baptised of the other churches'.³⁴ It does this in a theological way but does not deny its conviction that the Catholic Church, in its essence, is the church willed by Christ, while at the same time in the concrete order it is not exclusively the Church willed by Christ.³⁵ This is highlighted specifically in paragraph 8 of *Lumen Gentium* which speaks of the church in terms of a community of faith, before referring to the church as a society, adding that the two understandings do not contradict each other but, rather, deepen the understanding of the church as mystery. The following is a central element of the text:

This Church, set up and organised in this world as a society, subsists in the catholic church, governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with him, although outside its structure many elements of sanctification and of truth are to be found which, as proper gifts to the church of Christ, impel towards catholic unity.³⁶

Writing fifty years after the close of the council, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh Richard Clarke says that this statement is, for Anglicans at least, 'a bedrock which much of the ecumenical relationship between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism rests.'³⁷

Consideration must also be given to key elements of the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*. In it, the Roman Catholic Church acknowledged its role in the divisions of the

³³ John R.H. Moorman, 'Observers and Guests of the Council', in Stacpoole (ed.), *Vatican II by those who were there*, p. 156.

³⁴ Girault, 'The Reception of Ecumenism', p. 139.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ LG, 8

³⁷ Richard Clarke, 'Vatican II Fifty Years On: Some Anglican Reflections', in Coll (ed.), *Ireland & Vatican II*, 46.

sixteenth century that led to the splits in western Christianity. It also acknowledged the work of the ecumenical movement to overcome obstacles, despite which

it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are members of Christ's body, and have a right to be called Christians, and so are deservedly recognised as sisters and brothers in the Lord by the children of the catholic church.³⁸

The document added that the most significant elements which build up the church can exist outside the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church – the Word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity and the interior gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paragraph 4 of the decree on ecumenism, in effect, publicly revoked Pius XI's encyclical *Mortalium Animos* by stating the following: 'This synod, therefore, exhorts all the catholic faithful to recognise the signs of the times and to take an intelligent part in the work of ecumenism'.³⁹ Paragraph 5 of the decree noted that the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church, which the council was setting in motion, had an ecumenical dimension and acknowledged the contribution that the ecumenical movement was already making through the biblical and liturgical movements. The decree encouraged a widening of the ecumenical dimension, including such matters as marriage, social teachings and the role of the laity. The document called for a change of heart and a renewal of holiness in the church, and allowed Catholics 'to join in prayer with other Christians', it also warned that worship in common 'is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of Christian unity'.⁴⁰ Common worship, the decree said, should be governed by bearing witness to the unity of the church and to 'the sharing in the means of grace'. It explained:

Witness to the unity of the church generally forbids common worship, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice. The course to be adopted, with due regard to all the circumstances of time, place and persons, is to be decided by the local episcopal authority [bishop], unless it is otherwise determined by the bishops' conference according to its own statutes, or by the Holy See.⁴¹

This left the way open for local determination of how and when joint worship could be engaged in, a factor that would play a part in the Irish reception of the council in this respect. Further, the decree urged Catholics to learn and 'to get to know the outlook of our separated fellow Christians' adding that study was required, 'in fidelity to the truth and with goodwill'.⁴² In

³⁸ UR, 3. This was a significant shift. Prior to Vatican II, non-Catholic baptisms were recognised as 'imperfect' and, as a result, any non-Catholic who converted to Catholicism had to undergo a 'conditional' baptism and this was recorded in the baptism records.

³⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁴¹ Ibid., 8.

⁴² Ibid., 9.

dealing with the historical origins of the various splits, the decree noted especially that: among ‘those in which catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to subsist, the Anglican communion occupies a special place.’⁴³ Vatican II, while recognising that non-Catholics lacked full unity with the Roman Catholic church due to their not having ‘retained the authentic and full reality of the eucharistic mystery, especially because the sacrament of orders is lacking’, it saw ‘life in communion with Christ’ in such celebrations and urged dialogue on this subject as well on the other sacraments.⁴⁴ As we will see, structured dialogue did ensue at various levels on these subjects and this has resulted in opportunities for Catholicism ‘to learn, to be renewed, purified and even reformed.’⁴⁵ The degree to which such opportunities were availed of, or were capable of being availed of, is another matter. Nonetheless, receptive learning from other Christian churches and communities was further emphasised by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* in 1995 when he spoke of those churches as being the locus ‘where certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively exercised.’⁴⁶

The decree on ecumenism ends with a call for Catholics not to place obstacles in the way of unity and to ‘avoid not only all superficiality but also any importunate zeal, either of which would only hinder real progress towards unity’.⁴⁷ From this would flow not just instructions on implementation but directories to govern ongoing development. Moreover, the momentum to which the decree gave expression allowed for new initiatives that permitted people of different faiths to pray and study together. It would also bring into focus deep differences in some societies and communities, notably in Ireland.

The Reception of Ecumenism at the highest level in the Church

At the conclusion of the council, there was a sense that the way in which Catholics and Protestants engaged would be different and would be more in keeping with the mood of the 1960s, with a church more open to engaging with the modern world. Before the council concluded, Pope Paul VI presided at a farewell liturgy with the conciliar observers from other churches. In his address, he said: ‘We have gotten to know you a little better...our ecumenical council has taken steps in your direction in many ways...we have begun to love each other

⁴³ Ibid., 13. Among the churches in the Anglican Communion is the Church of Ireland.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁵ Paul D. Murray, ‘Vatican II: On Celebrating Vatican II as Catholic and Ecumenical’, in D’Costa & Harris (eds), *Second Vatican Council*, p. 94.

⁴⁶ Pope John Paul II *Ut Unum Sint*, 14.

⁴⁷ UR, 24

again'.⁴⁸ Ecumenism was now one of the main priorities of the church. We now examine some of the outcomes at universal and local levels.

Within a few years of Vatican II, the level of official dialogue and co-operation between the Roman Catholic Church and those churches not in communion with Rome, as well as with bodies such as the World Council of Churches, would be completely transformed. In 1968 the Roman Catholic Church was represented at the World Council of Churches assembly in Uppsala. In 1969, Pope Paul VI visited the headquarters of the WCC in Geneva and initiated a new era of collaboration focussed on common witness, justice and peace, biblical translations and questions such as mixed marriages.

On 23-24 March 1966 – just a few months after the close of the council – Pope Paul VI and the spiritual head of the Anglican Communion, Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, met in Rome where Paul publicly gave Ramsay his own ring as bishop of Rome, a symbolic act which recognised Ramsay's episcopal ministry and underpinned the desires of the council.⁴⁹ More significantly, however, what emerged from the meeting was a Common Declaration which reflected the 'development of fraternal relations based upon Christian charity, and of sincere efforts to remove the causes of conflict and to re-establish unity'.⁵⁰ In order to deepen the renewed fraternal relations and to take up the call to study which Vatican II put in place, they agreed to establish a joint-commission. In the years that followed, a Preparatory-Commission was established to make proposals on the structure and process for the joint-commission and dialogue. One of the key contributors on this body was Bishop Henry McAdoo (1916-1998), the Church of Ireland bishop of Ferns and Leighlin (and, later, Archbishop of Dublin, 1977-1985).

One of the most significant pieces of work to emerge from the Preparatory Commission was a paper in 1968 known as the Malta Report. It noted that the shared inheritance of the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in terms of scripture, the creeds, the Chalcedonian definitions of Christ's divinity and humanity, the teachings of the church fathers and the common traditions of the early centuries of Christianity. It said that divergences since the

⁴⁸ Pope Paul VI, Address (in French) at celebration of prayer for Christian unity, St Paul Outside the Walls, Rome, 4 December 1965,

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/fr/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651204_unita-cristiani.html> (accessed 18 January 2018). Cited in Girault, 'The Reception of Ecumenism'. p. 140.

⁴⁹ This ring is still worn by the Archbishop of Canterbury when he visits the pope. Ramsay's predecessor Michael Fisher had visited Pope John XXIII in 1960, thus becoming the first Archbishop of Canterbury to visit the Pope since the reformation.

⁵⁰ Joint Declaration of Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rome, 24 March 1966. Cited in, Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), *The Final Report*, (London, 1982), p. 117.

sixteenth century had come about not so much from the substance of the inheritance ‘as from our separate ways of receiving it’.⁵¹ The *Malta Report* made a number of recommendations on the structure and operation of the new joint-commission. It called for the hierarchies of both traditions to meet together jointly (either in whole or in representative form) once a year and for the establishment of joint-committees at national level to discuss pastoral and theological questions. Significantly, it also called for the joint use of churches, both existing and those to be built if this would be helpful to the local community. The Malta Report also sought agreement on the sharing of facilities for theological education, ‘with the hope that all future priests of each communion should have attended some course taught by a professor of the other communion’.⁵² It noted that as the liturgies in both communions were similar, due to their common source, and, therefore, recommended that the reform underway in the light of the council should lead to collaboration in this area.

All of the initiatives, discussed above, led to the formation of the commission, known as the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) which held its first meeting at Windsor Castle in January 1970. Consisting of clerics, theologians and others from both traditions, one of its co-chairmen was Bishop McAdoo.⁵³ The first phase of the commission lasted until 1981, during which time it produced documents on eucharistic doctrine (1971), ministry and ordination (1973), authority in the church (1976 and 1981). At the end of its first phase it produced what it termed *The Final Report*.⁵⁴ The commission said that despite differences, the churches had grown closer together in faith and charity. Nonetheless, issues remained to be resolved, principally the question of papal primacy, papal infallibility, marian dogmas, and the role of the ordained priesthood in the understanding of the eucharist. Such issues would continue to pose challenges during the following decades. In 1982, for example, the Vatican gave a cool response to the ARCIC final report, stating that it lacked the doctrinal ‘harmony and homogeneity’ needed for the journey to reconciliation. It was sceptical about the level of agreement and the use of language and concluded that it did not constitute a substantial and explicit agreement on some essential elements of Catholic faith.⁵⁵ The arrival of the more doctrinal Vatican response coincided with Joseph Ratzinger’s arrival there as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Ratzinger has been appointed by Pope John Paul

⁵¹ *The Malta Report: Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission*, 2 January 1968. Cited in *The Final Report*, pp 108-16.

⁵² *Ibid.*, no. 9(c).

⁵³ The Roman-Catholic co-chairman was Bishop Alan Clarke of East Anglia.

⁵⁴ *The Final Report*, pp 81-99.

⁵⁵ *Irish Times*, 6 May 1982.

II, who sought to assert greater control over the direction of Vatican II. Nonetheless, the ARCIC discussions continued at international level for the following decades. Another factor of note is the lack of involvement of Roman Catholics in the process, something which gave rise to pessimism on the part of the Church of Ireland. Speaking in the 1982, the then Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, John Armstrong voiced his dismay at the lack of engagement of Irish Catholic leaders on ARCIC questions. He said that as far as he could see, the ARCIC statements were what he called ‘a closed book’ for ordinary Catholics and that he had discovered that over half the Catholic bishops had not read them. And he asked a question which could be asked in Ireland with regard to many other aspects of church renewal following the council:

How is it going to get down beyond the bishops on the Roman Catholic side to the ordinary clergy and laity? There would have to be a massive programme of re-education.⁵⁶

It is to this question of reception of ecumenism that we now turn.

The Reception of Ecumenism in Ireland

It is true to say, as Ó Corráin affirms, that Vatican II ‘did not bring about any immediate change in institutional church relations in Ireland.’⁵⁷ While there was some degree of localised contact between clergy of the different denominations, and limited structured contact such as through the Churches’ Industrial Council, formed in 1959 to promote a Christian presence in the workplace, there was no formal or institutional contact between the Roman Catholic Church and other churches in Ireland. When the Churches’ Industrial Council issued a joint letter in Belfast in 1961, its signatories included the Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, Daniel Mageean. It called for the breaking down of barriers in the community and the need for greater emphasis on the common good.⁵⁸

Signs of improved cross-community relations were evident in Newry in July 1962 when newly-elevated and Irish-born Cardinal Michael Browne was, by unanimous agreement, given a civic reception by the local authority. In June 1964, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland unanimously passed a resolution welcoming what it described as the more tolerant attitude evident in the reported speeches of the leaders in Church and State, and praying

⁵⁶ *Irish Times*, 19 Sept 1981.

⁵⁷ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 209.

⁵⁸ *ICD 1962*, p. 692.

for a continued increase in mutual helpfulness among all creeds and classes. The proposer, Alfred Martin of Finaghy church, mentioned the positive comments on Protestants made by Archbishop Conway on his appointment to Armagh. He went on:

We too need to give a lead. This Assembly must speak the reconciling word. In the absence of such a lead in the Christian direction from us, who represents the largest Protestant denomination in Ulster, there are not wanting those who would turn us into another Cyprus.⁵⁹

Rev. W. McMillan in a sermon to his congregation in the non-subscribing Presbyterian Church in Newry in 1963 referred to Pope John as ‘one of the truly great popes of the Roman Church’s history; the man who made the greatest imprint on world affairs in 1962.’ He stated that Protestants should realise that ‘the Roman Catholic Church is being led by one who has the love of mankind deeply in his heart’.⁶⁰ The high regard for Pope John was evident too at the time of his death in June 1963 when the union flag on Belfast City Hall was lowered to half-mast as a mark of respect. Another significant feature of the period was the meeting between Taoiseach Seán Lemass and Northern Ireland’s Prime Minister Terence O’Neill at Stormont in 1965. O’Neill had tried to implement reforms to improve cross-community relations and had met with some initial success. In this regard he had correspondence with the Catholic bishop of Down and Connor, William Philbin, which reveals O’Neill’s efforts to become more familiar with Catholic thinking on the modern world and the role of churches in it.⁶¹

In December 1964, Conway stated that the Irish hierarchy would contemplate the attendance of Catholics at funeral and wedding services of those of other religions. He indicated that a directory on ecumenism could be available within a year. He was questioned on the subject in the light of the recent lifting of such restrictions by the bishops of England and Wales. In January 1966, the restrictions were still in place in Ireland. Speaking at a press conference in Wexford, the Bishop of Ferns, Donal Herlihy gave indications of possible relaxation of the

⁵⁹ *ICD 1965*, p. 731

⁶⁰ *ICD 1964*, pp 709-10.

⁶¹ Philbin to O’Neill 4 May 1967; O’Neill to Philbin (marked ‘personal’), 4 May 1967; Philbin to O’Neill, 4 May 1967 (PRONI: NI Cabinet papers, CAB9B/205/5). This episode concerned claims made in the Northern Ireland parliament on 3 May 1967 to the effect that priests were telling Catholics in West Belfast to boycott Protestant shops and not to employ Protestants. After investigation, it transpires that the claims arose from an anonymous letter to O’Neill, aimed at stoking communal tensions. Speaking in the Northern Ireland House of Commons on 4 May 1967, O’Neill stated: ‘We are fortunate indeed in this community that the churches generally are so strong. They have a major part to play in creating a better spirit, and I hope and believe they will play that’. See *Belfast Telegraph*, 10 May 1967 (including editorial comment).

regulations. He also said that it was ‘almost likely’ that in future mixed marriages could take place in churches instead of sacristies.⁶²

In January 1966, Conway delivered a sermon in Armagh in which he called for a correct attitude towards other Christians. ‘We must recognise’, he said, ‘that far from being enemies we are brothers linked together by baptism and belief in God’. He called on all people to ‘remove from our hearts feelings and attitudes which are basically unchristian’ and which would put back the day of unity.⁶³ The sermon was reported factually in the newspapers, north and south. From it Oliver P. Rafferty colourfully presents the language of reform:

By 1966 the ecumenical mood was in full swing and in a sermon in Armagh cathedral on 16 January, Cardinal Conway spoke of the need for change in the mental attitudes of individual Christians if the unity of the Churches was to become a reality.⁶⁴

Significant too was what was termed the first-ever ecumenical meeting in Ireland – a conference held in Greenhills Presentation Convent in Drogheda during Christian Unity Week, on 24 January 1966 and attended by over eighty people. In a message to the gathering, Cardinal Conway spoke of his confidence that the spirit of the meeting and the opportunity it would provide for mutual understanding and much good.⁶⁵ While there had been ecumenical gatherings prior to this, such as at Glenstal from 1964, the Greenhills conference was the first to have tacit approval of the churches and it was to be an important event in the ecumenical calendar for the years ahead. Nonetheless, it would be another seven years before the leaders of all the churches on the island would meet face-to-face for a formal ecumenical gathering.

The reasons for the slow beginning of ecumenical engagement in Ireland are varied. Among these was the now well-established caution of the Irish bishops in their implementation of the conciliar changes and their reliance on prior Roman approval. This, in turn, was informed by the particular circumstances of the church in Ireland and the cultural and political realities with which it engaged. This was influenced to a significant degree by both communal and political considerations, particularly in Northern Ireland, considerations that took on a pointedly polarised and increasingly violent complexion as the 1960s progressed into the 1970s. It is against this background, coupled with the developments between the churches at

⁶² *Irish Catholic*, 6 Jan. 1966.

⁶³ *Irish Independent*, 17 Jan. 1966.

⁶⁴ Rafferty, *Catholicism in Ulster*, p. 254. See, *Irish Independent*, 17 Jan. 1966; *Irish News*, 17 Jan 1966.

⁶⁵ *Evening Herald*, 24 Jan. 1966.

international level, that the reception of the ecumenical aspects of Vatican II in Ireland should be analysed.

Mixed Marriages:

Given the social, cultural and religious make-up of Irish society, questions surrounding the issue of mixed marriages had been pertinent for decades, if not centuries. We have already noted the impact of the *Ne Temere* decree on relations between the churches and within communities. In the aftermath of Vatican II there was growing momentum for change, driven not just by the council itself but by the liberalisation of Irish and western society during the 1960s. Such changes put pressure on bishops and priests, as leaders of the Irish Catholic Church, to move with the times and in a manner that reflected the council.

The requirement for the other Christian partner in a mixed marriage to raise the children of the marriage as Catholics was deeply resented by the Protestant communities. This was particularly so in the case of the Church of Ireland, the dominant Protestant church in the Republic of Ireland. Churches tended to view mixed marriages as a threat to the handing on of the religious faith of the particular church community and the transmission of the church's teaching. McQuaid voiced his sense of alarm in 1964 when he remarked

Hitherto, we have had an average per year of 110 dispensations in *mixta religione*. This year, in the first six months we have had to grant 100; and in 43 cases the woman was a non-Catholic. You can predict the outlook for a full Catholic rearing of the children.⁶⁶

Vatican II brought about a different approach on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to the question of mixed marriage. This emerged not just from the decree on ecumenism but also from the council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, which reinforced much of the decree regarding the relationship between the church and other Christians as well as recognising the need to respect the freedom of the individual in the practice of religion. As *Dignitatis Humanae* states: 'no one should be forced to act against his conscience in religious matters, nor prevented from acting according to his conscience'.⁶⁷

As noted already, a *votum* issued by the Holy See in 1964 replaced the existing *Code of Canon Law* (the *Codex*). This was brought a stage further in March 1966 with the publication

⁶⁶ 'Address to priests' retreat, 8 July 1964' (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/479).

⁶⁷ DH, 2.

of a document entitled *Matrimonti Sacramentum* which modified some of the restrictions around mixed marriages in terms of liturgical celebrations and changed the promise to being a verbal one in front of a parish priest rather than a written one. It also ended the penalty of excommunication for those Catholics who married in the presence of a minister of another church. However, it left the matter of whether Mass could be celebrated at mixed marriages to the local bishop. The *Instructio* was not greeted favourably by the Church of Ireland whose *Gazette* described it as representing ‘no advance’. On the other hand, the *Irish Catholic* regarded it as ‘a cautious experiment’.⁶⁸

The cautious approach of the 1966 revision was reflected in Galway where Bishop Browne informed the canons of the diocese that a Mass could be celebrated at mixed marriages, but with the following stipulation:

There should be some distinction between Catholic and mixed marriages; while the latter may take place before the altar, no Nuptial Mass was to be said or Nuptial Blessing given. The parties may remain in the sanctuary and attend Mass, but this was not to be a Nuptial Mass.⁶⁹

Browne repeatedly saw the regulations regarding mixed marriages as just being modified ‘to some extent’ and that the guarantees required from the non-Catholic party were essential. He emphasised the need for moral certainty concerning the guarantees, especially the intention to keep them, and referred to evidence in some dioceses of a number of non-Catholics refusing to give the undertakings required of them.⁷⁰ In November 1966, the Holy See sought information from the bishops as to the numbers of mixed marriages and an overview of any problems or issues arising. Replying to Conway on the matter, Browne said that in Galway there had been only eight mixed marriages between 1961 and 1965, that the husband was the non-Catholic party in most of the marriages and that the guarantees had been given in all cases.⁷¹

Following the first meeting of the Synod of Bishops in 1967, at which Ireland was represented by Conway and Browne, the latter referred to a ‘campaign’ for the relaxation of the guarantees and noted that Archbishop Ramsay of Canterbury had praised the council decrees but had added that if the church was serious about them it should change the present laws and not insist on the guarantees. Browne said that Cardinals Bea and Willebrands were pushing for changes in Germany and other countries where Catholics were in a minority.

⁶⁸ *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 25 March 1966, *Irish Catholic*, 24 March 1966.

⁶⁹ Minutes of Chapter meeting 26 June 1966 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/ii/4)

⁷⁰ Minutes of Chapter meetings, 25 June 1967 and 4 December 1967 (ibid).

⁷¹ Browne to Conway, 12 November 1966 (GDA, Browne papers, B/11/D/237).

The Church of Ireland bishops wrote a pastoral letter on the subject in November 1966 in which they claimed that the lack of movement on the key questions surrounding mixed marriage was disappointing.⁷³ They also instructed their clergy not to attend any wedding of one of their church members to a Catholic if the promises were demanded.

Ó Corráin highlights the differences in the implementation of the mixed marriages directive between Ireland and Switzerland, both of which have significant Catholic and non-Catholic populations. Instead of looking on mixed marriages in terms of a threat, the Swiss bishops welcomed them as a contributing to the pathway and search for Christian unity. The rights of both partners were encouraged and respected and the upbringing of the children was deemed to be a matter of conscience for both partners.⁷⁵ In France, the bishops sought to reconcile the requirement on the Catholic partner with freedom of conscience by declaring that any promise regarding the upbringing of children should be ‘carried out in the concrete circumstances of our family. This means that, in sincere dialogue and with respect for the reasons and religious convictions of each of us, we must jointly come to a decision that we can

⁷⁵ Declan Deane, 'Mixed Marriage: Irish and Swiss Bishops' statements compared, *The Furrow*, 25, no. 10 (1974), pp 544-8; Felix Trösch, 'Positions and trends in Switzerland' in Michael Hurley (ed.), *Beyond Tolerance: The Challenge of Mixed Marriage* (London, 1975), p. 127; Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, pp 190-1.

both accept in conscience'.⁷⁶ The bishops in Germany and the Benelux countries also accepted that they could no longer insist on the children being brought up as Catholics.

In Ireland, however, the bishops, in keeping with their practices in such matters, decided to take a more juridical approach. They agreed that 'the Catholic party be normally asked to make the necessary promise and declaration in writing in the presence of the non-Catholic party and the parish priest' with the other Christian party being requested not to impede the promise.⁷⁷ The Irish bishops also decided not to grant a dispensation when it was clear that some or all of the children would be brought up in another Christian tradition.⁷⁸ Ó Corráin records that despite the reformed legislation on the matter, Bishop Cornelius Lucey still insisted on the other Christian party making written promises in the diocese of Cork & Ross.⁷⁹ Cardinal Conway was more conciliatory, welcoming the document as the product of the whole church and of the meetings of the Synod of Bishops. He stated that 'there can be no complete solution to the problem of mixed marriages while Christians are divided on important truths' and that it was 'not possible for any human authority, Pope, bishop or anyone else, to release a Catholic from the duty of preserving his faith and handing it on to his children.'⁸⁰

The question of mixed marriages was to continue to be a source of division between churches and to dominate much inter-church dialogue over the decade ahead. The numbers of such marriages were low at the time of the new instruction. For example, out of 1,202 marriages in Derry diocese in 1970 only 67 were mixed marriages. In the Dublin archdiocese in 1972, out of 7,400 marriages only 388 (or 5.24%) were mixed marriages. This compares to over 27% in West Germany for the same period. Nonetheless, increased mobility, an ever-changing entertainment scene and increasing urbanisation was already contributing to new trends in the socio-religious make up of Ireland. This is perhaps typified by a remark by Bishop Patrick Mulligan of the cross-border diocese of Clogher in 1972 when, at a meeting of his Council of Priests, 'the bishop remarked on the increase of mixed marriages and asked the priests to do what they could to dissuade the Catholic partner from entering into such a marriage.'⁸¹

⁷⁶ Cited in Girault, 'The Reception of Ecumenism', p. 149.

⁷⁷ Minutes of General Meeting of Irish Hierarchy, 9-11 March 1970 (Kilmore Diocesan Archives (hereafter KDA), Austin Quinn papers, file AQ/ 57).

⁷⁸ Minutes of General Meeting of Irish Hierarchy, 12-14 October 1970 (ibid)..

⁷⁹ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 191.

⁸⁰ 'Press Statements 1970, statement dated 29 April 1970' (COFLA, Conway papers, File 18/8); see also, Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, pp 189-90.

⁸¹ Minutes of Council of Priests, 28 March 1972, (CDA: 'Minutes of Council of Priests 1969-1987').

The outcome of Catholic teaching and practice in relation to mixed marriage was raised at a political level too. Garret FitzGerald, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs during the coalition government of 1973-77 and himself the child of a mixed marriage, recalled in his autobiography that he raised the matter with the Holy See on a number of occasions, the first being in 1973 when he met the Vatican's Secretary for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs (often referred to as the Holy See's foreign minister), Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, at a conference in Helsinki. FitzGerald expressed the view to Casaroli that the church's position on mixed marriage was the most negative aspect informing the view of northern unionists and, in his view, impeding Irish unity. He told Casaroli that

the effect of this during the lifetime of the State had been an erosion of the Protestant population at the rate of 25% per generation. This has been gravely misunderstood in the north and was a contributory source of tension there.⁸²

He also referred to the need for increased access to integrated education. He told the Vatican official that

In Northern Ireland... there was evidence of an extensive sociological survey carried out in 1968, recently confirmed by a less scientific poll, that two-thirds of Catholics would favour integrated education, seeing it as likely to make a contribution to a reduction of community tensions. This view, however, did not seem to be shared by the Irish Hierarchy, who seem very unwilling to accept that even in Northern Ireland there should be any change in the situation. The dissonance between Catholic public opinion and the views of the members of the Hierarchy in Northern Ireland might be somewhat unfortunate.⁸³

FitzGerald followed up on this by sending a memorandum to Rome (apparently agreed to by the then Taoiseach, Liam Cosgrave), in which the case for reform in these and other areas, such as divorce and the legal ban on contraception, was put forward. Despite some further exchanges, nothing came of the initiative. However, in March 1977, using the opportunity afforded by a European Economic Community meeting in Rome, FitzGerald was successful in securing an audience with Pope Paul VI on the subject of Northern Ireland. The pope had a lengthy prepared statement, in French, which he read to FitzGerald. For Pope Paul, there was to be no compromise. As FitzGerald puts it: 'The theme was uncompromising, Ireland was a Catholic country – perhaps the only one left. It should stay that way.'⁸⁴ Here we can see, at a point in time close to the end of the period covered by this thesis, that at the highest level of the church, the view existed that Ireland was the last bastion of Catholic power, a different place when it came to change. Pope Paul and Vatican officials – no doubt briefed by the Irish bishops and, most likely, the then nuncio Gaetano Alibrandi – had formed the view that

⁸² 'Discussion with a delegate of the Holy See, 10 July 1973' (UCD Archives, Garret FitzGerald papers, P215/330).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Garret FitzGerald, *Just Garret: Tales from the Political Front Line* (Dublin, 2010), p. 235.

resistance to change should be emboldened. As we have already noted, this was also Alibrandi's stance when it came to episcopal appointments. Indeed, as FitGerald concludes, calls for reform were met with, what appeared to him to be a combination of 'diplomatic evasion and arguments based on power rather than charity.'⁸⁵ Receiving the impetus of the council in its totality, insofar as it affected ecumenism, would continue to be a challenge for the Roman Catholic Church, especially in Ireland.

Joint-Prayer

The council documents, despite the nuances involved, did encourage Catholics and non-Catholics to pray together on occasions. As the 1960s moved into the 1970s, and despite the kind of differences that questions such as mixed marriages gave rise to, the increased level and visibility of joint prayer initiatives, was one of the most outward signs of the reception of the Second Vatican Council. These took the form of gatherings such as ecumenical services and the official representation of churches at liturgical or ceremonial events in other churches and ecclesial communities. Many official public events featured ecumenical prayer services instead of just a blessing by a Catholic priest.

In Rome in October 1964, while the council was in session, two meetings were held of an English-speaking committee established to draft input for the directory on ecumenism that was planned in the aftermath of the council. Ireland was represented by Bishops Lucey of Cork & Ross and Ahern of Cloyne. The proceedings give some insight into the shifting attitudes and the differences between countries. The committee considered a range of areas including prayer in common with other Christians, Catholics visiting churches of other traditions and ecumenical services in different settings and circumstances. With regard to prayer in common with other Christians, the minutes of the meetings note that the Irish representatives entered a reservation to the effect that 'no participation with a non-Catholic minister leading in prayer in private or public would be acceptable in Ireland under present circumstances'.⁸⁶ In relation to Catholics visiting other Christian churches as tourists or 'by chance' to hear music, this was found to be acceptable. Regarding visiting Protestant churches for the attendance of services such as funerals, marriages or baptisms, the committee agreed that passive attendance would be acceptable if *remoto rationabili scandalo* and with the sole purpose of showing respect or kindness to a public figure, relative or close friend. Being a sponsor at a baptism in another

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 236.

⁸⁶ Minutes of Irish bishops' meetings on 'Draft of Directory on Participation in Prayer and Worship with Protestant Non-Catholics' held in Rome on 17 and 22 October 1964 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/88).

Christian church was disapproved of by all, other forms of active participation (such as bridesmaid, bestman or pall bearer) would depend on circumstances of 'reasonable cause' and custom. The presence of official representatives of the Roman Catholic Church at the funeral of a civic personality or ecclesiastic was also deemed acceptable provided that 'people be instructed on the reasons justifying such attendance'.⁸⁷ Such attendances would also include non-Catholic eucharistic services. Regarding special ecumenical gatherings, the Irish delegates disapproved of such services being in a church of another Christian tradition, while Australia and New Zealand approved of them, with England and Wales approving in theory subject to people being prepared for such a move.

When the Irish delegates reported on their deliberations to the extraordinary general - meeting of the Irish hierarchy in the Pontifical Irish College in Rome on 10 November 1964, the minutes record that 'it was thought that the exclusion of all cases where a non-Catholic led in prayer was perhaps a little on the strict side'. Overall, the bishops were of the view that in drawing up a directory, special consideration should be given to the historical and social circumstances of the various countries and to the fact that what might be tolerated in one country might not be advisable in another. The minutes record that 'in the special circumstances – historical and social – of our own country, the degree of "*communicatio*" which would be advisable would be much less than that contemplated in some other countries'.⁸⁸ Once again, we see the cautious approach of Irish church leaders to something which was at the very heart of the council. It resonates more with McQuaid's concern for the 'simple faithful' than it does with the vision of Pope John XXIII.

In 1965, the Irish bishops established a commission on Ecumenism, chaired by Archbishop Thomas Morris of Cashel and Emly. Other episcopal members included Donal Herlihy of Ferns, William Philbin of Down and Connor and John Ahern of Cloyne. This commission was later assisted by a group of consultants – mostly priests but including two lay people, Frank Duff of the Legion of Mary and Dr Muriel Fraser, a Belfast consultant paediatrician and a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. Once again, the Irish dependence on Roman leadership was evident when in June 1966 the commission advised against the idea of a national directory on ecumenism in the absence of one being available from Rome. The commission did recommend, however, to the June 1966 meeting of the hierarchy that Catholics

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy in the Pontifical Irish College, Rome, 10 and 18 November 1964 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/88).

be permitted to attend baptisms, weddings and funerals of other Christians ‘as a gesture of friendship and in the exercise of charity’. Catholics were also to be permitted to be witnesses at a non-Catholic wedding, provided that it was not a mixed-marriage for which a dispensation had not been given. Participation in ecumenical services for special occasions was also permitted. However, participation in eucharistic services of other churches was not permitted, although people in official positions could attend on occasions without taking an active part in these.⁸⁹ In a report to a conference in Rome in May 1967, the Irish bishops recorded that the new provisions were ‘favourably received on all sides and have been implemented throughout the country’, adding that as far as cooperation among the churches was concerned, ‘the ground is being slowly and carefully prepared’ with emphasis being placed on the spiritual side of ecumenism – the need for interior conversion and holiness of life. The report also noted that there were no joint prayer services due, it claimed, to there being no demand for them and due also to the increased political tensions in the part of Ireland where Catholics are in a minority, i.e. Northern Ireland. It cited the recent cancellation of a visit to Belfast by the Anglican Bishop Moorman, even though the cancellation was condemned by several Protestant church leaders.⁹⁰

An early indication of prayer in common in a local community setting was in Mullingar in November 1966 when a Catholic priest Joseph Dermody and a Church of Ireland minister Ian McDougall led prayers at a conference on ecumenism organised by the Legion of Mary. In the same month, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, George Simms, was present in the Pro-Cathedral in Dublin for the funeral Mass for the former President of Ireland, Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh. In April 1967 the Church of Ireland Archdeacon of Eyrecourt, CJ Burrowes, presided at the blessing and re-dedication of the eighteenth-century church of St Brendan the Navigator at Clonfert, Co Galway, in the presence of the local Catholic bishop (and former secretary to Pope John XXIII), Thomas Ryan. Ryan noted that the Church of Ireland community had contributed financially to the restoration project, pointing to such gestures of kindness as fruits of the council and the ‘climate of goodwill and mutual understanding between followers of Christ’ begun by Pope John XXIII.⁹¹

During the discussions surrounding the emergence of a directory on ecumenism, McQuaid made his views clear that, due to what he saw were historical and cultural reasons, ecumenism in Dublin was ‘a gravely delicate process, which requires careful preparation and

⁸⁹ Minutes of meeting of Episcopal Commission on Ecumenism, 8 June 1966 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/v/156(2)); see, *Irish Catholic*, 30 June 1966.

⁹⁰ ‘Report on Ecumenism in Ireland’, 15 May 1967 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/v/156(2)).

⁹¹ *ICD 1968*, pp 776-7.

very tactful execution', adding that 'it cannot be hastened, no matter what a minimal group may urge'.⁹² It would not be until 1972, after McQuaid's term had ended, that the two archbishops of Dublin would participate together in a formal liturgy. This occurred on 5 November 1972 in Christ Church cathedral, when Archbishops Dermot Ryan and Alan Buchanan presided jointly at a service during which Ryan occupied the throne reserved for his Protestant counterpart. It was the first time that a Catholic prelate attended at service in Christ Church cathedral since the reformation.

Inter-Church Dialogue

Despite the various examples of representation and well-meant efforts at evoking common prayer, ecumenism in this area never moved beyond gestures. As Louis McRedmond points out, 'the whole ecumenical exercise was very much welcomed in Ireland at the time at the level of gesture', but lacking in theological dialogue and depth. It never progressed to the levels achieved in other countries such as, for example, Belgium or even England, to which we will turn later.⁹³ One of the reasons for such hesitancy was the continuing lack of understanding and appreciation of the theological underpinnings of the council and its quest for unity and renewal. A major reason was fear, fear of indifferentism – that people would come to see one religion being as good as another.

The *Irish Directory on Ecumenism*, published in 1969, highlighted that Catholics and other Christians were divided on a number of important questions and it warned against 'unity at the expense of truth'. However, one of the significant outcomes of the new directory was the acceptance of the validity of baptism conferred in Christian communities not in communion with the Roman Catholic Church. It encouraged prayer in common. It also welcomed non-Catholics to participate in Catholic liturgies, though it did stop short of what was increasingly termed in ecumenical dialogue, 'eucharistic hospitality', in other words, joint communion services. While others were welcome to participate at Mass, they were not permitted to receive Holy Communion 'since this requires belief in Christ's real presence in the Eucharist and is the sign that unity in faith and worship is already realised'.⁹⁴ While the new directory showed the slow signs of change, it may be noted, as Ó Corráin points out, that official dialogue and

⁹² McQuaid to Herlihy, 26 April 1966, enclosing comments on ecumenism (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/XV/b/06).

⁹³ Cited in Carty, *Hold Firm*, p. 120.

⁹⁴ *Irish Directory on Ecumenism* (Dublin, 1969), no. 20.

interaction came slowly in the decade after 1963 ‘as a result of international factors and, in the Irish context, low-key ecumenical moves and the galvanising impacts of the Troubles.’⁹⁵

In their excellent analysis of ecumenism in Ulster during the years following the council, Eric Gallagher and Stanley Worrall argue that the 1969 Irish *Directory* made progress possible.⁹⁶ They cite its reference to different denominations living in harmony and peace and their hope that the movement would grow. They refer to the document’s acknowledgement of the work achieved at Glenstal and Greenhills. Equally, they refer also to what they describe as ‘a salutary warning’ the bishops gave to Catholics to ‘remain fully loyal to the truth handed down by the Apostles and professed throughout the centuries by the Catholic Church, for it is through Christ’s Catholic Church alone...that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.’⁹⁷ This approach of gesture, discussion and self-protection, combined with different views and interpretations of ecumenism, would shape the reception of the council by both traditions in Ireland, insofar as ecumenism was concerned.

While it was not until 1973 that the leaders of all the Irish churches met together formally for the first time, the years following Vatican II had some significant moments. One of these was in June 1967 when the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, visited Dublin and was welcomed at the airport by both archbishops before being received officially by McQuaid at Archbishop’s House in Drumcondra. Ramsey also visited St Patrick’s College, Maynooth.⁹⁸ The images of McQuaid’s welcoming attitude towards an Anglican leader differed from those of the first occasion on which he publicly met his own Dublin counterpart, George Otto Simms, at a lecture on ecumenism at the Mansion House during Christian Unity Week in January 1966. However, the event is remembered for poor organisation and an embarrassing situation whereby Simms was left in the audience while McQuaid sat on the dais beside the papal nuncio and an empty chair. While they did recite the Lord’s Prayer together at the conclusion, the event is remembered more for the ‘empty chair’ and imputations of a snub, which was never the intention.

Other moments of inter-church contact included the annual meetings at Greenhills and Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick. The 1967 Glenstal conference heard calls for increased cooperation on social issues of the day in all parts of the country and a deeper mutual awareness

⁹⁵ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 209.

⁹⁶ Eric Gallagher & Stanley Worrall, *Christians in Ulster 1968-1980* (Oxford, 1982), p. 132.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁹⁸ *ICD 1968*, p. 805. This reception differed from that afforded to Ramsey on a previous visit in 1961 when McQuaid did not receive him.

of the sacramental traditions in the various Christian communities. Speakers included J. G. McKinley of the Church of Ireland, T. P. McCaughey of the Presbyterian Church, Fr Patrick Corcoran of Milltown Institute and Ernest Gallagher of the Methodist Church. In 1968, the conference considered papers on the subject of ‘Sacred and Secular’ and speakers included Patrick Masterson, professor of philosophy and religion at, and future president of, University College Dublin, and the future Church of Ireland bishop of Cork (and, later, of Connor), Samuel G. Poyntz. Poyntz had authored works on church unity and devotion to Mary.⁹⁹

By the time that the Irish bishops and the leaders of other Churches met at Ballymascanlon on 26 September 1973, there had been considerable interaction between them, mostly at local levels. Their official engagement prior to that, however, had rarely been beyond gesture. Nonetheless, both the ecumenical dynamic unleashed by Vatican II and the political circumstances in Northern Ireland contributed to the growth in trust and familiarity between them, even though some of the contributors to the dialogue may have disagreed on matters where religion and politics interfaced. As Ó Corráin puts it, ‘the troubles induced inter-church cooperation in three ways: meetings of church leaders and their representatives, intercessions for peace... and meetings of the Joint Group on Social Problems’.¹⁰⁰

In the midst of severe political turmoil, structures emerged, formally and informally, which would enable dialogue to take place and for trust to grow. In 1966, the Irish Council of Churches was formed as an umbrella group for Protestant churches on the island. In 1968, this new body called for dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church to explore ways of improving community relations. However, it was the attack on a Civil Rights march at Burntollet in January 1969 that set in motion a series of consultations that led to the first formal meeting of the leaders of churches in Ireland since the Reformation, held in Cardinal Conway’s residence in Armagh on 30 January 1969. This led to the establishment of what Ó Corráin has termed a ‘secret and informal *ad hoc* committee composed of representatives of the church leaders or principals.’¹⁰¹ The committee, which met for the first time in April 1969, served as a clearing house for views that might be expressed on behalf of all the leaders and it was also a channel for the different churches to assess an increasingly volatile political and security situation. Among the matters discussed were grievances felt by the different communities, housing,

⁹⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 21 February 2017, <<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-samuel-poyntz-a-bishop-of-courage-and-vigour-35466847.html>> [Accessed: 18 January 2018]

¹⁰⁰ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 216. The Joint Group on Social Problems was formed by the Irish Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in 1970.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

policing, local government reform and relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. As the political crisis deepened, the church leaders were compelled to meet more frequently. At local level, there were interdenominational initiatives at parish and diocesan levels in 1968 and 1969, such as the formation of PACE (Protestant and Catholic Encounter), a non-political group whose mission was to promote goodwill between the communities at local level. At another level, in the universities in Dublin, the Student Christian Movement (SCM), an ecumenical group founded by students, became active in housing campaigns in 1968.¹⁰² Thus, grassroots ecumenism, north and south, was, albeit slowly, taking root outside of formal liturgical and church gestures, while the leaders sought ways to engage with each other.

As rioting broke out across Northern Ireland in the later summer of 1969, the leaders of the churches were to be seen together on television calling for restraint, something that would have been unthinkable in earlier decades. Conscious that the international impression was emerging of a conflict between religions, Conway proposed to the other church leaders in May 1970 that they issue a joint statement on the matter. Conway drafted the statement, which was accepted by the other leaders, with only minor amendments. It was the first joint-statement of church leaders in Ireland with its perceptive analysis of the political situation. The statement declared that church leaders had

no wish to deny that there are serious and deep divisions, which we deplore, in the Northern Ireland community but we wish to assert that these divisions are not primarily of a religious character. They arise from deep and complex causes – historical, political and social – but the religious differences between the professing Christians are not a primary cause.¹⁰³

The statement was signed by the leaders in alphabetical order, so that one church would not be seen as being superior to another. This was to be the pattern of all future joint statements, to the present day. Ó Corráin offers the view that the statements issued by the leaders were generally ‘safe and non-controversial’. In support of this, he cites private correspondence between Conway and one of his representatives on the secret *ad hoc* committee to the effect that statements from the northern bishops carried more weight with the Catholic community.¹⁰⁴

For the Northern Ireland government, the new situation was a major problem. In 1970, due to pressure from the British government, the Stormont administration established a

¹⁰² Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 204.

¹⁰³ ‘Statement by Church heads, 27 May 1970’ (COFLA, Conway papers, File 18/8) cited in Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁴ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 222.

Ministry of Community Relations, with a Unionist MP, Dr Robert Simpson as minister. In July of that year, he met with nine, mainly church-related groups, to discuss possible ways of improving relations at a local level. Among the groups represented was the Fellowship of Prayer which was represented by Alec Reid, a priest who would play a significant role in the future peace process of the 1980s and 1990s. A Community Relations Commission, headed by a Catholic civil servant and prominent GAA member, Maurice Hayes, was also established. Hayes summarised the situation thus: ‘not having given a thought to community relations for the previous fifty years, the Unionists now found themselves with a Minister, a Ministry and a Commission. Stormont was not at all sure what to do with them.’¹⁰⁵ The ministry and commission had limited input to what was an increasingly volatile situation. However, a number of key figures in this sector were to play important roles in inter-church dialogue into the decades following.¹⁰⁶

Throughout this period, the other Christian churches also had to be careful of considerable levels of opposition to ecumenical activity among some in their congregations. Those who engaged in ecumenical activity were accused of ‘Romanism’ by hardline Protestants such as Rev Ian Paisley, the founder of the Free Presbyterian Church. Other clergy, usually members of the Orange Order or similar bodies, portrayed Protestant involvement as ‘the training school of the pro-Romanist “protestant” ministers of Ulster’.¹⁰⁷ Even the appointment of McAdoo to ARCIC had to be put on hold for several months before it was finally announced in the *Journal of the General Synod* [of the Church of Ireland] in 1968.¹⁰⁸

The beginning of inter-church dialogue represented a reception of the ecumenical dimension of Vatican II in Ireland. It also saw the Roman Catholic Church engaging, however secretly, with other churches on matters affecting modern society. Nonetheless, these encounters happened because of the increasing levels of violence and were informed by the grave situation that people in Northern Ireland faced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Theological dialogue, one which allowed critical examination of one’s beliefs and positions,

¹⁰⁵ Cited in Norman W. Taggart, *Conflict, Controversy and Co-operation: The Irish Council of Churches and ‘The Troubles’ 1968-1972* (Dublin, 2004), p. 45.

¹⁰⁶ For example, David Bleakey, the leader of the Northern Ireland Labour Party – though not an MP, succeeded Simpson as minister. Bleakey, who resigned in protest at the introduction of internment in 1971, was later to serve as Secretary of the Irish Council of Churches from 1980 until 1992. His successor as minister, Basil McIlvor, was to play a role in promoting integrated education in Northern Ireland. One of the founders of PACE, G.B. Newe became the first-ever Catholic to be appointed to the Stormont government in September 1971, just months before it was dissolved. His appointment by Prime Minister Brian Faulkner has been described as ‘experimental ecumenism’. See Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (Oxford, 2003), p. 249.

¹⁰⁷ Cited by Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 213.

¹⁰⁸ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 216.

was not to be a feature of inter-Church dialogue for the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland until at least 1973.

In early 1973, in another sign of rapprochement, the Church of Ireland invited Catholic representatives to attend its General Synod. On 22 June 1972, the Irish bishops announced at the conclusion of their summer meeting that in response to an invitation from the Irish Council of Churches, the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland would engage with it ‘on ecumenism in general and on mixed marriages in particular’.¹⁰⁹ At this time too, the Irish School of Ecumenics, which was formed in 1970, proposed a multilateral approach to inter-church dialogue and joint study of theological questions.¹¹⁰ Conway accepted that approach and, as a result, the scope of the discussions was broadened to include a wide range of scriptural, doctrinal, pastoral and practical areas. Thus, the Ballymascanlon Inter-Church meetings came into being.

The first meeting at Ballymascanlon in September 1973 was the first time that the leaders of the Irish Roman Catholic Church formally took part in formal ecumenical dialogue. All twenty-eight bishops, together with four Maynooth professors, two diocesan priests from Belfast, two members of religious communities and six lay people took part. The Church of Ireland had thirteen representatives. In all, eight churches and ecclesial communities on the island of Ireland took part. There were five Ballymascanlon Inter-Church meetings between 1973 and 1978. The range of topics discussed centred on papers delivered at the first meeting. These included church, scripture and authority, baptism, eucharist and marriage, social and community problems, and Christianity and secularism. Working parties were established for each of the topics and each year’s meeting heard reports from the ongoing discussions that took place between meetings. In 1977, a further range of topics was added. Ballymascanlon also commissioned a report on violence in Ireland. A Joint-Committee on Mixed Marriages was commissioned in 1975 and reported in 1977.

The reception of the Ballymascanlon meetings by the public was informed by the political realities of the day and viewed more in terms of summits to deal with the political problems of the time, particularly in relation to Northern Ireland.¹¹¹ In their book on Ballymascanlon, Cahal B. Daly and Stanley Worrall comment that inter-Church dialogue ‘is

¹⁰⁹ *ICD 1973*, p. 650

¹¹⁰ Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 221.

¹¹¹ Ó Corráin refers to editorials and opinion comments in newspapers such as *Irish Press* and *Irish Times* as well as observations by officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs, see, Ó Corráin, *Rendering*, p. 227.

not primarily designed and should not be expected to “solve the Irish problem” or to end violence’.¹¹² However, they did believe that Christian leaders who thought, prayed and worked together would be more effective in contributing to the solution of the problems facing the country. However, just like some of the Irish bishops in advance of Vatican II, they warned that ‘there should not be unrealistic expectations of what Ballymascanlon can do’. They also warned against dismissive attitudes and encouraged recognition of what had been achieved.¹¹³

Nonetheless, the failure of the Catholic bishops to enter into discussions on questions such as mixed marriages and family planning added to the apathy concerning the process, thus leading one Church of Ireland layman to speak of ‘soft words at Ballymascanlon and hard lines at the grass roots’.¹¹⁴ In February 1977, the Church of Ireland publicly voiced its concerns and reflected the disenchantment with Ballymascanlon :

We are bound to say that the unreality of inter-church dialogue hitherto e.g. the Ballymascanlon meetings, as illustrated by an apparent inability to come to grips with these moral, social and practical issues which affect the lives of ordinary people and contribute to the maintenance of divisions based on suspicion and fear...¹¹⁵

Comments such as these reflected an unease with the pace of progress. Due to the death of Cardinal Conway in April 1977, the deaths of Popes Paul VI and John Paul I in 1978 and the papal visit to Ireland by Pope John Paul in 1979, Ballymascanlon was not resumed in earnest until March 1980. During the papal visit, church leaders had a brief meeting with the pontiff, though the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Dr William Craig refused to meet him. He had earlier refused to meet Cardinal Tomas Ó Fiaich, Conway’s successor. However, the 1980 Ballymascanlon meeting was positive and resulted in the establishment of country-wide groups to study St John’s Gospel as well as groups to study questions such as crime and punishment and the possibility of establishing joint pastoral ministry to prisoners and their families. Another group was tasked with examining questions surrounding increased secularism in society and to make representations to the Departments of Education, north and south, concerning the syllabuses and the teaching of history in both states. But events were to overtake these initiatives, namely the H-Block hunger strikes of 1980-81 and the decision of the Presbyterian Church to withdraw from the World Council of Churches. On the positive side, personal relations between leaders remained strong, and this was reflected in January

¹¹² Cahal B. Daly and Stanley Worrall, *Ballymascanlon: An Irish Venture in Inter-Church Dialogue* (Belfast, Dublin, 1978), p. 12.

¹¹³ Daly and Worrall, *Ballymascanlon*, p. 13.

¹¹⁴ Cited in Gallagher & Worrall, *Christians in Ulster*, p. 138.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

1981 when Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist clergy preached in St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh for the first time, at the invitation of Cardinal Ó Fiaich.

So, despite the paucity of apparent progress in terms of spectacular announcements, Ballymascanlon enabled the journey to continue. The questions being dealt with reflected the thinking behind Vatican II, particularly relating to the place of scripture, dialogue and prayer and they reflected the conciliar vision of the church in the modern world. They reflected these in an Irish context too. As we will review briefly, this led, in time, to the quest for unity and reconciliation being replicated at another level in the community.

Another lasting achievement of Ballymascanlon was that it led to the formal establishment of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting as a body in its own right. This body is coordinated by a standing committee which is made up on a 50/50 basis by the Irish Episcopal Conference and the Irish Council of Churches. The Irish Inter-Church Meeting and the Irish Council of Churches jointly form a body known as Churches in Ireland, which continues to serve as the official platform for the publication of joint statements and also a body which continues to pioneer projects in peace building and local ecumenism.¹¹⁶ In this respect, despite the various obstacles, it has achieved the objectives of the original Ballymascanlon meeting – enabling dialogue on theological and pastoral matters in a competent and thorough manner while fostering ecumenism at a local level too, ‘so that “the Ballymascanlon spirit” can be more widely shared by local congregations.’¹¹⁷ As the noted ecumenist Michael Hurley has pointed out, political agreements of the 1970s such as Sunningdale failed, while Ballymascanlon didn't. He argues that the ‘survival of Ballymascanlon shows that the churches at the outbreak of the Troubles were indeed “more ready than the political parties to stretch out hands of friendship”.’¹¹⁸

What of other countries? The Jesuit ecumenist Gustave Weigel, writing in 1950, noted that since 1900 the ecumenical scene in the United States of America had changed because Protestants had come to realise that they were not inviolable, at a time when Catholics were gaining a stronger foothold. However, he noted that Catholics were not overly interested in the

¹¹⁶ See, <<https://www.irishchurches.org/about/who-we-are>> (accessed 18 January 2018). The current joint-chairpersons of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting are Bishops Brendan Leahy and John McDowell.

¹¹⁷ Daly and Worrall, *Ballymascanlon*, p. 13. Another initiative worth noting was the establishment in 1965 of the Corrymella Christian Community in County Antrim, a cross-community initiative dedicated to peace-building and which still survives. It was founded by a Presbyterian minister, Rev Ray Davey. See, *The Independent*, 24 April 2012, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/rev-ray-davey-presbyterian-minister-who-fought-to-reconcile-catholics-and-protestants-7675833.html>> [Accessed: 18 January 2018].

¹¹⁸ Michael Hurley, ‘Northern Ireland and the post-Vatican II ecumenical journey’ in Brendan Bradshaw & Dáire Keogh (eds), *Christianity in Ireland: Revisiting the Story* (Dublin, 2002), p. 269.

subject of ecumenism due to not knowing much about Protestants and not being allowed to attend their weddings and funerals. This was in addition to historical and divisive animosities. Nonetheless, by 1958 it was noted that both communities were increasingly involved in common projects, there was greater fairness in the teaching at theological schools of both traditions, Catholics and Protestants were studying together in universities. and that both groups have become more united around the scriptures.¹¹⁹ Writing in 1970, Eugene Bianchi said that the decade of the 1960s saw enormous changes in the area of ecumenism:

In America, attitudes changed importantly: Catholics put aside their hostile defensiveness towards Protestants and began regarding them as separated brothers. American Protestants, influenced by the remarkable historical convergence of Pope John XXIII and John F Kennedy, were overcoming their longstanding fears of the Roman Catholic menace.¹²⁰

Prayer, study and mutual action became the paths towards unity that the churches embarked on. These were the same pathways as in Ireland.

Bodies like Ballymascanlon were established in other countries such as, for example, in Canada where structured dialogue came into existence formally in 1971 with the creation of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue (ARC Canada). This body included people who had direct experience of Vatican II, namely the theologian Jean-Marie Tillard and Eugene Fairweather who had been one of the Anglican observers at the council and who had played an important role in organising the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey in 1966. As Catherine Clifford points out, the concern of ARC Canada was to contribute to international theological reflection in practical ways through the medium of education and communications. Its role was further enhanced by the discussions engaged in by ARCIC.¹²¹

The kinds of institutional ecumenism referred to in these instances were complemented in some dioceses by a more person-centred approach, better described as relational ecumenism. An example of this was in the Diocese of Bruges in Belgium where the bishop, Emile de Smedt (already referred to for his role as a member of the Secretariate for Christian Unity) refrained from grand gestures and concentrated instead on using the church press and other forms of communications to reach out to other Christian communities. In 1972, he held a conference on ecumenism in his diocese and its practical implications for chaplains of various denominations at the nearby NATO headquarters. When Archbishop Ramsey visited Belgium in 1973, De Smedt gave a speech on the relationship between Christian unity and the unity of

¹¹⁹ Collins, 'Gustave Weigel S.J.', pp 112-16

¹²⁰ Bianchi, 'John XXIII, Vatican II, and American Catholicism', p. 39.

¹²¹ See Catherine E. Clifford, 'Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Canada: Receiving Unitatis Redintegratio', in Attridge, Clifford & Routhier (eds), *Vatican II: Canadian Experiences*, p. 558.

the people of Europe. This, in turn gave rise to two outcomes: the founding of an organisation known as Christians for Europe and the creation of a formal twinning of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brugges and the Anglican Diocese of Lincoln in 1979. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham (whose area covers Lincoln) joined the initiative in 1981. In 1983 both Brugges and Lincoln cathedrals had appointed ecumenical canons to their respective chapters. The Belgian Catholic historian Kurt Priem views such ‘little steps’ as these as being crucial.

These ‘little steps’ included regular meetings from representatives of both dioceses; visits by junior clergy as part of their post-ordination training; choir concerts, twinning of parishes, exchanges of professors from the Seminary in Brugges and Lincoln Theological College and delegations at religious ceremonies...¹²²

While it must be admitted that Belgium did not have the same degree of political and religious turmoil which Ireland had experienced historically, the more practical reception of the council in terms of ecumenical dialogue was more in keeping with the criterion of communal openness to reception generally, as set out by commentators such as Órsy and to which we have referred in Chapter One.

Nonetheless, if we look to the longer term, which is outside of the period under review here, we can see that as the 1980s led into the 1990s a new level of ecumenism began to grow in Ireland, and in Northern Ireland in particular – community ecumenism. By the end of the century, inter-church contact existed at three levels: the national level between the leaders, at local level between local clergy and churchgoers, and through the work of professional people and community groups in advancement of peace and reconciliation. However, those engaged at community level had completely different methodologies and results. Maria Power comments that when assessing ecumenical relations prior to 1980, the relationship between politics and ‘non-theological factors’ had an adverse impact on inter-church relations. However, since 1980 the political community

had a constructive influence upon the practice of inter-church relations combining with other factors to change its very definition. In doing so, they have provided a model of cooperation that adheres closely to the principle of Christian reconciliation upon which the aims of this work was founded.¹²³

Power’s assessment offers a clear example of how the church (in its widest sense) can move forward through a collegial approach and without fear, in furthering its mission, confirming

¹²² Kurt Priem, ‘Emiel De Smedt at Vatican II and the Ecumenical Vocation of the Brugges Diocese’, in Woodruff (ed.), *Unity of Christians*, p. 94.

¹²³ Maria Power, *From Ecumenism to Community Relations: Inter-Church Relationships in Northern Ireland 1980-2005* (Dublin, 2007), p. 198.

that this is what Vatican II sought, bringing the message of the gospel into the modern world, to reconcile it. It shows too that subsidiarity, i.e. dialogue and decision-making at local level, is the optimum approach. This allows the more sensitive theological questions to be handled in other ways by those whose competence it is.

Conclusion

Ecumenism is a key element of Vatican II. Given the historical, political and cultural significance of religious differences in Ireland, together with the reluctance of the Roman Catholic Church to engage in the ecumenical movement, the path to receiving the ecumenical dimension of the council in Ireland had obstacles to overcome. As Mary Daly puts it, ‘the Irish response was neither prompt nor overly enthusiastic’.¹²⁴ This was reflected in the paucity of the progress in relation to inter-church dialogue when it did commence after 1969. Ireland was a society divided geographically and politically, with religious difference being embedded in the narrative of such divisions.

When the Irish bishops met at Mulranny in County Mayo in 1974, they discussed the developments in the area of ecumenism over the preceding decade and concluded that ‘the Catholic Church must be seen to be taking the initiative and giving leadership in ecumenical activity’.¹²⁵ This differed from their more cautious approach at their meeting in Rome ten years earlier. But the reception of Vatican II in this crucial area was still a hierarchical one. The Irish Catholic bishops were careful in how the changes were implemented, even compared with their counterparts in other countries. They faithfully relied on Roman direction, even when it was clear that bishops in other countries had moved ahead of them, with no visible ill-effects to the faith. However, when the changes in terms of prayer in common did come, they were received without disruption, outside of some parts of Northern Ireland, and such activity became part of the life of local Christian communities over time. Church representation at significant events in other churches became normative. By the time of the funeral of President Erskine Childers in 1974, no longer were government ministers outside but they were joined in St Patrick’s Cathedral by Catholic bishops too.

The ecumenical dimension of Vatican II was largely dominated in Ireland by the question of mixed marriage and the lingering effects of the *Ne Temere* decree. While the

¹²⁴ Daly, *Sixties Ireland*, p. 204.

¹²⁵ Mulranny Document, 6.1.

renewed regulations of mixed marriages did diminish some of the sharper elements of the pre-Vatican II era, the failure of the Irish Catholic bishops, in particular, to realise the potential of the journey towards Christian unity was a missed opportunity. This was made more acute by the rising levels of secularism throughout the following decades. The quest to ‘hold on’ to the image and practice of Ireland being an especially Catholic place, ‘perhaps the last Catholic country’ as alluded by Pope Paul VI in 1977, impeded the vision, if not the journey.

Inter-Church dialogue was slow due to the burden of history that each side had and place occupied by religion in the society of both states on the island. However, the Protestant churches were, generally, more likely to take the initiative in this area, such as when the Irish Council of Churches initiated what became the first meeting of the four main church leaders in 1969 and even the Ballymascanlon Inter-Church meetings. While, in the period under consideration, these meetings did produce numerous documents on key areas of study, it would be in the longer term that the outcomes would take hold and often empowered by people and forces beyond church leaders. Nonetheless, the effects of the political troubles in Northern Ireland did mean that intra-Protestant concerns, particularly concerning the ecumenical activities of the World Council of Churches, meant that it was, generally, the Church of Ireland which would become a more fruitful partner with the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical dialogue. This is not surprising, given the less-substantive theological differences between both churches. The Church of Ireland also made a substantial contribution to the deliberations of ARCIC, most especially up to its Final Report in 1981.

The effects of the new ecclesial understandings were visible in terms of participation and greater friendships between the churches and among church leaders. These visible forms of the reception of Vatican II would stand side-by-side with the liturgical changes which flowed from the council, and which will be subject of our next chapter.

Chapter Six

Liturgy and the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland: the Reception of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*

The Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, was the first document promulgated by Vatican II, on 4 December 1963. Pope Paul VI declared that its primary place in the council gave expression to ‘the recognition of a right order of values and duties: God in the first place, prayer our first duty, the liturgy the first school of spirituality.’¹ The Constitution on the Liturgy was ‘with little doubt the most decisive for most Catholics’ in the daily life of the church.² It was a document that led to the first visible and audible signs of change following the council. In many respects, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* remains the iconic document of Vatican II with its call for renewal through *ressourcement*.

If Vatican II was a ‘seminal council’, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was surely a seminal document, the impact which reached every corner of the church’s life. It is also noteworthy, as Massimo Faggioli argues, that Vatican II was the first council in church history to ‘approve a doctrinal document on liturgy’. As such, he contends, that it gives further credence to the conclusion of historians that ‘something happened’ at the council.³ Over the years since its adoption, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has given concrete expression to a mandate for liturgical renewal in the Roman Catholic Church, a renewal which had a long gestation period in the liturgical movement.

This chapter, first examines the background to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, notably the liturgical movement that inspired it in the decades prior to the council. Secondly, it studies how this document gave expression to a renewed understanding of liturgy, with particular reference to *ressourcement*. Thirdly, it considers the application of the document in Ireland by outlining the principal elements of the liturgical changes and examines their reception with particular attention to the introduction of the vernacular in the liturgy, new liturgical practices and ministries, together with developments in church art and architecture. Finally, the chapter considers the extent to which worshipping Catholic communities in Ireland adapted to the liturgical reform

¹ Cited in Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London, 1994), p. 366.

² Adrian Hastings, ‘The Key Texts’, in Hastings (ed.), *Vatican II*, p. 63.

³ Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, 2012), p. 2; see, O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, p. 295.

Liturgy and the Liturgical Movement

Liturgy concerns public worship. According to Mary Collins, it ‘designates the official public worship of the church.’⁴ By official, Collins means that it is authorised by and celebrated in communion with the local bishop, according to norms approved by the Holy See. By public, she means that it is celebrated as an activity by a visible assembly of believers. Worship is defined as prayer and giving thanks and glory to God by members of a believing community. The word liturgy is derived from two Greek words – *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work). Christian usage of the term narrowed its meaning down to the public worship of the church. The liturgy is identifiable by the rites celebrated and by the liturgical books. These ‘embody a vision of christian salvation that is centred in the eucharistic mystery.’⁵ In other words, rituals, such as a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word or the Prayer of the Church, or devotions such as the rosary or benediction ‘are either an anticipation or an extension of the eucharistic assembly.’⁶ In the Roman Catholic Church, the eucharist is the memorial of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, through whom, according to Catholic belief, salvation is found. From the earliest times, therefore, the church has celebrated this memorial as a mystery, known as the paschal mystery, because it was brought to completion at the celebration of the Passover, the first Easter. This emphasis was to feature strongly in the post-Vatican II reforms.

The Benedictine liturgist Alcuin Reid describes the long development of the liturgy appositely as follows:

The Roman Rite, the ritual of the local Church at Rome and of most Western Churches in communion with her, may broadly be said to have undergone a gradual development throughout the first Christian millennium, being enriched by the introduction of some customs and suffering the loss of others over time.⁷

In Ireland, the gradual development to which Reid refers began during the late fourth and early fifth century. This was largely due to the arrival of missionaries from Gaul. The earliest ecclesiastical centres were monastic, being centred around seats of power such as Tara, Eamhain Maca and Down. These were monastic, community-based church settlements, unlike monasteries on the continent. Hence the Irish word *muintir* is derived from the Latin

⁴ Mary Collins, ‘Liturgy’, *NTD*, p. 591.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 592.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 592.

⁷ Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council* (2nd ed., San Francisco, 2005), p. 19.

monasterium.⁸ Consequently, the liturgies celebrated during this period reflected the communal dimension of the church, something that the *ressourcement* of Vatican II sought to recover. It is also reasonable to assume that the earliest liturgies celebrated in Ireland had their origins on the continent and were developed accordingly, thus maintaining unity of worship.⁹ In the fifth century, the liturgy was simple in format, with fixed and variable parts.¹⁰ From the middle ages, however, the celebration of the liturgy became largely the preserve of the clergy. The laity attended Mass in a silent, devout and passive manner. The form of the eucharist celebrated in the period prior to Vatican II was the Roman Rite established in the *Missale Romanum* of Pope Pius V in 1570. It was celebrated in Latin, the vernacular language of the local Roman church at the end of the fourth century. Given that the prayers of the Mass were inaccessible to people in their own language, it is unsurprising that a wide range of private devotional practices grew up and ‘these had begun to obscure the primary role of the corporate and public worship of the church.’¹¹ There was an inadequate sense of common worship by an assembly of God’s people.

The developments to which Vatican II gave expression may be attributed largely to the liturgical movement that flourished during the nineteenth century and, especially, in the early decades of the twentieth century. Similar to the genesis of the ecumenical movement, countries such as France and Belgium, together with Germany, provided the geographic base for the reform. In 1833, a Benedictine monk, Dom Prosper Guéranger (1805-75) dedicated the new Abbey of Solesmes to the study of the church’s liturgical traditions, especially Gregorian chant. He is considered to be the pioneer of the movement. However, following the publication of a *Motu Proprio* by Pope Pius X in 1903, the liturgical movement began to re-assert itself. Entitled *Tra le sollecitudini*, Pius’s document, though ostensibly concerned with church music, provided the movement with one of its best-known terms, ‘active participation’, thereby promoting the liturgy as a central source of Christian life and encouraging the role of the laity in liturgical celebrations.¹² As the renowned French liturgical expert Pierre-Marie Gy pointed out, this call was ‘granted conciliar approval at Vatican II and brought to its full requirements by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, [and] demands some time for its full

⁸ John J. Ó Riordáin, *Irish Catholic Spirituality: Celtic & Roman* (Dublin, 1998), p. 33; see also John Ryan, (ed.), *Irish Monks in the Golden Age* (Dublin, 1963).

⁹ See Edmond Gerard Cullinan, *The Story of the Liturgy in Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp 15-18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹ Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys to the Council*, pp 23-4.

¹² Pope Pius X, *Motu Proprio, Tra le sollecitudini*, dated 22 November 1903 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19031122_sollecitudini.html> (accessed 1 July 2017).

implementation.’¹³ Two years later, another document from Pius X entitled *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*, introduced further innovation and encouraged more frequent reception of holy communion by lay people.¹⁴ The 1909 Catholic Conference at Malines provided a forum for discussion on these documents and their pastoral implications. The Malines Conference also facilitated the emergence of an influential leader of the liturgical movement, Lambert Beauduin. In Chapter Five of this thesis, we saw how Beauduin played a significant role in what became known as the Malines Conversations on Christian Unity. We noted also his role in the establishment of the abbey of Amay-sur-Meuse in Belgium, with its dual focus of the renewal of spirituality in worship and the advancement of Christian unity. Beauduin, who was influenced by both Guéranger and the Irish Benedictine, Dom Columba Marmion (1858-1923), proposed a practical pastoral programme based on the premise that the liturgy is for all the baptised, not just an elite. Beauduin’s vision, adopted by the Malines Catholic Conference, sought greater use of the vernacular missal ‘as a book of piety’ so that people could follow the Mass and pray along with it. Beauduin also placed greater emphasis on the communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, the ancient prayer of the church.¹⁵ His work, *Piété de l’Église* was published in 1914 while its English translation, *Liturgy the Life of the Church*, was published in 1926.¹⁶

Questions of reform took on greater urgency during the years following the First World War, especially in Belgium and in Germany, with the Abbey of Maria Laach in the Rhineland becoming a particular place for discernment on questions concerned with historical and theological insights into liturgical renewal. It was there that a series of publications entitled *Ecclesia Orans* was established from 1918.¹⁷ One of the early publications in this series was that by Romano Guardini, entitled *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.¹⁸ Guardini’s work had a significant influence on many of those who would help to shape *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and, equally, on those who defended the place of tradition in the liturgy, most notably Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI.¹⁹ Other contributors at this time came from the Augustinian monks

¹³ Pierre-Marie Gy, OP, *The Reception of Vatican II Liturgical Reforms in the Life of the Church* (Milwaukee, 2003), p. 23.

¹⁴ Pope Pius X, *Motu Proprio, Sacrosancta Tridentina Synodus*, dated 22 December 1905, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-x/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-x_motu-proprio_19050716_sacrosancta-tridentina-synodus.html> (accessed 2 July 2017).

¹⁵ Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 79.

¹⁶ Lambert Beauduin, *Liturgy in the Life of the Church* (Collegeville, 1926).

¹⁷ Daniel P. Grigassy, ‘The Liturgical Movement’, *NDT*, p. 588; see, Bryan D. Spinks, ‘Liturgy’, in Hugh McLeod (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ix, World Christianities c.1914-c. 2000 (Cambridge, 2006), p. 472).

¹⁸ Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. by Ada Lane (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998).

¹⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. by John Saward (San Francisco, 2000).

at Klosterneuberg in Austria. In France, the Dominican Order founded the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique in 1943. Among the Dominicans who were to play a pivotal role in the area of liturgical renewal was Pierre-Marie Gy. A historian and theologian who specialised in liturgy, he was director of the Institut Supérieur de Liturgie, a faculty attached to the Institut Catholique de Paris from 1956 until 1964. Gy was a *peritus* at Vatican II and was later appointed by Pope Paul VI to be a *relator* to the post-conciliar commission or *consilium* for the implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and he played a key role in shaping the new Roman Missal of 1969.²⁰ In England, the liturgical movement was pioneered by the monks at Ampleforth Abbey during the late 1920s. The movement also made its appearance in the United States of America in 1926, at the behest of another Benedictine, Dom Virgil Michel, based at St John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. He founded the Liturgical Press for the distribution of pamphlets and books. By 1940, the liturgical movement in the United States was sufficiently established to host seminars and conferences on liturgical matters, these being focussed on grassroots practical application, especially in the area of lay liturgical ministry, rather than academic discussion.

In the course of World War II, liturgical practices underwent considerable transformation on the continent of Europe. Due to displacement and disorganisation, it might have been expected that the liturgical movement would have been driven underground. In fact, as the American liturgist Daniel Grigassy, explains, the opposite is the case:

The crisis established a milieu which fanned the fires of the continental Liturgical Movement. A war-torn people needed to find some means of expressing their religious identity and of reinforcing a much needed sense of solidarity. That was achieved by a communal celebration of the eucharist usually in the form of a dialogue Latin mass. When the war was over, both the priest-chaplains and the former military personnel could not possibly return to what they had known before.²¹

Thus, the war, from which Ireland had been largely sheltered, had an effect in advancing the experience of and necessity for liturgical reform centred on active and conscious participation. Into this debate would come questions such as language, ministry and the meaning of the liturgical actions. The return to the sources of the faith was a theological factor which would help to bring new life to the liturgy, but another factor would soon emerge, albeit cautious, in the form of papal approbation.

²⁰ See Pierre-Marie Gy, *La liturgie dans l'histoire* (2 vols Paris, 1990).

²¹ Grigassy, 'The Liturgical Movement', p. 589.

In 1947 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical letter to all the bishops of the church, entitled *Mediator Dei*.²² It affirmed the organic developmental aspect of liturgy when he declared:

The sacred liturgy does, in fact, include divine as well as human elements. The former, instituted as they have been by God, cannot be changed in any way by men. But the human components admit of various modifications, as the needs of the age, circumstance and the good of souls may require, and as the ecclesiastical hierarchy, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, may have authorized.²³

The encyclical set in motion a series of liturgical changes which were given expression in the 1951 restoration of the Easter Vigil to its traditional place on the evening of Holy Saturday, to be followed in 1956 with the introduction of the Easter Triduum as a single three-day celebration of the paschal mystery, with greater lay participation at local parish level. The liturgical movement was further enhanced by an international liturgical congress held at Assisi in September 1956. This congress, which had Irish representation led by Bishop McNamee of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, marked both the progress of the movement and the renewed priority placed on liturgical reform. These years also witnessed the publication of a history of the Roman missal by the Austrian liturgist and Jesuit, Josef Jungmann (1889-1975).²⁴ Jungmann was one of the key figures in the post-conciliar period when the new liturgical books were produced.

From an Irish perspective, the first liturgical congress held in Ireland, at Glenstal Abbey in County Limerick in April 1954, was attended by seventy priests. The theme of the congress was the encyclical *Mediator Dei* and its relevance to Ireland. The contributors concentrated on liturgical developments and how they might affect urban and rural parishes. One speaker told the congress that if Ireland was not ‘liturgically minded, it is in turn great part due to the influence of the Penal Days.’²⁵ The introduction of new Holy Week liturgies gave rise to what the Irish bishops described as ‘an impressive demonstration of the faith and piety’ with regard to attendances.²⁶ Other liturgical initiatives in Ireland included the introduction in February 1961 of a trilingual ritual (in Latin, Irish and English) for the celebration of the sacraments and other liturgies (other than the Mass) in Ireland.

²² Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mediator Dei*, dated 20 November 1947, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html> (accessed 7 July 2017)

²³ Ibid., 50. This is echoed in SC, 21.

²⁴ See J.A. Jungmann, and C.K. Riepe, *Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)* (London, 1961); Joanne M. Pierce & Michael Downey (eds), *Source and Summit: Commemorating Josef A. Jungmann S.J.* Collegeville, 1999).

²⁵ *Limerick Leader*, 10 April 1954. The speaker was Fr Thomas Garde, the Irish Provincial of the Dominican Order. A summary of some of the themes and topics covered at Glenstal is set out in Appendix I.

²⁶ *Irish Press*, 16 Aug 1956, ‘Statement by National Synod’. This statement was contained in a message to the Irish people from the National Synod held at Maynooth in 1956, the last such national synod to be held in Ireland.

The work on the ritual was undertaken by Michael Harty, a professor at Maynooth and a future Bishop of Killaloe, under the authority of the hierarchy.²⁷ He was one of a small number of Irish priests and religious who was active in the area of liturgical renewal, including the publication of articles in pastoral and theological journals.²⁸ In 1967 he was appointed Bishop of Killaloe. Another priest who actively engaged in the liturgical movement in Ireland was Joseph Cunnane of Tuam.²⁹ Cunnane and Harty wrote accounts of the Glenstal congresses for the various journals. Joseph Duffy of Clogher was another keen participant in the Glenstal liturgical conferences. Both Cunnane and Duffy were appointed bishops of their respective dioceses in the 1960s and 1970s and were pivotal to the advancement of the reforms. Harty chaired the liturgy commission at national level from the late 1960s and Duffy was to do so later. In their own dioceses, they led by example in terms of high quality liturgical renewal, including in the areas of art and architecture. Another priest of note in this respect was Austin Flannery (1925-2008). He was to the fore in promoting the theology and pastoral dimensions of Vatican II in Ireland. He was editor of *Doctrine and Life* for thirty years from 1958. He also edited several editions of Vatican II (and subsequent) documents, with commentaries. In compiling these he engaged specialists from across different fields. These publications were extremely popular, due largely to the manner in which they merged the theological, the prayerful and the practical. In the foreword to the seventh edition of the book on the liturgy in 1968, he spoke of the outworking of the council documents in terms of an ‘evolution’ of change that had exceeded the dreams of the liturgical movement pioneers.³⁰ Flannery was also a key organiser of an exhibition on church art and architecture in Dublin in 1956 and he was a member of the first advisory committee of the Episcopal Conference on Sacred Art and Architecture.³¹ He was also a strong campaigner in the area of social justice, particularly anti-apartheid.

The liturgical movement was largely made up of scholars and priests, but its endeavours would shape the debates on liturgy at Vatican II and what would emerge as the constitution,

²⁷ *Irish Independent*, 4 Feb 1961. During a lecture in Dublin on the subject of the new ritual, Canon Cathal McCarthy explained that it was ‘a most generous concession’ to Ireland by the Holy See as part of its efforts to encourage greater use of the vernacular. While inviting Irish Catholics to ‘rejoice’ in this concession, McCarthy warned against ‘the fallacy of identifying the understanding of a text with a devout reception of a sacrament.’

²⁸ See, Michael Harty, ‘The Use of the Vernacular in Baptism’, *The Furrow*, 7, no. 10, (October 1956), pp 596-604; ‘Pastoral Liturgy in the Priestly Life’, *The Furrow*, 15, no. 3 (March 1964), pp 135-42.

²⁹ See, Joseph Cunnane, ‘The Funeral Service: Death and Removal of the Remains’, *The Furrow*, 8, no. 10 (October 1957), pp 631-43; ‘The Doctrinal Content of Marian Piety’, *The Furrow*, 10, no. 2 (February 1959), pp 89-103; ‘Instructions on the Liturgy’, *The Furrow*, 16, no. 2 (February 1965), pp 77-83.

³⁰ Austin Flannery, ‘Foreword’ in Austin Flannery (ed.), *Liturgy: renewal and adaptation*, (Dublin, 1968), pp 7-8.

³¹ See Richard Hurley, *Irish Church Architecture in the Era of Vatican II* (Dublin, 2001), pp 28, 37.

Sacrosanctum Concilium. Étienne Fouilloux contends that the liturgical movement ‘aimed at transcending what it called the rubricism of the preceding century with its fussiness and rigidity and its demands for uniformity.’³² Reid, however, rejects Fouilloux’s contention, adding that ‘it says more about the revisionism pervading postconciliar liturgical thinking than it does about the Liturgical Movement, the origins of which do not lie in a reaction to rubicism.’³³ Reid counters with an assertion that the primary objective of the liturgical movement upon its foundation was ‘to return liturgical piety to its rightful place in the life of the Church.’³⁴ Only later, he states, would questions of greater reform come to the fore. By the time of Vatican II, the purpose of the movement was described as ‘freeing the liturgy from Baroque practices by restoring the purity of the traditional liturgy in order to bring it back to its ancient spiritual value, and thus overcoming the ritualism that had grown’ since the time of the Council of Trent.³⁵ Thus, we see the role of *ressourcement* in a movement and in a document which has liturgical and ecclesiological implications. We now turn to a consideration of the salient elements of the Constitution on the Liturgy.

Sacrosanctum Concilium: Towards a Renewed Understanding of the Liturgy

The first words of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* were also the first words addressed formally by the council to the whole church. In that respect, they are important as they set out the programme of the council.

It is the intention of this holy council to improve the standard of daily christian living among Catholics; to adapt those structures which are subject to change so as better to meet the needs of our time; to encourage whatever can contribute to the union of all who believe in Christ; and to strengthen whatever serves to call all people into the embrace of the church. It therefore, and with quite special reason, sees the taking of steps towards the renewal and growth of the liturgy as something it can and should do.³⁶

The renewal of the liturgy was seen, therefore, not merely as a response to the liturgical movement alone, but as part of the total remit of the council, as part of both *ressourcement* (in liturgical terms) and *aggiornamento* (in terms of updating to speak to the modern world). The central importance of liturgy in the life and mission of the church is summed up in paragraph 10 of the document which states: ‘The liturgy is... the high point towards which the activity of

³² Fouilloux, ‘The Antepreparatory Phase’, pp 86-7.

³³ Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 73.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Melloni, *Vatican II: The Complete History*, p. 134.

³⁶ SC, 1.

the church is directed, and, simultaneously, the source from which all its power flows out.’³⁷ This put worship and liturgy, and especially the eucharist, at the forefront of the church’s life.

From its inception, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* emphasises the central place in the Christian life of the paschal mystery – the dying and rising of Christ. This very act, it states gave birth to the church.³⁸ The Second Vatican Council agreed with the Council of Trent that the Mass is a sacrifice united with that of Jesus on the cross. However, it went further, by explicitly including in it the resurrection as part of the paschal mystery which is celebrated in the eucharist. This, as O’Malley notes, ‘gave new emphasis to the Mass as a replication of the sacred banquet that was the last supper.’³⁹ In fact, the document stated that the celebration of all the sacraments draw their power from the paschal mystery.⁴⁰ Baptism, therefore, means that each Christian is ‘implanted’ into the paschal mystery. Indeed, the council highlighted the foundational importance of baptism, adding that it ‘validated a less restrictive understanding of membership in the Catholic Church, for the church to some degree includes all the baptised.’⁴¹ The link between baptism, eucharist and the paschal mystery was emphasised in the central prominence of the Sunday liturgical celebration of eucharist.⁴²

The constitution called for all believers ‘to be led to take a full, conscious and active part in liturgical celebrations.’⁴³ This, it said ‘was demanded by the nature of the liturgy itself’ and by virtue of baptism. This was to be the guiding principle of any reform. Nonetheless, it articulates a caveat as follows:

There is no clear prospect of this coming about unless those who are responsible for pastoral care first get thoroughly immersed in the spirit and power of the liturgy themselves, and become competent in it. Therefore, it is especially necessary that priority be given to decisions on the liturgical formation of the clergy.⁴⁴

The council decreed that liturgy be a ‘core’ subject in seminaries and in religious houses of study, to be taught both theologically and historically. Seminarians were to receive spiritual formation that was orientated towards the liturgy.⁴⁵ Regarding the wider church, the council

³⁷ Ibid., 10.

³⁸ See SC 5.

³⁹ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?*, p. 295.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 61.

⁴¹ See O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?*, p. 295.

⁴² SC, 102, 110, 111.

⁴³ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 17.

made provision for the making of new norms governing liturgy in general. The following principles were to inform such a revision of the liturgy:

- (a) All revisions were to undergo ‘thorough investigation’ so that ‘healthy tradition’ could be preserved while allowing room for ‘legitimate development’;⁴⁶
- (b) Liturgical events were not to be ‘private actions but celebrations of the church’ and community celebrations were preferred to more private ones;⁴⁷
- (c) The place of scripture was to be enhanced;⁴⁸
- (d) Celebrations should include a mixture of acclamations for the people, responses, psalmody, antiphons and hymns, together with ‘actions, movements and bodily self-expression’; it also recommended appropriate periods of silence;⁴⁹
- (e) Above all, the rites ‘should radiate rich simplicity; they should be brief and lucid, avoiding pointless repetitions; they should be intelligible to the people; and should not in general require much explanation.’⁵⁰

With regard to the use of the vernacular, the council encouraged its practical benefits, even though Latin was to be ‘maintained’.⁵¹ It described the use of the vernacular as ‘a practice which is really helpful among the people.’⁵² It therefore left the matter to ‘the competent local church authority, if necessary also in consultation with bishops from neighbouring areas which have the same language, to lay down regulations as to whether and how the local language should be used.’⁵³ These decisions were to be then confirmed by the Holy See, having been given prior approval by the local episcopal conference. To this end, it was judged desirable for each episcopal conference to have a liturgical commission, assisted by experts in the field of liturgy, music, art and pastoral practice.⁵⁴ This was to be replicated at diocesan or inter-diocesan levels.⁵⁵

The council fathers, gave recognition to the place of the liturgical movement in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26, 27.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 24.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁵¹ Ibid., 36.

⁵² Ibid., 36 §2; see also SC, 54.

⁵³ Ibid., 36 §3.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 45.

The current enthusiasm for the encouragement and renewal of the liturgy is rightly seen as a sign of God's providential designs with regard to our time and as a movement of the holy Spirit within his church. This enthusiasm has left its own mark on the church's life, and indeed on the whole concept of religious awareness and action as it is found in our time.⁵⁶

Without naming the liturgical movement *per se*, the council fathers gave recognition to the momentum of the preceding decades. They acknowledged the role of *ressourcement* with the call for thorough investigation of 'healthy tradition' and of *aggiornamento* with the references to 'legitimate development'. According to O'Collins, these are not polar opposites. He contends that 'recovering neglected teaching and practice both from the Scriptures and the great tradition serves the Church's adaptation in the present and progress into the future.'⁵⁷ O'Collins supports this by pointing to the re-introduction of the second eucharistic prayer, retrieved from the apostolic tradition of St Hippolytus, and the restoration of the rite of Christian initiation of adults as well as the re-introduction of the prayer of the faithful. This retrieval, he argues, 'constitutes a major resource for renewal' while *aggiornamento* involves discerning what should be changed and what should be introduced.⁵⁸

Retrieval and discernment also involve collegiality. Another important feature of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was the delegation of many of the key aspects of reform to the local churches. Thus, on the one hand, it fell to the Irish bishops as a body to undertake the major task of liturgical reform in Ireland and, on the other, to the church in Ireland as a whole to begin the lengthy process of reception.

The Application of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in Ireland

A commission for the implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was established by Pope Paul VI in January 1964.⁵⁹ The following September, the commission published an instruction which set in motion a series of reforms over the following ten years.⁶⁰ The instruction was a product of the commission and of the Congregation for Divine Worship, thereby including it within the ambit of Roman norms, which local dioceses were used to receiving. Giuseppe

⁵⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁷ O'Collins, *Second Vatican Council*, p. 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp 85-6.

⁵⁹ Paul VI, *Motu Proprio, Sacram Liturgiam*, dated 25 January 1964, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19640125_sacram-liturgiam.html> (accessed 18 January 2018). Cardinal Conway was appointed a member of this commission or *consilium* following his elevation to the College of Cardinals in 1965.

⁶⁰ The Instruction, entitled *Inter-Oecumenici*, was to become the yardstick for the implementation of the liturgical reforms as it gave greater direction to local bishops in terms of the practical. See Austin Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Dublin, 1975), pp 45-56.

Alberigo points to this being a ‘knotty situation in Rome’ while, in reality, the location of renewal was not there but on the periphery ‘in the people of God assembled in local communities.’⁶¹

The work of translating the reality of the council’s vision from the *aula* of St Peter’s basilica to the local churches in Ireland began with the establishment of a liturgy commission of the Irish Hierarchy and the institution of formal decision-making processes on the degree to which the vernacular would be used.⁶² The translation work was undertaken by a new international body - the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL). This was set up in the weeks prior to the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in 1963 by the bishops of fifteen countries where English was spoken. Ireland’s first representative on this body was Joseph Walsh, the Archbishop of Tuam and chairman of the liturgy commission. He was replaced in this role in 1969 by Bishop Michael Harty of Killaloe. ICEL translated the Latin editions of the liturgy books and liaised with local conferences of bishops, some of whom were collaborating to work out common interim translations. Once translations were approved by the hierarchy, they were sent to Rome for formal confirmation before being introduced into the liturgy.

In the case of Ireland, as we will see, there was considerable interaction between Irish bishops and their counterparts in Great Britain in the early stages. The level of enthusiasm of the Irish bishops, individually and collectively for this process would be an early indicator of the level of enthusiasm and preparedness for liturgical change in Ireland.

The significant changes to the liturgy

In June and October 1964, the Irish bishops decided formally on which Mass prayers and responses would be in the vernacular and these were submitted to Rome for approval. On 8 November, they announced in Rome their decision to introduce the vernacular into certain parts of the Mass. It was noted that the changes would be introduced in stages. In addition to the

⁶¹ Giuseppe Alberigo, ‘The Conclusion of the Council and the Initial Reception’, in Alberigo & Komonchak (eds), *History of Vatican II*, v, pp 560-1.

⁶² Moira Bergin states that the Irish bishops established a commission in December 1963. This commission was assisted by five panels covering areas such as music, sacred art and architecture, pastoral liturgy, catechetics and translations. See Moira Bergin, ‘The Work of Liturgical Renewal in Ireland – and Patrick Jones’, in Thomas R. Whelan & Liam M. Treacy (eds), *Serving Liturgical Renewal: Pastoral and Theological Questions, Essays in honour of Patrick Jones* (Dublin, 2015), p. 374. A minute of an extraordinary general meeting of the Irish Hierarchy held in Rome on 27 October 1964, indicates that ‘an Episcopal Commission for the Sacred Liturgy was constituted in accordance with paragraph no. 44 of the instruction of September 1964.’ This act appears to have been just a legal formality. See, ‘Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting, 27 October 1964’ (GDA. Browne papers, B/12/B/109).

Epistle and Gospel, the prayers at the foot of the altar, the *Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Orate Fratres, Sanctus, Pater Noster, Agnus Dei*, and *Ecce Agnus Dei* would be recited in the vernacular. These initial changes came into effect in March 1965. The following June, the bishops applied to Rome for authorisation to enable greater use of the vernacular in the Mass.⁶³ By the first Sunday of Advent 1966, new interim texts for many of the prayers and responses were introduced following agreement by the bishops' conferences of Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. In May 1967, the vernacular was extended to the canon of the Mass (the eucharistic prayer), something which the Irish bishops had resisted at the council. The work of revising the texts and format of the Mass continued in Rome until 1969 when a new Roman missal was approved by Pope Paul VI. This was promulgated for the entire church in March 1970 and following translation by ICEL, the English language version of the Roman Missal came into effect in Ireland on 16 March 1975. The Irish bishops unanimously approved the ICEL translation of the *Ordo Missae* by secret ballot at a meeting on 7 and 8 October 1969. This *Ordo* was incorporated into the new *Roman Missal* which was approved for use from 1975. At the same meeting, a recommendation was agreed for uniform practice in Ireland with regard to the posture of the laity at Mass.⁶⁴

Most notable among other changes were the posture and position of the priest during the Mass. Previously, the priest had celebrated the Mass with his back to the congregation, whereby the people offered the sacrifice of the Mass through him. Following the council, the renewed emphasis on the eucharistic assembly of priest and people led to the priest facing the congregation, as a presider and celebrant. This would be given greater effect through changes to the architectural layout of churches. The renewed emphasis on scripture in the liturgy was also a feature of the liturgical changes.⁶⁵ For example, a homily, based on the scripture reading, was to be given at Masses on Sundays and holy days of obligation. This represented another shift for Irish people. While practices varied according to local custom, it had been the practice for sermons to be given only at one Mass in a parish each Sunday and these were usually based on a catechetical programme which was approved by the local bishop. Another change, the introduction of the prayers of the faithful, coincided with the week of prayer for Christian unity

⁶³ *ICD 1966*, pp 739-40.

⁶⁴ See 'Minutes of General Meeting of the Irish Bishops, 7/8 October 1969' (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/96).

⁶⁵ Gy noted that, despite some reservations, the *Consilium* for the implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* adopted 'the most ancient tradition' of both Constantinople and Rome that the liturgy of the Sunday Mass had three readings, from the Old Testament, the letters of St Paul and the Gospels. See, Gy, *The Reception of Vatican II Liturgical Reforms*, p. 10; Cullinan states that the Mass celebrated in Ireland during the late fourth and early fifth centuries had three readings, similar to those quoted by Gy. See Cullinan, *The Story of the Liturgy in Ireland*, pp 18-19.

in January 1966. A month later, these prayers began to form a part of the Mass. Initially, texts of the prayers of intercession, in both Irish and English, were written and distributed to parishes nationally. In a statement, the Irish bishops said that the new prayers would ‘[take] the congregation more fully into the Mass by providing an authentic expression of their personal needs and the needs of the whole Church within the sacrifice of the Mass.’⁶⁶ Other changes which flowed from the council in the area of liturgy included the reform of the rituals for the celebration of all sacraments and the re-introduction of concelebration.⁶⁷

An important area of renewal was in the domain of music during the years following Vatican II. The search for appropriate music to accompany the new liturgy in Irish churches weakened the Gregorian chant tradition while it also introduced a variety of music styles that were congregation-centred.⁶⁸ A number of new hymnals were produced and these were complemented during the 1970s with Mass settings from Irish composers such as Seán Ó Riada, Seoirse Bodley, Fintan O’Carroll, Thomas C. Kelly and Gerald Victory.⁶⁹ More efforts were also made to encourage greater participation by congregations in singing at Mass and other liturgical events, especially at parish missions or at places of pilgrimage such as Knock in County Mayo and St Patrick’s Purgatory at Lough Derg in County Donegal.⁷⁰ In the course of time, there were significant advances in this area as choirs and parishes generally enhanced their repertoires with new compositions and even new genres which enabled the introduction

⁶⁶ *ICD 1967*, pp 724-25.

⁶⁷ A revised Rite of Marriage came into effect in Ireland in July 1969 while a new Rite of Baptism came into force in January 1971. The vernacular was in use in Confirmation from late 1966 and a new rite of that sacrament came into use in Ireland in 1976. The new Rite of Ordinations came into effect in 1976 and the revised Rites of Penance finally came into effect in Ireland on Ash Wednesday 1977. In addition to all of these a revised Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970 and a common translation was agreed for Ireland, England and Wales and Australia, coming into effect in 1974. The first concelebrated Mass in the post-Vatican II era was in St Patrick’s Cathedral, Armagh on Holy Thursday 1965.

⁶⁸ See, Kieran Daly, ‘Catholic Church/Liturgical Music’ in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland* (Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 2013), p. 175.

⁶⁹ See *New Liturgy Hymn Book* (Maynooth, 1966); Gerry Threadgold (ed.), *Veritas Hymnal: The People’s Edition* (Dublin, 1974); John O’Keeffe, ‘Singing the Mass’, in Whelan & Tracey (eds), *Serving Liturgical Renewal*, p. 71).

⁷⁰ See Laurence J. Flynn, ‘Singing Pubs and Silent Churches’: Revisited’, *The Furrow*, 44, no’s. 7/8 (July/Aug 1993), pp 408-15. Flynn notes that the improvements on Lough Derg in the years after 1978 must have been ‘a reflection of something that was happening rather imperceptibly throughout the country, both at the level of repertoire and in terms of a growing sense of what is good liturgical practice.’ (p. 411). A survey of the Lough Derg archives shows that the reception of the liturgical changes there mirrored much of what was happening elsewhere. The Dialogue Mass, at noon on Day 2 of the pilgrimage, was introduced in 1961. In 1970, an evening Mass was introduced, at the insistence of Bishop Patrick Mulligan. From 1970 too, the celebration of Stations of the Cross included greater emphasis on scripture. The ‘Instruction’ following early morning Mass was discarded in 1977. In 1980, Bishop Joseph Duffy had the renewal of baptismal promises introduced as part of the exercises, reflecting the centrality of pilgrimage and conversion alongside the foundational emphasis placed on baptism and reconciliation by Vatican II, thus linking ‘the two sacraments together as sources of renewal in the Christian life.’ See Joseph McGuinness, *St Patrick’s Purgatory Lough Derg* (Dublin, 2000), pp 84-5; see SC, 109,110; LG, 48.

of more musical instruments. Much of this was initiated and augmented by the Irish Church Music Association, founded in 1969.⁷¹

In May 1967, the Holy See issued a further instruction regarding the liturgical reforms entitled *Eucharisticum Mysterium*. It concentrated on the eucharistic mystery of the Mass and various theological and liturgical principles with which priests and lay people should be acquainted.⁷² Among these principles were the connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the nature of active participation in the Mass and the different modes of Christ's presence in the eucharist. It recalled the teaching of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* that Christ is present in the liturgical celebrations. It reiterated the conciliar teaching that Christ is also present in the faithful who gather for a liturgy and in the proclamation of the scripture. Further, Christ is also present in the person of the priest and, above all, in the species of the eucharist.⁷³ This was new territory for Irish Catholics used to devotional practices which emphasised the presence of Christ exclusively in the blessed sacrament.

Several of the changes to the liturgy served to highlight the unity of those gathered at Mass, the assembly. One example was the recitation of the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father) by all of the congregation. Previously it was recited by the priest alone. Gy has stated that this practice was predicated on an understanding, which originated in Roman law, that only a 'public person' has the power to act in the name of the people.⁷⁴ This, taken together with the priests' role as president of the assembly, finds its expression in the words 'we your servants and your holy people'.⁷⁵ Hence, more recent editions of the *Roman Missal* and the rituals speak of the 'priest-celebrant' to distinguish his role and place it in context of the whole assembly.

The period following Vatican II witnessed significant but controlled change in the celebration of liturgy in every parish in Ireland. In terms of liturgy, Louise Fuller describes the ten-year period after the close of the council as being 'an uneasy period of transition for both priests and people.'⁷⁶ The question inevitably arises as to the approach and attitudes of Irish Catholics towards the reception of the liturgical changes, particularly in terms of their implementation during the period up to 1977.

⁷¹ See Gerard T. Gillen, 'Looking Back, Looking Forward', *New Liturgy*, no. 98 (1998) (Maynooth, 1998), p. 5.

⁷² *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, Instruction of the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, dated 25 May 1967. See Flannery (ed.), *Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, pp 100-36.

⁷³ *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, ch. 2; see, SC, 7.

⁷⁴ Pierre-Marie Gy, *The Reception of Vatican II Liturgical Reforms*, pp 21-2.

⁷⁵ *Roman Missal*, Eucharistic Prayer I.

⁷⁶ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 111.

The Implementation of the Liturgical Changes

On Sunday 7 March 1965, for the first time, Catholics throughout Ireland celebrated Mass with the responses in the vernacular. Telefís Éireann hosted a live broadcast of Mass in Irish, celebrated by Cardinal Conway at the Franciscan College in Gormanstown in County Meath, which was attended by President Éamon De Valera.⁷⁷ In Dublin, the new liturgy received an enthusiastic response, with one priest saying that people had been ‘thrilled’ to take a vocal part in the Mass. Masses were celebrated at the Pro-Cathedral from 6.30am and additional priests were required for the distribution of Holy Communion. At St Andrew’s Church, Westland Row, additional priests led the people from the pulpit in answering their responses.⁷⁸

We have seen that the reception of Vatican II in Ireland was, to a very large degree, a hierarchical one. With this in mind, we may ask, how did the reception of the liturgical changes in Ireland give expression to the declaration of Vatican II that liturgy was ‘the high point towards which the activity of the church is directed and, simultaneously, the source from which its power flows out’?⁷⁹

When in June 1964, the Irish bishops agreed, by a secret vote, on the level of usage of the vernacular, the handwritten notes of Bishop Browne of Galway indicate that there was virtual unanimity on almost all decisions regarding the use of the vernacular. His notes indicate that the highest level of opposition to the vernacular usage was in relation to the *Agnus Dei* during the communion rite. According to Browne’s notes, they also voted by 17 to 4 that the translation of *Et cum Spiritu tuo* should be ‘And also with you’.⁸⁰ At a further meeting of the hierarchy held in the Irish College in Rome on 27 October 1964, it was agreed unanimously to seek approval for the use of the vernacular in nineteen further parts of the Mass, mostly spoken by the priest, but including the ‘*Corpus Domini*’ at the people’s communion.⁸¹

While the above shows an acceptance of the changes, comparative analysis with other countries shows that the Irish bishops were much slower and less enthusiastic in implementing

⁷⁷ *Irish Press*, 8 Mar. 1965.

⁷⁸ *Irish Press*, 8 Mar 1965. Archbishop McQuaid in his instructions dated 19 January 1965 concerning the introduction of the vernacular directed that only Sunday Masses were affected. Latin was to be the only language used at all weekday Masses and those celebrated at side altars on any day. (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/522).

⁷⁹ SC, 10.

⁸⁰ ‘Miscellaneous Notes from Meetings of the Hierarchy – 24 June 1964’ (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/88). Gy attributed the term ‘and also with you’ to Josef Jungmann, whom, he claimed, mistakenly translated it from Latin ‘*et cum Spiritu tuo*’. See Gy, *The Reception of Vatican II Liturgical Reforms*, p. 26.

⁸¹ ‘Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting of the Irish Hierarchy, 27 October 1964’ (GDA, Browne papers, B/12/B/109).

the changes than some other English-speaking countries. This cautious approach was the hallmark of the Irish response, especially in the early stages. The briefing papers for the meeting of 27 October 1964 included a list of Mass parts approved for English-speaking countries with indications of those already decided on by the Irish bishops at their June meeting. Up to the offertory, there were fifteen items approved for the vernacular of which the Irish had decided on seven. From the offertory until the end of Mass, there were twelve items approved for vernacular of which Irish had decided on six.⁸² Another indication of the warmer reception of liturgical changes in other countries was the fact that the South African and Australian hierarchies had their petitions for even greater use of the vernacular submitted to the Holy See in March 1964, three months before the Irish hierarchy had even had its first vote on the question.⁸³ In fact, the Irish bishops had sight of the South African and Australian petitions before their June meeting when they voted on their limited initial petition.⁸⁴ The bishops of England and Wales has accepted the liturgical changes and made their petition in plenary session on 24 April 1964.⁸⁵

The slower approach of the Irish bishops may have reflected a generally cautious attitude toward change in the wider church in Ireland people like Conway realised that further changes were inevitable and, therefore, a gradual approach was required. Bishop Browne, at a diocesan conference in February 1964, asked priests to report to him concerning whether or not certain parts of the Mass should be addressed to the people in their local language, and if people really wanted any changes at all. A survey of some of the findings shows that while some people favoured changes such as the epistle and gospel being read in the vernacular, there was a reticence on the part of many others towards change. Of course, whether the priests were reporting in such a manner as to coincide with own views or perhaps expressing the outcomes in a way they thought the bishop would want to hear, is another matter.

Among the examples of a cautious approach to change are referenced in the archives of the Diocese of Galway. The parish priest of Castlegar, Joseph Mitchell, reported that he and

⁸² See GDA: Browne papers, B/12/B/87.

⁸³ Conway to all Irish bishops, 2 May 1964, enclosing details of the submissions by the South African and Australian hierarchies to the Holy See (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/v/153).

⁸⁴ The letter enclosing these petitions included a cover note, dated 2 May 1964, from Conway detailing the procedures to be followed and highlighting 'the principle of gradualism, in order to avoid too sudden a change from the present position of the almost exclusive use of Latin, to the new situation in which a greater use of the vernacular is envisaged'. Every decision in relation to the liturgy required a two-thirds majority. (See, GDA: Browne papers, B/7/B/iii/88.)

⁸⁵ 'Summary of plenary of Bishops of England and Wales, 24 April 1964' (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8 /VC16 /XLV/Box no 1).

his curate had interviewed one hundred and ten ‘heads of families’ in their homes and that sixty four of these wished for no change, while forty one wished that English would be introduced and five wanted the introduction of Irish.⁸⁶ The parish priest of Kilfenora, County Clare, James Horan, reflected a narrative that abounded on liturgical participation through simplicity, when he said that the majority of his parishioners wanted no change. He adds: ‘Few country people will venture an outright statement but more than one might imagine [text unclear] associate themselves very closely with the priest by the use of missals and simple prayer books’.⁸⁷ In the Galway city parish of *An Cladach*, Damian Byrne reported that people were, in general, ‘suspicious of change for the sake of change’ but that any change which would help them attend at Mass with a better disposition would be welcomed. He then went on to recount the response of someone who had participated in liturgies outside of Ireland that used the vernacular.

The most informative discussion I had was with a docker. He would like all the parts of the Mass at present sung by the choir to be said “in English” by the priest and people. He spent some time in England and was very impressed by, for example, the recitation of the Apostle’s Creed by the people during the recitation of the *Credo* by the priest.⁸⁸

On the other hand, writing from Gort in March 1964, Denis Hynes, chairman of the Galway Diocesan Liturgical Commission, stated that the liturgical movement in England amounted ‘almost to an agitation’ and did not appeal to Irish Catholics. As he writes:

Irish Catholics knew and appreciated what the Mass essentially was ... and though they may not have had a clear understanding of the meaning of the prayers or of the symbolism in the Mass, their act of faith embraced the whole liturgical celebration.⁸⁹

Overall, most laypeople were reported as seeming to be open to, but not excited by, possible or even imminent liturgical change. Thus, we see here, on the one hand, the lack of any liturgical tradition in Ireland, compared with what was happening elsewhere, and, on the other, the mixed degrees of openness to reform, other than on the part of those who had witnessed liturgical renewal elsewhere. Others were satisfied to leave to the hierarchy to be the receivers for them.

The early stages in the process of agreeing translations for the Mass and the scripture readings highlights the mix of caution, *inertia* and even narrow nationalism of some of the

⁸⁶ Mitchell to Browne, 18 February 1964 (GDA, Browne papers, B/12/B/109).

⁸⁷ Horan to Browne, 8 February 1964 (ibid).

⁸⁸ Byrne to Browne, 14 February 1964 (ibid).

⁸⁹ Hynes to Browne, 23 March 1964 (ibid).

church leadership in Ireland and their inability to grasp fully what was happening in the wider church in terms of liturgical change. It also highlighted that Ireland was no longer in control of its own liturgical destiny. Outside influences, particularly from America, would come to the fore. Added to these were the ambiguity of language in the conciliar documents, the need for compromise and the desire to bow to modernity in the quest to achieve accessible language. These would be the dominant factors that would inform the reform of liturgy in Ireland during the decade following Vatican II. Nonetheless, where the Irish bishops had the power, they used it cautiously to ensure that changes were introduced gradually.

In early 1964, representatives of the Irish hierarchy embarked on a series of meetings with the bishops of England and Wales and Scotland which would lead to a greater degree of uniformity in the usage and form of the vernacular in the liturgy. The initial contact was at the level of the four archbishops, led by Conway. However, at an early stage it was clear that McQuaid was having little or no part in the deliberations. This is evidenced by correspondence with Conway where McQuaid wrote:

I find it hard to see... why Ireland, England and Scotland should have to follow the American version of the English vernacular or even the American pattern. We speak a different language and live in very different circumstances.⁹⁰

The fears of McQuaid and like-minded clergy regarding American influence came to light particularly regarding the question of which bible translation would be used in the revised liturgy. Through a series of letters between the archbishop and Monsignor Boylan of Dun Laoghaire, a biblical scholar, it became apparent that they feared that a translation of the New Jerusalem Bible might be agreed upon for common usage. In one letter Boylan explains:

I do not like to think of Irish Catholics being compelled to adopt an English translation or “edition” of a French Bible. Neither do I like being lectured to by English Bishops. I have a strong suspicion that financial factors have something to do with the canvassing of His Lordship of Leeds for the adoption of the J.B as the vernacular Bible for “these islands”.⁹¹

Regardless of views such as those expressed by Boylan, however, a new lectionary – the book containing the scripture readings for the liturgy – became mandatory from Lent 1970. It used the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and Jerusalem Bible editions.

When it came to getting agreement with the bishops of Scotland, England and Wales on common Mass responses, compromises had to be reached between fidelity to the Latin

⁹⁰ McQuaid to Conway, 28 December 1963 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/xvi/i).

⁹¹ Boylan to McQuaid, 18 January 1964 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/VC/xvii/).

original of the Roman Missal and the desire to achieve the active and conscious participation sought by the council. An example of this was the attempt to harmonise the response to the invocation ‘The Lord be with you’. Catholics in England and Wales had been using ‘and with you’ since the introduction of the vernacular in 1965, while in Scotland the response was ‘and with your spirit’ – a more direct translation of the Latin ‘*et cum spiritu tuo*’. In the end, it was the Irish response of ‘and also with you’ which was agreed upon – in common with the usage in North America. This would remain the case until the revision of the missal during the first decade of the twenty-first century.⁹² A further change was the usage of the term ‘Holy Spirit’ in place of ‘Holy Ghost’ in the missal, with the exception of the final blessing. Regardless of conforming more closely to the Latin original, this change was considered ‘more modern’.⁹³ It was also reported that the retention of the dismissal *Ita Missa est* ‘resulted in oceans of ink flowing over its meaning’, concluding in the retention of the word ‘Mass’ and the addition of the word ‘forth’ so as to soften the impact of the word ‘go’.⁹⁴ The word ‘consubstantial’ in the *Credo* was replaced by ‘one in substance with’ due to, it was felt, the awkwardness of the word. This would later be reversed in the 2010 revision.

The influence of the American church in the translations during the period that led to the new English-language missal in 1975 is evident. ICEL had its headquarters in Washington DC and was heavily staffed and influenced by American clergy and liturgists. Cardinal Conway, while on a visit to St Augustine, Florida in March 1966, praised American Catholic leaders for their ‘exceedingly strong and fruitful liturgical movements’ describing these as ‘intellectual and practical’. He characterised the American church as being one of ‘youthful dynamism’ and said that ‘the entire world should be willing to learn about the church in America.’⁹⁵ It is clear that, for the most part, the Irish bishops, in common with others in the English-speaking world, were content to leave the bulk of the translation work to the Americans and thus allow them shape the wordings of prayers and responses that would become part of liturgical life in the decades ahead. While the translation of the Mass into English was ongoing, the production of a missal in Irish came to fruition in 1973, ahead of its English counterpart. The introduction of the vernacular provided an opportunity for supporters

⁹² When the revised Roman Missal was promulgated in 2010, in keeping to its mandate to be faithful to the Latin version, the more direct translation ‘And with you Spirit’ replaced ‘And also with you’. This came into effect on the first Sunday of Advent 2011.

⁹³ *Irish Catholic*, 29 Sept 1966.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ICD* 1967, p. 730; *Irish Independent*, 16 Mar 1966.

of the Irish language movement to lobby for and promote the use of Irish and the promotion of Irish-language Masses.

When issuing his instructions on the use of the vernacular in Dublin, McQuaid provided for one Mass in Irish per week in each parish of the diocese and that it would be subject to the same criterion as the use of English. Provision was made however for the homily to be in English, if necessary. At the priests' retreat a few months later he was fulsome in his praise of the way in which the Irish-language community had uniformly embraced the vernacular.⁹⁶ However, as the Oxford historian James P. Bruce points out, McQuaid's plans to provide Masses in Irish were frustrated from the outset by three groupings. First, some *gaeilgeoirí* complained whenever any English was used at Mass. Secondly, some priests were unhappy with the arrangement because of their own lack of fluency. However, as Bruce argues, few, if any, publicly voiced their unhappiness, due to McQuaid's attitude towards any public dissent. Thirdly, the most common source of complaint was ordinary Catholics who felt they were being denied what Vatican II had promised – active participation in the liturgy. According to Bruce, these Catholics 'sometimes found themselves at a Mass where one obscure language had been replaced by another.'⁹⁷ Evidence of this can be found in the Dublin archives. One parishioner wrote:

Today, I attended Mass in a Dublin church. The priest said the words of the Mass in Irish, he also read the Epistle and Gospel in Irish and another priest preached in Irish. I felt as if I had not been to Mass at all, and I'm sure that 95% of the people did not know what the priest preached about or what was said at the Gospel. I am sure [Our Lord] is angry that the people who do come to Mass are forced to sit in silence while an unknown dead language is spoken to them.⁹⁸

Another parishioner protested forthrightly as follows:

As I see it, you have no mandate from the Vatican Council, or from the people, to celebrate Mass, except in Latin or the vernacular, and Gaelic is not the vernacular in any part of Ireland outside the Gaeltacht.⁹⁹

McQuaid's standard replies to such letters were that people had plenty of choice when it came to Masses in Dublin. When he received any complaints from *gaeilgeoirí* about the use of English, he simply referred them to the relevant parish priest. As Bruce shows, he did not take any direct action against priests who deviated from his Irish Mass policy, yet, formally, the policy remained in place.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ 'Address at Priests' Retreat, 8 July 1965' (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/510).

⁹⁷ James P. Bruce, 'Champion of the Gaeilgeoiri: John Charles McQuaid and the Irish-language mass', *Irish Historical Studies*, 40, no. 157 (2016), p. 123.

⁹⁸ J. Brennan to McQuaid, 23 October 1966 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/XXVII/10).

⁹⁹ Patrick J. McCann to McQuaid, 9 May 1966 (ibid).

¹⁰⁰ Bruce, 'Champion of the Gaeilgeoiri', p. 122.

The efforts of McQuaid to provide for the Irish-language movement were mirrored in another of his regulations following Vatican II, namely, that a Mass in Latin should be provided for in each parish each week.¹⁰¹ His love of Latin and his disquiet concerning the liturgical changes generally, and the vernacular in particular, were well known. Bruce offers the opinion that McQuaid may have been trying to provide for Irish-language Masses on the same basis as Masses in Latin, so as to reduce the availability of Masses in English. He claims that, from McQuaid's perspective, such an arrangement would have been in line with *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Mass in Irish would cater for those who, in conscience, could not attend Mass in English while Mass in Latin would have honoured the church's Latin tradition.¹⁰²

The issue shows how, on the one hand, McQuaid used the Irish-language community to show how the vernacular could be used, while on the other, many Catholic laypeople who had for centuries attended Mass in a language largely unknown to them, were suddenly objecting strenuously to the use of another language which was in relatively little use. It serves to demonstrate the impact the vernacular had on Irish people at an early stage, and highlights its reception.

The controversies over Irish-language Masses in Dublin came at a time when the language was becoming politicised. An opinion poll in 1964 showed that almost three-quarters of Irish adults were in favour of voluntary, rather than compulsory, teaching of Irish in secondary schools. In September 1965, a new organisation, the Language Freedom Movement (L.F.M) was formed, with the aim of promoting 'a realistic attitude towards Irish and to remove compulsion and discrimination from the language policy.'¹⁰³ The Dublin 'Mass in Irish' controversy became a feature of the public disputes between the L.F.M. and Irish-language activists, with accusations that such Masses were disrupted by 'planned raucous replying in English'.¹⁰⁴ Some activists were more militant than others. In 1966, Proinsias Ó Mianáin, an Irish-language enthusiast who also a fervent Catholic living in Dublin, exposed a serious lack of adequate management in the structures of the hierarchy in dealing with one of their primary duties arising out of the liturgical provisions after the council. His concern was with the availability of the Irish text of the Mass for Irish-language speakers on the same basis as the text in English for English speakers. The bishops, to their cost, left the task entirely in the hands of Veritas, their publishing house, who failed to deliver and without explanation. It was left to

¹⁰¹ McQuaid to Boylan, 27 April 1967 (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/XXVII/2).

¹⁰² Bruce, 'Champion of the Gaeilgeoiri', pp 129-30.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Times*, 7 July 1966.

the entirely voluntary intervention of two priests and Irish enthusiasts, Tomás Ó Fiaich and Colman Ó Huallacháin, to settle what was fast becoming an unnecessary and ugly public row, which filled the media and resulted in two separate hunger strikes by Ó Mianáin.¹⁰⁵

A number of articles on the relationship between the liturgy and the assembly were carried in Catholic newspapers and magazines, reflecting this shift in emphasis from the private to the public dimension of the role the laity played in the liturgical actions of the mass itself.¹⁰⁶ A course of lectures organised by Michael Russell, the new Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, were held in February 1966 and included speakers such as the Dominicans, Gabriel Bowe and Austin Flannery. The lectures placed particular stress on the council decrees as they concerned the faithful and the practical ways in which they could and should participate in the liturgy and the life of the church generally.¹⁰⁷ Another example of varied local reactions to the liturgical changes concerned the new eucharistic prayers of the Mass, introduced in 1968. Bishop Browne was not enamoured and the minutes of a meeting of the Galway Diocesan Chapter of Canons in 1968 recorded his expressed views which demonstrate his unease at the role lay people were being asked to undertake in the revised liturgy: ‘The most remarkable change is the “*acclamatio populi*” after the Consecration. The Bishop felt that it would be a shock and a scandal to Irish people.’¹⁰⁸

The new place of lay participation was given further emphasis in the creation of new ministries, notably that of reader or lector and, later, that of extraordinary ministers of holy communion. Other roles, such as those of cantors and musicians, would also come to be seen as ministries that shared in the liturgical life of the parish. An early indication of the reception of this change was the newsworthiness of laypeople reading the Scriptures at Mass, such as when the Taoiseach Seán Lemass read the epistle at the consecration of Michael Russell (1920-2009) as Bishop of Waterford and Lismore in December 1965. He became the first lay person to participate in such a liturgy, while the Mayors of Waterford and Clonmel took part in the offertory procession.¹⁰⁹ But not every first occasion for the introduction of lay ministry was as high profile, nor were the ministers. In fact it would be some years before formal support and recognition for the role of lay reader was in place. Further, the reception of the liturgical

¹⁰⁵ See Risteárd Ó Glaisne, *Tomás Ó Fiaich* (Baile Atha Cliath, 1990), pp 78-88; *Cork Examiner*, 17 Oct. 1966; *Belfast Telegraph*, 19 Oct. 1966. The use of hunger strike was a tactic used by the Irish-language movement of the 1960s. See Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.601.

¹⁰⁶ For example, *Irish Catholic*, 6 Oct. 1966; also, *Irish Catholic*, 5 May 1966.

¹⁰⁷ *Irish Catholic*, 27 Jan. 1966.

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of Chapter meeting, 30 June 1968 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/ii/4).

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Press*, 19 Dec. 1965. See also, *ICD 1967*, pp 709-10.

changes was not only hierarchical but it was gendered too. At the annual retreat of his priests in 1968, McQuaid gave ‘a very grave warning’ that he would not tolerate any interference with the regulations of the Holy See, and included in his assessment ‘no reading of lessons by girls or women (as has happened); no Offertory processions of nuns or others; no private observations.’¹¹⁰ Equally punctilious about observing regulations from the competent authorities, was Bishop Browne of Galway who in 1970, in an exchange of correspondence with Cardinal Conway, questioned whether it had been agreed by the Episcopal Conference that women were permitted to read at Mass. Conway replied by quoting the relevant extract from the November 1969 meeting of the conference, that ‘it was agreed that women be allowed to read Scriptural readings other than the Gospel where the local Ordinary judges this to be opportune.’¹¹¹ Here, once again, we see an adherence to power through regulation. When compared to more advanced countries such as Canada, where the French-speaking influence was more manifest in driving liturgical change, Ireland was once again lacking. For example, from March 1964 the reading of scripture in the vernacular at all Masses in Canada was the norm. This was a year in advance of the Mass responses being made in the vernacular.¹¹²

Two other developments honoured the active participation insisted on by *Sacrosanctum Concilium* – the introduction of Eucharistic ministers (or Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion) and the option to receive communion in the hand (*communio in manu*). In relation to extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, these were introduced in France by indult dated 13 March 1970.¹¹³ The US bishops requested the Holy See for permission to introduce them in the USA in 1971 and this was granted.¹¹⁴ By virtue of the Roman document, *Immense Caritatis* in January 1973, this was extended to the universal church from that date. In Ireland, while there is evidence of it having been discussed at a meeting of the Council of Priests in Galway in 1974, where a proposal to have it considered was passed unanimously, it would be the late 1970s to mid -1980s before Eucharistic Ministers became a reality in most parishes.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ ‘Address by Archbishop McQuaid to Priests’ Retreat, 3 July 1968’ (DDA, McQuaid papers, AB8/B/LVII/604).

¹¹¹ Browne to Conway 3 January 1970 (GDA: Browne papers, B/11/D/243); Conway to Browne, 7 January 1970 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/v/158).

¹¹² Darren J. Dias, ‘The St Lawrence Flows into Lake Ontario: Tides of Liturgical Renewal’, in Attridge, Clifford & Routhier (eds), *Vatican II: Canadian Experiences* p. 430.

¹¹³ Monique Brulin, ‘Les mutations liturgiques en France (1965-1975)’ in Galinier-Pallerola, Laffay & Minvielle (eds), *L’Église de France après Vatican II*, p. 123.

¹¹⁴ See, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=1168> (accessed 24 October 2018).

¹¹⁵ ‘Minutes of meeting held on 17 June 1974’ (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/A/vii/ 31 – ‘Minute Book of the Consilium Presbyterate 1966-1976’). Earlier, in 1972, the Council of Priests in Kildare and Leighlin had raised the possibility of male religious assisting with the distribution of holy communion. See Patrick McGoldrick, to Bishop John McCormack, 5 September 1972 (GDA, Browne papers, B/7/B/ v/159).

There was an acceptance of unease on the part of some to such a development as can be seen by a notice in a parish bulletin in a Dublin parish in 1981 which stated that ‘some people find it strange to receive the Blessed Eucharist from the hands of a lay person’, adding that ‘a person has every right to receive the sacraments from whom they wish’.¹¹⁶ Consideration of the reception of communion in the hand was first raised by another Roman document *Memoriale Domini* in May 1969. It sought the views of the bishops of the world. The French bishops were once again very positive and requested an indult.¹¹⁷ However, a perusal of the minutes of the Irish hierarchy shows that the matter was discussed first in June 1973 and, again, in 1976. It transpires that at the 1973 meeting a proposal to apply to the Holy See for an indult allowing the introduction of communion in the hand was rejected by fourteen votes to twelve. Immediately, however, a second proposal to apply to the Holy See for a similar indult in the event of the hierarchy of England and Wales having agreed to do so was carried by twenty-one votes to four. On 29 March 1976, Cardinal Conway wrote to all Irish bishops informing them that the English and Welsh Conference of Bishops had received the required indult and that he had asked them to delay any announcement so that the Irish bishops could have an opportunity to formally decide to proceed with the indult process. This was agreed at the April meeting of the Standing Committee.¹¹⁸ The practice was introduced into the Archdiocese of Dublin in October 1978.

A similar caution was applied in the United States on the communion in the hand question. There the question was delayed as it became one of a series of intermingled issues that the bishops had referred to a committee on pastoral practice and to which we have made reference to in Chapter Three. As early as 1970 the US bishops’ committee on liturgy had described the question of communion in the hand as ‘a serious and sensitive matter’ and proposed to defer the question in order to ‘acknowledge and develop greater awareness of the dignity of the baptised Christian.’¹¹⁹ As in Ireland, the practice was rejected by the US bishops in 1973 and it was only approved for use in 1977. This intermingling of complex issues is reflected by Chinnici:

Certainly the issue touched questions of lay participation in the liturgy, but it also symbolized much wider questions: the interpretation of tradition, reliance on modern medicine, infantile versus adult authority relationships, theological and philosophical understandings of

¹¹⁶ Parish Bulletin, Sutton Parish, Dublin, September 1981; cited in Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, pp 115-16.

¹¹⁷ Brulin, ‘Les mutations liturgiques en France’ p.123.

¹¹⁸, Conway to all bishops, 29 March 1976, enclosing extracts from the relevant minutes (GDA, Browne papers, B/11/D/249 (1) .

¹¹⁹ Cited in Chinnici, ‘Reception of Vatican II in the United States’, p. 476.

transubstantiation, the locus of the holy, the definition of an appropriate public etiquette code, and the sociological sources of institutional power.¹²⁰

Here we see that change can bring with it certain tension, especially when it concerns religious practice or human practices with religious meaning or significance. This tension can highlight questions about the source of authority, the relevance or otherwise of history or, quite simply, the human grasp of tradition. These were as relevant in Ireland as anywhere else.

This approach highlights the gradualism inherent in the implementation of the liturgical changes in Ireland, a gradualism accompanied by caution, but also, it must be added, by a degree of collegial openness to working with bishops in a neighbouring country in order to implement something that might have been problematic in some quarters.

An area of notable change was that of church art and architecture. Like the liturgy itself, church architecture was influenced by changes which originated in continental Europe following World War One. While few of these impacted in Ireland, there was sufficient interest in this area by 1955 when a well-attended conference on church architecture was held in Dublin, under the auspices of the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. The 1950s and early 1960s also witnessed some notable exhibitions both in Ireland and in Europe, where a number of emerging Irish artists featured.¹²¹ The new liturgical reforms called for adaptation in terms of space usage so as to maximise the levels of participation by those gathered – priests and laity – and to emphasise the role of the assembly in the liturgical actions. In response, the Irish bishops established an advisory committee on sacred art and architecture in 1964. It was chaired by J.G. McGarry, editor of *The Furrow* and included a number of architects and artists such as Wilfred Cantwell, James White and Ray Carroll. In June 1966 directives were issued on the building and re-ordering of churches, arguing that ‘participation of the faithful can best be achieved in a church which has been properly planned or re-organised.’¹²² Among the changes was the new place of scripture and the preaching of a homily in the Mass. This allowed for the introduction of an ambo and the abandonment or replacement of pulpits. Another feature was the removal in many churches of the altar rails which divided the sanctuary area from the remainder of the church. It was almost thirty years later before a comprehensive and more

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ See Hurley, *Irish Church Architecture*, pp 16-37.

¹²² Episcopal Liturgical Commission of Ireland, ‘Pastoral Directory on the Building and Reorganisation of Churches, June 1966’, *The Furrow*, 17, no. 7 (July 1966), p. 471. See also Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 112.

definitive pastoral directory covering this area was published.¹²³ The extraordinary elapse of time before the publication of a definite pastoral directory in this area is yet another indication of the piecemeal approach to the reception process in Ireland with regard to Vatican II. While the work of the first advisory committee on sacred art and architecture did oversee the publication of guidelines in 1966, followed by the publications edited by Austin Flannery which gave further assistance, there appears to have been no sense of urgency to provide an overall framework for architects, artists and church communities in this area. Bishop Joseph Duffy, who from the late 1980s chaired the committee which brought the directory to completion in 1994, says that getting agreement from all the interested parties, particularly specialists in the field of art and architecture, was slow and painstaking.¹²⁴

The planning of new churches and, especially, the re-organisation of existing ones took time. During the years following the council, many parishes erected altars of a temporary nature in their churches. Over the following decades, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, some major re-organisations of churches and cathedrals were undertaken and these brought to the fore various forms of modern art and design.¹²⁵ The approach to this question varied from diocese to diocese. Ray Carroll, an artist who was closely associated with several church re-ordering projects ranging from cathedrals in Killarney and Longford to the community chapel of St Patrick's Missionary Society in Kiltegan, County Wicklow, noted that Vatican II had unleashed a new mood and a movement for architectural change. He believed that the movement for architectural innovation was hampered by two factors, namely, a shortage of architects and artists competent in this field and a 'lack of informed artistic criticism among potential clients.' According to Carroll, the reason for the shortage of architects and artists was akin to 'the inherited James Joyce syndrome in Irish artists – the wretched anti-clericalism which has prevented many from getting involved in the spiritual movement of the Church in modern times.'¹²⁶ This confirms Duffy's assessment of the delay in finalising the directory.

One artist who became involved in the new movement was Angela Christina MacDonnell, Countess of Antrim, a Catholic member of the nobility. Bishop Philbin appointed

¹²³ Irish Episcopal Commission for Liturgy, *The Place of Worship: Pastoral Directory on the Building and Reordering of Churches* (Dublin, 1994).

¹²⁴ Interview with Bishop Joseph Duffy, 5 January 2018.

¹²⁵ For example, St Mel's Cathedral, Longford, St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh, and St Macartan's Cathedral, Monaghan were extensively re-ordered during this period. A further re-ordering of the sanctuary area of Armagh Cathedral occurred during the early 2000s. This was informed by 'a desire to connect with the past but not to uncritically reproduce it.' See O'Hare, *St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh*, p. 148; Eltin Griffin (ed.), *A Cathedral Renewed: St Macartan's, Monaghan* (Dublin, 1998).

¹²⁶ *Sunday Independent*, 23 Nov 1975, 'Portrait of an Irish Church Artist'.

her as chair of an advisory committee on art and architecture in Down and Connor. The committee examined proposals for new church buildings in the diocese and give its recommendation to the bishop from an artistic point of view.¹²⁷ One of their first projects was in 1965, when St Brigid's church on Derryvolgie Avenue in Belfast was re-opened after extensive renovations, at a cost of £30,000. It was the first church in the Diocese of Down and Connor where the altar was positioned for the priest to face the congregation. The original altar, which was awarded first prize for carving at the 1908 Paris Exhibition, had the *reredos* removed.¹²⁸ St Patrick's church in Dungiven was the first church in Diocese of Derry to conform to the liturgical reforms, allowing for the celebration of Mass *versus populum*.¹²⁹ The first newly-built church in the whole island to have no pulpit or communion rails was in Ballyjamesduff, County Cavan, which was dedicated in October 1966.¹³⁰ Across the country, a number new churches were built during the decades following Vatican II and the new designs reflected the role of the assembled community of priest and people gathered together to celebrate eucharist.

Perhaps the biggest undertaking in terms of church building in Ireland at this time was the completion of the new Cathedral of Our Lady Assumed in Heaven in Galway, which was completed and dedicated in August 1965. The plan of the cathedral that emerged was 'conscious of Galway's long ecclesiastical past' and thus a varied one with a mixture of designs from the classical and renaissance periods, such as the dome, pillars, round arches and the various-shaped windows.¹³¹ Delivering his annual report on the progress of the cathedral in 1964, Bishop Browne noted that it was 'of interest to know that the cathedral fulfils perfectly the requirements of the new Liturgy Constitution for the architecture and design of churches and altars.'¹³² The cathedral was nearing completion when *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was adopted and a survey of the building project papers, held at the Galway Diocesan Archives, shows that there was no demand for any re-ordering of the cathedral in the light of the liturgical reforms. Alan Burke, a Galway priest and liturgist, argues that the building and design of the cathedral drew from the various liturgical movements which Vatican II gave expression in

¹²⁷ *ICD* 1966, 30 October 1965, pp 762-3.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 735.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1966, p. 748.

¹³⁰ *Anglo Celt*, 14 Oct 1966; *Irish Catholic*, 13 Oct 1966.

¹³¹ Peadar O'Dowd, 'Building the Cathedral', in *The History of Galway Cathedral 1965-2015: Jubilee Celebration* (Galway, 2015), pp 24-26.

¹³² 'Annual Reports on the work carried out on the Cathedral 1957-1966. Annual Progress' (GDA, Browne papers, B/6/ C/62 (2)).

terms of liturgical concepts.¹³³ However, and as architect Richard Hurley contends, when the architect John J. Robinson was commissioned to design the cathedral in 1949, ‘Vatican II was not even on the horizon’ and it was largely completed by the time *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was adopted, it cannot therefore be seen as in any way responding to the liturgical changes.¹³⁴ One new church which was designed with the liturgical reforms in mind was the Church of Our Lady, Queen of Ireland, at Knock, County Mayo, opened in July 1976.¹³⁵ Designed to accommodate seven and a half thousand people, it was the largest church ever built in Ireland and cost over £1m. It was raised to the rank of basilica by Pope John Paul II during his visit there in September 1979.

To establish the role of ecclesiastical architecture and art in the reception of Vatican II would require a separate study. The period covered by this thesis is too short and the level of available records too small to undertake such an evaluation here, and there are others with architectural expertise better placed to carry out such work. Suffice to say that the initial reception of modern architectural and artistic designs gave way over time to a more restrained appreciation. This was added to by civil legislation which was designed to protect churches as heritage spaces and structures.¹³⁶ Such transitions also took place in other countries. Colleen McDannel, a professor of history and religious studies at the University of Utah, writes of the spirit of Vatican II as experienced by her own mother in several Florida parishes. McDannel contends that, by the late 1980s, the ‘modernist’ architectural and artistic changes experienced there, had given way to what she labels a ‘tiredness’ with the ‘noble simplicity’ and ‘emptiness’ of post-Vatican II art. As McDannel states:

Many American parishes that emptied their churches during the sixties and seventies have undertaken renovations that reintroduce crucifixes, statues, ranks of candles, Stations of the Cross, small chapels, and pipe organs... Across the country, parishes have modified the Second Vatican Council’s preference for noble simplicity with a post-Council fondness for traditional Catholic symbols.¹³⁷

While the post-conciliar period in Ireland saw some notable architectural and artistic creations, the place of Catholic heritage and tradition is an aspect that was neglected in the endeavour by some to get ‘involved in the spiritual movement of the Church in modern times’

¹³³ Alan Burke, ‘Liturgy in Galway Cathedral’, in *The History of Galway Cathedral 1965-2015*, pp 85-98.

¹³⁴ Hurley, *Irish Church Architecture*, pp 112-14.

¹³⁵ *Irish Press*, 16 July 1976; Hurley, *Irish Church Architecture*, pp 88-9.

¹³⁶ See Section 57 of the Planning and Development Act 2000

<<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/30/enacted/en/html>> (accessed 4 July 2017)

¹³⁷ Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York, 2011), p. 211.

as referred to by Ray Carroll. An example of the inclusion of heritage and tradition in the conversation is the outcome of the second re-ordering in St Patrick's Cathedral in Armagh in the early 2000s. This included the provision of a new altar, an ambo and presider's chair, together with the reinstatement of the Marian chapel, the creation of a new and more open rood screen, the retention of the sanctuary lamp and the refurbishment of the *reredos* of side- altars. This has been described as an 'authentic renovation' which 'honours the past and the present together so that any new work is a valid contemporary expression of the worshipping community.'¹³⁸

The Reception in Irish Worshipping Communities

While, in general, the liturgical reforms were implemented over a relatively short time span, they did not create any significant upset in the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. The caution with which the Irish bishops approached the implementation at the early stages of the translation process may have had more to do with their lack of historical and theological training in the area of liturgy, and their lack of awareness of *ressourcement* in particular. The translation work was left to ICEL and the reforms were, in the main, implemented dutifully in accordance with Roman norms. Overall, this had a positive effect in terms of their implementation at parish level.

A commentary in the *Irish Times* on the day following the introduction of the vernacular in 1965 noted the warm welcome for the change and doubted if 'Ireland will see the establishment of a society such as that which has been established in England to keep Latin in the Mass.'¹³⁹ The comment was referring to the establishment in England in the course of 1965 of the Latin Mass Society. This body was formed by 'a number of converts, members of "old Catholic families", and conservative intellectuals' in order to provide a platform for 'loyal dissent to the reforms of 'Vatican II.'¹⁴⁰ The Boston University professor of social sciences, Jay P. Corrin points out that Catholic converts admired 'the aesthetic qualities of the Latin rites, connecting them to the verities of the past.'¹⁴¹ Corrin adds that many of the converts had accepted Rome in the first place 'because the Vatican historically stood against the "progressive" cultural currents of modernity itself.' He then asks rhetorically, however, what

¹³⁸ O'Hare, *St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh*, p. 148.

¹³⁹ *Irish Times*, 8 Mar. 1965.

¹⁴⁰ Corrin, *Catholic Progressives*, p. 157.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

of those Catholics who did not have ‘elitist benefits of a classical education’? Was it ‘better for them to worship in silence and ignorance but at least be guided in a higher spirituality by their superior brethren?’¹⁴²

The question of the interior effect of the liturgical changes is a subjective one, the answer to which cannot be conclusively speculated upon in the absence of empirical evidence. Nonetheless, the question must be asked: did Catholics in Ireland find life and relevance in the celebration of the new liturgy? Did a liturgy that was celebrated in the vernacular and that encouraged and facilitated participation speak to modern people and did people see the liturgy as ‘the high point towards which the activity of the church is directed’ and, ‘the source from which all its power flows out’?¹⁴³ To try to answer these questions, one can only point to commentaries by various observers in the field of liturgy. P.J. Brophy of St Patrick’s College, Carlow, stated that ‘the new liturgy seems to have little to say about tomorrow since it is presented in the categories of yesterday.’¹⁴⁴ Taking into account the bigger picture of Irish society at the time, Fuller states:

What the council could not absolutely foresee...was the huge impact of the consumer society, pop culture and communications revolution and a more individualistic age which would lead people to have far higher expectations of what was meaningful for them. The irony was that, within a decade of the close of the council, Irish society and culture were so utterly transformed that many observers in the 1970s felt that, radical though the changes had been, and notwithstanding the traditional devoutness of Irish Catholics, the renewed liturgy did not really speak to their needs.¹⁴⁵

A similar point was made by Eamonn Bredin, a lecturer in sacramental theology at Mount Oliver Institute for Religious Education in Dundalk. Writing in *The Furrow* in 1979, he stated that the liturgical reforms seemed to ‘have left the inner core of people’s lives untouched.’¹⁴⁶ In reaching this conclusion, Bredin pointed to a series of studies of religious beliefs and practice that had taken place in Ireland in the 1970s. For example, the survey carried out in 1973-4 by the Council for Research and Development, a study we have referred to already, found that while there was a 91% rate of weekly Mass attendance, other findings showed cause for concern, especially a rate of just 76.5% Mass attendance among single males.¹⁴⁷ Bredin referenced a statement by the National Conference of Priests (in May 1979) that ‘the main

¹⁴² Ibid., pp 156-7.

¹⁴³ SC, 10.

¹⁴⁴ P.J. Brophy, ‘Whatever Happened to our Liturgical Dreams?’, *The Furrow*, 25, no. 4, (April 1974), p. 214.

¹⁴⁵ Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 122.

¹⁴⁶ Eamonn Bredin, ‘The Liturgy: Problems and Prospects’ in *The Furrow*, 30, no. 1 (January 1979), p. 53.

¹⁴⁷ Cited in Fuller, *Irish Catholicism*, p. 120-2.

danger to religion in Ireland is not unbelief but shallow belief, a convention retained but only on the margins of life, a religion without challenge and without depth.’¹⁴⁸

An example of the changing landscape of religious practice was reflected in comments by Conway in 1970 when he criticised the poor attendances at the Holy Week liturgies in Ireland. Speaking in Moy, Co Tyrone he noted that for some people ‘Holy Week is just the week before the Easter holidays’ and that many people were content just to attend Mass on Easter Sunday morning.¹⁴⁹ When this comment is juxta-posed with the statement by the Irish bishops in 1956, already referred to above, concerning the large attendances at the Holy Week liturgies as evidence of the practice of the faith and the reception of those reforms, this expression signalled that a significant shift was underway.

The quality of the celebration was also a consideration. Among the factors informing this element of reception were the introduction of the vernacular and the homily. Both of these made communications skills an important component in the relationship within the liturgical assembly. Priests were now expected to be transformed from silent actors to active and vocal leaders and animators of a gathered community. It meant that Mass had to be meaningful for people. A submission from a priest to the Mulranny meeting of the Irish bishops in April 1974 put it starkly:

The vernacular has put us in the dock. Unless the people find Mass meaningful they may not continue to go to Mass. To say that they are lacking in faith, that they are not putting anything into the Mass etc is not the answer. The pedagogical value of good celebration is written all over the documents of the magisterium since Vatican II. Good celebration will help to counteract the trend away from Sunday Mass.¹⁵⁰

In this regard, the bishops highlighted elements of non-reception of the liturgical reforms, which they termed as ‘abuses in the name of tradition’ These included non-cooperation with liturgical renewal, failure to give a homily, failure to provide a worthy setting for the liturgy. They also called for greater attention to the length of Masses.¹⁵¹

It must be acknowledged that after 1965 people had become increasingly accustomed to, and came to insist on, the participative elements of the liturgy. This was most visibly seen at family and community-related celebrations such as marriages and funerals. Priest and liturgist, Edward Magee of Down and Connor, states that ‘while exterior manifestations of

¹⁴⁸ Bredin, ‘The Liturgy’, p. 48.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Address by Cardinal in Clofeacle parish’ (COFLA, Conway papers, File 18/8).

¹⁵⁰ Mulranny Report, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., no. 1.3.4.

participation facilitate greater involvement in the liturgy, an interior disposition is equally important.¹⁵² This is a matter to which this thesis has referred already, in Chapter Four in relation to the meeting at Mulranny and the failure of the bishops to follow up on the detailed information which they had in relation to attitudes, beliefs and practices. In the rush to implement the council's liturgical changes for a laity that was primarily used to seeing the Mass as an obligation to be fulfilled through quiet observance, there was little or no attention paid to the theological and catechetical dimension of those changes. The hierarchical reception of the council in Ireland meant that the import of the changes, however understood, was lost on the majority of people. As Magee notes, 'inculturation of the liturgy and creativity in expression was achieved at the expense of a more interior and spiritual sense of participation in the liturgy.'¹⁵³ As noted, such an assertion relates to the personal rather than communal reception of the reforms, an aspect which is always difficult to quantify.

Similar experiences are to be found in the United States. Eugene Bianchi argues that in America the new forms of liturgy represented not just a return to the sources 'but rather a response to the wider demand in modern society for a needed experience of personal identity and intimate community.'¹⁵⁴ Progressives saw the changes in the liturgy as a sign of new hope, welcome the greater levels of participation. Conservatives, on the other hand, saw in the changes 'a vulgarization of worship and a loss of what they had come to think of as important Catholic traditions.'¹⁵⁵ Liberals became frustrated by what they saw as tardiness of the response to reform and this, combined with a new sense of freedom, pushed some younger priests and laypeople to experiment. These experimentations, particularly prevalent in universities and small communities, included the laity choosing the reading and leading a discussion-type homily, vestments not being used and the whole assembly reciting the consecration prayer.¹⁵⁶

The crucial factor of liturgical formation should also be considered at this point. With few exceptions, little or no discussion on the changes was held in public within dioceses or parishes, in terms of how the liturgical reforms represented the action of the council. As Bredin puts it, 'all they [the people] were ever told was that there were new changes and that these were the new responses.'¹⁵⁷ This is not to say that no positive actions were taken. The creation

¹⁵² Edward Magee, 'Towards a Fuller Participation in the Liturgy: Embracing the Mystery of God', in Coll (ed.), *Ireland & Vatican II*, p. 191; see, SC, 11.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

¹⁵⁴ Bianchi, 'John XXIII, Vatican II, and American Catholicism', p. 36.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Bredin, 'The Liturgy', p. 50.

of the Institute for Pastoral Liturgy in 1974 and the appointment of Seán Swayne (1933-1996) as its first director, enabled considerable outreach in terms of pastoral liturgical training, including in the area of church music.¹⁵⁸ Between its formation and 1982, it had provided a one-year course to over two hundred people, and through its shorter course, seminars and study-days had touched many thousands more.¹⁵⁹ Speaking at a liturgy conference in Rome in 1982, Swayne reviewed progress in this area since the council and stated firmly that ‘to hope for liturgical renewal without prior liturgical formation is futile’, adding that the difficulties in putting the liturgical reforms into practice after Vatican II stemmed from the fact that ‘neither priests nor people have received an adequate liturgical formation.’ Swayne held the view that liturgy itself, well celebrated, becomes a school of deep formation. But enabling that to be realised in parishes and communities would remain a challenge for decades to come.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the impact of the Constitution on the *Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium* in Ireland. It attempted to trace the history and impact of the liturgical movement in the decades prior to Vatican II and to set out the main points of the constitution. It then outlined the principal changes to the liturgy as a result of the council. The thesis examined some examples of the changes in Ireland such as the introduction of the vernacular, together with new practices and ministries. It considered also the impact of the reforms on church architecture and art. Finally, some contributions on questions surrounding the impact of the reception of the liturgical changes, or otherwise, on worshipping communities in Ireland were considered.

Once again, it is clear that the council was received in Ireland through a hierarchical reception and a dutiful implementation. With regards to liturgy, and the introduction of the vernacular in particular, the bulk of the work was undertaken by ICEL, which, as we have seen, was dominated largely by American personnel. That influence permeated the translations and much of what people were asked to receive during the period under consideration. Where the Irish bishops had discretion, they used it cautiously and collegially, as shown in the example of the introduction of communion in the hand.

¹⁵⁸ Based initially in Portllington, it was moved to Carlow in 1978 and then to Maynooth in 1996 where it is now the National Centre for Liturgy. See, <<http://www.liturgy-ireland.ie>> (accessed 18 January 2018)

¹⁵⁹ Sean Swayne, ‘The Continuing Liturgical Formation of Clergy and People’ in Whealan & Tracey (eds), *Serving Liturgical Renewal*, with annotations by Liam M. Tracey and Thomas R. Whelan, p. 347.

The fruits of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in Ireland began to be experienced in early 1965 and this continued throughout the period under discussion. There was no attempt to withhold the work of the council. Every parish in the country witnessed and experienced the changes in terms of language, liturgical action, church architecture and art and the introduction of new ministries. However, the lack of engagement of most of the Irish bishops and priests with the theological and historical ideas and movements that underpinned the word, work and vision of the council was especially evident in this area of liturgy. The slow pace of liturgical formation of bishops, priests and people was a direct result. However, the creation of the Institute for Pastoral Liturgy in 1974 was a notable development and this body has continued to be a resource. Liturgical development became a feature of Irish church life. As Edmond Cullinan writes: ‘The liturgy in the future will not remain unchanged, but will continue to develop as it is enriched by the encounter with culture, by theology and by responding to pastoral needs.’¹⁶⁰

The implementation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* provided a real opportunity for the church in Ireland to experience *communio* in the prayerful action of public worship and to receive Vatican II. It achieved that to a certain degree but not to its full potential, due to the complexities of the reception process, the lack of preparedness of the church in Ireland and the accelerating changes in society. Another reason why it did not realise its potential is because of the dearth of theological and catechetical development in Ireland and the lack of capacity of the Irish church as a whole to receive the renewed theology of Vatican II. While new catechetical publications emerged in the aftermath of the council, there was no targeted or strategic effort to enable the laity immerse themselves in the new liturgy, to become aware of its rich tradition and how it spoke to their needs.

Realising that potential, drawing from the richness of tradition and responding to the needs of the present, is a work-in-progress.

¹⁶⁰ Cullinan, *Liturgy in Ireland*, p. 108.

Conclusion

The Second Vatican Council had a profound impact on the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world. The council was a pivotal moment witnessed by Catholics through the medium of television which captured the well-choreographed ceremonials in Rome. There were moments too when they read of debates on matters affecting ecclesiastical questions such as liturgy, the church's understanding of itself, how bishops related to each other, how Christian churches related to each other, and how the church sought to engage in dialogue with modern society. Many changes in practice, understanding and outlook followed Vatican II. Yet, the council did not represent a hiatus or a rupture. As we have shown in this thesis, movements for change were already underway before Vatican II. In the words of Ian Linden:

New things were already happening before, and old things continued afterwards. Old ways withered and died and new ones were given permission to grow and flourished. The Church was the crucible; the Council was the catalyst.¹

The council, therefore, allowed the Roman Catholic Church to engage with the modern world in a new era; to gain new insights into worship and spirituality and, through theological study and development, to 'be inspired by the perennial newness of the Gospel.'²

The period of the council was one of global change, coming as it did after two world wars and during a cold war which threatened world peace. The reception of the council coincided with a time of social, cultural and political upheaval that challenged not merely orthodoxies but the very right of the church and its leaders to teach and to enter into public discourse in ways that were the norm decades earlier. Ireland was not immune from these circumstances. Changes and challenges meant that old institutional certainties were not as secure as previously. A new generation was making its own decisions and drawing from sources other than those of faith and church.

Having reviewed archival and secondary sources, and in light of a careful examination of the background to the council and its reception in key areas such as collegiality and communion, the modernisation of society, ecumenism and liturgy, together with the participation of the Irish bishops at Vatican II, we can now offer closing reflections on the reception of the council in Ireland and on the degree of openness to change and reform based on an authentic reception.

¹ Ian Linden, *Global Catholicism: Diversity and Change since Vatican II* (London, 2009), p. 261.

² Pope Francis, Address to the Italian Theological Association, 29 December 2017

<<http://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2017-12/pope-to-italian-theologians--creative-fidelity-needed-to-confro.html>> (accessed 18 January 2018).

In Chapter One we set out a series of definitions of reception. We described it as a process through which a receiving community incorporates into its own life various decisions, teachings or practices. We mentioned that it involved the whole church as the principal agent. That community should be capable of looking inward at itself and outward to observe other communities so that it can become a creative agent. Against such a background, and having carried out extensive archival research and drawing from a wide range of secondary works, how can we assess the reception of the Second Vatican Council in Ireland?

Vatican II did effect very significant change in the church in Ireland. The change was most visible in terms of the liturgy and church buildings. But there were deeper changes which took time to work their way into the life of the faith communities around the country. Any assessment of Vatican II reception in Ireland has to take into account the capacity of the church in Ireland to receive. This thesis has shown that there was a huge deficit in Ireland in terms of theological formation of both clergy and lay people. The reliance on scholastic methods of formation and on doctrinal emphases in terms of pronouncement may have been ‘partly the product of a momentary conjunction of circumstance after the Great Famine’ but the continued emphasis on legalistic interpretations of church teaching and a culture that was over-imbued with forms of devotionism closed Ireland off from developments.³ This meant that the reception of the council tended to be exterior and legalistic. The failure to engage in any meaningful way with theological debates that were happening in Europe, left the church in Ireland at a severe disadvantage. As this thesis has shown, the background to the council was as important as the council itself and should have informed its reception with a richer theological understanding. While new journals and periodicals such as *The Furrow*, *Irish Theological Quarterly* and *Doctrine and Life* appeared, and despite their circulation and great work of outreach to parishes, there remained a divide between that pastoral outreach and the theological. The failure to bridge that divide was heightened by the failure of the bishops to take seriously the findings of their own research in the early 1970s on attitudes, beliefs and practices in the church in Ireland and, moreover, their failure to address in a serious way, the absence of theology from universities and the public square in general. Even before the council, articles by the likes of Peter Birch and Desmond Fennell in these new journals were pointing to a changing landscape, Fennell pointedly so. Ten years after the council, the bishops’ own Mulranny Report, while largely aspirational, was not acted on in a way that saw any danger. Clearly, this false notion of Ireland still being a strong Catholic country persisted and

³ Lee, *Ireland*, p. 655.

it is this view of Ireland that informed the Vatican view of Ireland, as Garret FitzGerald discovered in 1977. While Ireland was still a conservative society, even during the decade following Vatican II, it was opening up to a fast-changing world. The absence of an informed laity hampered the ability of the receiving community to dialogue with questions, to open up the church to move forward in dialogue with the modern world, aware of its mission, inspired by the Word of God and animated by its liturgy.

The question must be asked too, who were the receivers? The fact that the bishops abrogated to themselves the role of implementation of the council in Ireland, its reception here became just that, implementation. The process of reception in all its richness was not experienced in an authentic way by the People of God that form the church in Ireland. This meant that laypeople in particular were not given a chance to absorb fully the rich theology that the changes in the liturgy brought, people did not get to appreciate the such new concepts as sacramentality of the word, the awareness of the unity of the church or the priesthood of all the people. The failure to activate that priesthood has been highlighted over and over again throughout this thesis, especially in terms of the role of the laity in sharing in governance and in spreading the mission of the church. Once again, the lack of theological formation and the general attitude towards theology in the church in Ireland added to this deficit.

Of all the shortcomings, the failure to actualise the baptismal vocation of the laity in the life and mission of the church was the greatest failing, and it was one that would haunt the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland in the decades after the council, as Catholic culture was transformed and Irish society drifted further away from the church. Some thirty years after the council, Cardinal Cahal B. Daly commented that his experience as a bishop from 1967 onwards reinforced his conviction that there were enormous spiritual resources in the church in Ireland and that they remained to be exploited.⁴ Daly was correct in his assessment, but the reality is that the bishops failed to exploit those same resources and to nourish them. As the thesis has shown, the appointment of bishops had more to do with the papal nuncio's desire to pick 'safe men' who would maintain his view of Irish Catholic tradition than it had to do with Pope John XXIII's vision of the church in the world following the council, as set out in *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, on 11 October 1962.

Not resourcing the laity in terms of collegial leadership and co-responsibility is only one example of how the power of the church's leadership had become, in the words of one historian, an example of 'a lazy monopoly, the legacy of which is proving to be its greatest

⁴ Daly, *Pilgrim Journey*, p. 114.

burden.’⁵ That monopoly was compounded in the years following the council by the fact the number of priests remained relatively constant, despite underlying trends. This enabled the pervasive culture of clericalism to prevail and to stymie any meaningful activation of the laity. Some bishops were more active than others. Conway was one example and was a man of great intellect and vision with sound political acumen and management style. His personal warmth helped to build bridges with other churches, even though the Northern Ireland Troubles were more of a catalyst than Vatican II and the inter-church dialogue moved slowly. He was conservative and by the 1970s his thinking on the direction of the council was probably closer to that of Ratzinger than that of Kung. But he steered a safe course and avoided collisions. This was acknowledged at the time of his early death in April 1977. One newspaper editorial summed up his success thus:

The measure of his success can be gauged from the changes which have come over the Catholic Church in Ireland since the Council and which have been accepted without the complications that arose in other countries.⁶

But Cardinal Conway could have pushed the course of the boat out wider. He made many speeches on the question of evangelisation and the future of the church in Ireland into the twenty-first century. Seeing ‘the signs of the time’ more could have been done to prepare the church to face those challenges, to activate the mission of the laity in the area of theology and their capacity to interiorise and evangelise. Again, the pervasive clerical culture still prevailed, and the impact of Northern Ireland Troubles cannot be discounted either. Sadly, reflection on a unity of theology, as put forward by Congar, or subjects such as collegiality or communion, would remain foreign to most Irish minds and to church practice for some time.

In relation to McQuaid, it is difficult to disagree with Carty’s analysis of his nuanced response. The archbishop realised that change was inevitable, but he stubbornly resisted it for as long as he could, conscious that his priests were fiercely loyal to him and would do as he commanded. His attempt to introduce Masses in Irish in Dublin is but one example of that. For other prelates, the whole question of receiving Vatican II in terms of a process probably never occurred to them. They probably saw it as painful to have to implement. They were accustomed to having people show deference to them and their unquestioned authority. As one historian has put it, ‘the whole experience was in some respects a preview for clerics of what tribunals would be like for Irish politicians a generation later.’⁷ In most Irish minds, the church remained simply the bishops and the priests, not the whole People of God that *Lumen Gentium* set forth.

⁵ Ó Corráin, *Catholicism in Ireland*, p. 727.

⁶ *Irish Independent*, 19 Apr 1977.

⁷ Bartlett, *Ireland*, p. 494.

The clerical dominance in the absence of a theological discourse for lay people, not to mention longstanding tradition, meant that such a total ecclesiology could not take hold.

The failure of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland to fully receive the council limited its ability to become a creative agent in a changing society at a crucial moment in the life of that society. It must be acknowledged, however, that one of the more positive elements to emerge from the council was in the area of justice and peace, with the creation of quite effective commissions and the impact these had domestically in terms of social welfare reform and changes in family law, and externally in terms of the work of Trócaire. However, as Irish society became increasingly pluralist and secular, as state control of areas like education and healthcare increased and as changes in legislation concerning moral issues came to the fore, the church's position was challenged. While the same occurred in other countries such as France, the church in Ireland did not have the resources in place to enable it to question, debate and then forge the type of renewal that has been happening there.⁸ Finding that religion does not disappear when its power is denied leads to various kinds of renewal. That task of turning the faith community into a creative agent in a new culture would be a task to be undertaken by later generations of Irish Catholics, for which Vatican II will be a great gift.

Irish Reception – something happened

Despite the limitations and complexities of the reception process in Ireland following Vatican II, the council was received, largely through a process of implementation. To use O'Malley's phrase, 'something happened'.

The introduction of the vernacular was well received, the response of Mass-goers in Dublin being denied Mass in English proved that. The lack of any significant opposition to the end of the Latin Mass was another example. Over time, lay ministries were introduced and people responded well to these. Less visible forms happened too. These included reforms concerning episcopal collegiality and collegial structures and practices within dioceses. The extension of collegiality to parish level was less successful, however. In terms of ecumenism, inter-church prayer services came to be seen as part of the life of each local community, especially at public events such as the opening of public amenities. Church leaders were seen together regularly and this was important in terms of the reception of Vatican II and also in the context of the violence in Northern Ireland. Over time, questions surrounding mixed-marriages became less prevalent in public discourse. The effects of Vatican II were being seen.

⁸ Twomey, 'Second Vatican Council', pp 415-16.

This thesis also demonstrates that the reception of Vatican II in Ireland was driven by two factors. The first of these was the desire by the bishops to minimise disruption and confusion among the wider faithful. This resulted in the reforms being implemented gradually, as evidenced for example by the manner in which the liturgical translations were applied and the approach taken by the bishops regarding communion in the hand. The second factor was that of control and the use of power. While, it has been noted, the Irish bishops had a tradition of working collegially on questions of common concern, the reforms of Vatican II forced them to be collegial in new and unprecedented ways. New structures and new ways of reaching decisions did not always lead to a renewed sense or understanding of communion. The lack of a coherent ‘corporate’ vision at national and more local level, the continued clerical dominance of church governance and the virtual exclusion of the laity from effective decision-making, did not indicate an authentic reception of the council and its vision. Our research shows, however, that the application of this varied. We have seen how in Armagh and Clogher there was some openness to inclusive lay involvement; how in Derry the enthusiasm had mixed results, that in the Diocese of Galway there was pro-active outreach in some city parishes and towards young people. The response, at least initially, in Dublin was more muted. Other dioceses such as Waterford and Lismore and Limerick were held up as role models in some areas.

The thesis has also added to our knowledge about Vatican II in terms of how it informed some important social changes in Ireland, particularly concerning social welfare, attempts to implement constitutional changes and the emergence of a more open intellectual and cultural environment in the Republic of Ireland. It has shown that in these areas, while the bishops reacted to societal changes, over which they had little control, the changes that Vatican II brought ran in tandem with, and reinforced, a gradual shift toward a more open society. This shift is captured in John Montague’s poem ‘The Siege of Mullingar, 1963’ in which he describes the youthful *Fleadh Cheoil* attendees listening on the transistor for news of the health of Pope John XXIII, followed by the hopeful refrain, ‘Puritan Ireland’s dead and gone/a myth of O’Connor and O’Faolain’.⁹

In terms of the crucial area of the reception of Vatican II in general, this thesis adds to the understanding of this subject through the examination of the council’s reception in Ireland. Each of the chapters has highlighted the various movements for theological dialogue and reform that permeated many aspects of church life in Europe during the years prior to the

⁹ John Montague, *Selected Poems*, (Toronto, 1991), p. 62; see, Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London, 1995), p. 581; Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*, p. 605.

council. Moreover, this thesis has emphasised the unique call of Vatican II in terms of its *aggiornamento* being rooted in *ressourcement*. It has detailed many of the initiatives that took place during the decades preceding the council and how these had but minimal impact in Ireland. The independence of the church in Ireland, in which the bishops were dominant, and which was exemplified by the question of the statutes, coupled with poor theological formation and the lack of meaningful debate about liturgical reforms prior to the council, ensured that the Irish influence at Vatican II itself was marginalised. The lack of intellectual engagement with the key ideas which influenced the council, ensured that the reception of Vatican II in Ireland was impoverished and relied on developments and even resources available elsewhere.

Ireland had a unique part to play however in the area of ecumenism, one of the key elements of the council. While there was ecumenical dialogue and prayer, the degree to which it was embraced was mostly at the level of gesture. Deeper theological investigation or dialogue on the return to the sources, was not widely pursued, notwithstanding the work of ARCIC and the Ballymascanlon meetings. Compared to countries such as Belgium and Switzerland, the church in Ireland was slow in terms of its reception of the council in this regard during the period under review. Again the lack of a strong theological tradition was probably another factor here too. Nonetheless, a highly significant achievement of Vatican II in Ireland was to enable and empower the leaders of the various churches to take a preeminent role in publicly and visibly countering political violence in Northern Ireland.

This thesis has also added to the understanding of Vatican II in terms of its analysis of the various criteria and understandings of reception and then testing some of these against the reality of the church in Ireland during the period under review. We referred to the comment that *Lumen Gentium* points to the whole people of God as the primary receivers,¹⁰ and ‘the principal agent in the process of learning and receiving.’¹¹ This thesis has shown that the entire people of God were not fully awakened to their unique calling in this respect due to the reception of the council in the church in Ireland by the bishops and, to a lesser extent, the priests.

Having reviewed the findings of our research we can state that Vatican II was experienced in Ireland as an event within the Roman Catholic Church. It was experienced also in terms of the implementation of the conciliar reforms, insofar as priests and people came to know them. It was understood only to the degree that people were allowed to understand them.

¹⁰ Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, p. 53.

¹¹ Örsy, ‘Authentic Learning and Receiving – A Search for Criteria’, p. 44.

In this way, Ireland was no different from other countries. However, as the biblical scholar Sean Freyne points out, the council ‘made almost no impact on Irish Catholics ... because the questions the Council sought to grapple with had never been seriously posed in this country.’¹² That’s because of our lack of a theological tradition. In addition, the manner in which the reforms were implemented in Ireland, taken together with the non-theological tradition, meant there was a dearth of knowledge on the one hand and a lack of opportunity on the other for Catholics to fully realise and experience the Christocentric communion that the conciliar reforms were centred on and which were designed to transform the church. To this degree, therefore, the council reception in Ireland was not complete. Something happened, the full depth of which was not comprehensively understood, and therefore the journey of reception was not completed in the period under review.

Reception is an ongoing event. The reception of such a vast and multi-facteted council as Vatican II will require generations, as Gerald O’Collins has pointed out:

Called by Pope John XXIII, Vatican II was the most significant religious event in the twentieth century. One generation has now passed and a second is well established since the council ended in 1965. Its teaching is still being received and tested in the lives of believers.¹³

This is especially true, given the breadth and depth of the agenda pursued by Vatican II that, in large part, came from the bishops around the world.

Pope Francis has made it clear that his mission is to ‘bring to full fruition the vision of the Second Vatican Council.’¹⁴ Notwithstanding that the period covered by this thesis ended in 1977, it may be argued that a new phase of the reception of Vatican II is now necessary. If such a new phase is to succeed, the church must learn from the shortcomings of the reception of Vatican II in the period under review. Something did happen, but the vision of the council, rooted in communion of all the baptised, was neither applied nor understood in its entirety. The reception of Vatican II remains, therefore, both an ongoing challenge and an opportunity for the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland.

¹² Cited in Ó Corráin, ‘Catholicism in Ireland,’ p. 746.

¹³ O’Collins, ‘*Ressourcement* and Vatican II’, p. 391; see, O’Collins, *Living Vatican II*, p. 171

¹⁴ Gerard Mannion, ‘Pope Francis’s Agenda for the Church- *Evangelii Gaudium* as Papal Manifesto: Introduction’, in Mannion (ed.), *Pope Francis and the Future of Catholicism*, p. 7.

Appendix I - Some Information on Glenstal Liturgical Congresses 1954-1975

Year	Congress Themes & Titles of Some of the Papers
1954 (November)	The Liturgy Liturgy in Ireland – Thomas Garde Phases in the Liturgical Movement – William Barden Impressions of the German Ritual – Balthasar Fischer Liturgy in a City Parish – Liam Breen Liturgy in a Rural Parish – Michael O'Dwyer
1955 (October)	The Lord's Day Sunday Mass and the Faithful – Dermot MacIvor The Liturgy in a City Parish – Liam Breen The Sunday Sermon – Donal Casey Evening Devotions – Jerome Toner
1956 (October)	Baptism A Study of the Rite of Baptism – Joseph Dowdall, Abbot of Glenstal Towards a Fuller Understanding of Baptism – Dermot MacIvor
1957 (October)	The Liturgy and Death The Funeral Service in Ireland – Joseph Cunnane The Liturgy of the Dead – Joseph Dowdall, Abbot of Glenstal
1958 (June)	The Eucharist The Structure of the Mass and its Restoration, as reflected in the new Holy Week <i>Ordo</i> – Hermann Schmidt The Canon of the Mass – Donal O'Connor The Graces of the Eucharist Studied in the Postcommunions of the Missal – Placid Murray OSB Eucharistic Piety in Irish Practice – Daniel Duffy
1959 (May)	Holy Week – The Passion of Christ and the Christian Risen Life in the texts of Holy Week – Placid Murray A selection of books for Holy Week – Thomas Finnegan The Use of Commentary in Holy Week – Mark Tierney The Chants of Holy Week - Rev Kieran O Gorman The History of Holy Week as the Heart of the Liturgical Year -Joseph A Jungmann Panel discussion on pastoral problems and possibilities of the Holy Week ceremonies
1960 (April)	The Sick- Christ and the Sick in the New Testament – Conbleth Kearns The History of Extreme Unction – Placid Murray The Care of the Sick in the Roman Ritual – Dermot MacIvor Recent Writings on the Liturgy of the Sick – Joseph Cunnane
1961 (April)	Participation at Mass – Theological Principle of Participation – A-M Roguet The Mass in the Irish parish – William Conway A study of the Secrets – Placid Murray The New Code of Rubrics – Patrick Muldoon Music at Mass – Kieran O'Gorman Participating in the Mass at School – Michael Tynan and Charles Agnew

1962 (April)	<p>The Liturgy in Pastoral Life – The Liturgy of the Mass in Pastoral Practice – T.D. Crichton The Liturgy in Modern Missionary practice – F Sheridan Community Participation – Placid Murray The Word of God through the Liturgy – Gerard S Sloyne Pastoral Liturgy in the Priestly Life – Michael Harty</p> <p>The Congress closed with a symposium on the results of a survey of participation in the Mass and the sacraments, the Holy Week liturgies and the teaching of liturgy in church and school.</p>
1963 (May)	<p>Our Churches – A Outline History of the Development of Modern Architecture –Urban Rapp Liturgical Principles for Church Architecture – Placid Murray The Relationship between Liturgy and Devotions as expressed in Church Interiors – Joseph Cunnane Architect, Priest and Community – Austin Flannery & W.D. McCormick The Liturgy and Church Architecture: the Principles Illustrated – Gerard McConville and Laurence McConville The Artist’s Role – James White Church Building and Restoration in Irish Conditions – Wilfrid Cantwell</p>
1964 (April)	<p>Liturgy of the Word – Impact and Problems – A New Approach to the Liturgical Homily – Balthasar Fischer The Living Word of God – H.J. Richards Hearers of the Word: Problems of Communication – Brian Connolly A Liturgical Appraisal of Vernacular Translations of the Scripture – Columba Breen Vernacular Chants in the Liturgy of the Word – Bede Lynch</p> <p>The congress also featured a panel discussion on ‘the new shape of the Mass’</p>
1965 (April)	<p>Christ in our Midst: New light on the Christian Life from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy - Christ in the Liturgy – Placid Murray The New Consitution: A comment from the parish – Joseph Cunnane Every Sunday an Easter Sunday – Vincent Ryan Bible Vigils in the Parish – J. Morley The Liturgy in a German Parish – Alfons Kirchgässner, Frankfurt am Main ‘Et Cum Spiritu Tuo’ – Paulinus Milner</p> <p>The congress also featured a symposium on ‘Liturgy in the Teaching of Theology’. Contributors included Rev’s Kevin McNamara, Gerard Mitchell, Donal Flanagan, Michael Tynan and T. Curran.</p>
1966 (April)	<p>Christian Prayer in Scripture, Liturgy and Catholic practice – Mary in the Liturgy and in Catholic Devotion – Rene Laurentin Popular Devotion in Modern Catholic Piety – Eltin Griffin, Christopher O’Donnell and Thomas Uas de Bhal The Biblical Approach to Prayer in Christ – K. Condon Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in a time of Liturgical transition - Placid Murray OSB</p> <p>For the first time, a panel of laypeople took part in the Congress. They participated in a discussion on ‘Prayer Pattern for the Family’. The panel members were John Horgan, Dublin; Mrs W. Cassidy, Dublin; Mrs Davy, Dublin; James Barton, Dublin; and Kevin O’Kelly of Telefís Éireann.</p>

1967 (April)	The Mass in Renewal – Speakers include Archbishop Thomas Morris of Cashel and the French liturgist Pierre-Marie Gy.
1968 (April)	The Community at Worship – Speakers include Rev Heinrich Rennings of the Liturgical Institute, Trier, Germany, Bishop Henry Murphy of Limerick and Rev Ronan Drury, Maynooth.
1970 (April)	Group Masses and the Christian Community –
1971(April)	The People and The Book: the experience of the new Lectionary.

Source: *Irish Catholic Directory*, various issues, 1960-1972. An edited collection of the papers presented at the first six congresses (1954-59) was published in 1961. A second volume was published in 1962 covering the years 1960 and 1961. A third volume, covering the years 1962 to 1965, was published in 1967. ¹ Volume 1 also contains the results of a surveys on 'The Funeral Service in Ireland' and 'Eucharistic Piety in Irish practice'.

Information for the congresses of 1969 and 1972-74 is not available

¹ See footnote no. 54 in Chapter Two.

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