

Liturgy, Inculturation and the reception of *Sacrosanctum concilium* 37-40: an on-going project for those who preside?

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It is now proverbial wisdom that the reception of a council takes decades, or even longer; and that we are only now, after more than half a century, uncovering the real significance of what the Second Vatican Council means for the Church.<sup>1</sup> The time lapse in reception has many factors not least that distinctive shifts in emphasis take far longer be appreciated in a real way that practical changes which, for good or ill, can be accomplished by *fiat*. So that the reception, fast or slow, of the Council is not a uniform process, akin to waiting for paint to dry, but some elements have been thoroughly absorbed into the Church's life, some elements have received hardly any attention, and then there is vast middle area where the Council has been received to a greater or lesser extent. Assuming those uneven levels of reception it is interesting to read afresh the first of the Council's four constitutions, *Sacrosanctum concilium* [SC], and the one that more explicitly called for renewal, to see the extent its teaching can be seen to have taken effect.<sup>2</sup>

One area where very little change has been seen is in relation to 'adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples' (i.e. nn. 37-40). There the Council set out the principle that the liturgy could admit into itself materials belonging to human cultures which 'harmonize with its true and authentic spirit.' In the intervening years this desire and endeavour has been given many names, the most common being 'inculturation' and has developed a detailed literature in which the most eminent name is that of Anscar Chupungco (1939-2013) who in a string of publications has tried to tease out the significance of the process and how it should lead to an enrichment of the Church:

Inculturation fosters mutual enrichment. Culture is evangelised when it comes into contact with the gospel message that the church proclaims during worship ... In turn, however, Christian worship is enriched by the culture

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<sup>1</sup> See John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte* (Vatican, 2001), n. 57.

<sup>2</sup> It was promulgated on 4 Dec 1963. The translation in A. Flannery ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Wilmington, DE, 1975) will be followed.

it embraces, as the liturgies of the Eastern and Western Churches attest.<sup>3</sup>

However, whatever terminology is used there was a call at the Council for a deliberate dialogical relationship between the liturgy and culture, and it is this relationship, rather than any particular modelling of it, that is my concern here.

The exact mandate of the Council is worth quoting:

Even in the liturgy the Church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters that do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community. Rather does she respect and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations. Anything in these people's way of life which is not indissolubly bound up with superstition and error she studies with sympathy, and, if possible, preserves intact. She sometimes even admits such things into the liturgy itself, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit. (37)

Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission countries. ... (38) ...

In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed, and this entails greater difficulties ... [to] carefully and prudently consider which elements from the traditions and cultures of individual peoples might appropriately be admitted into divine worship. ... Because liturgical laws usually involve special difficulties with respect to adaptation, especially in mission lands, men who are experts in the matters in question must be employed to formulate them. (40)

So, how has that challenge and vision being taken up?

## **The novelty of Vatican II**

Probably the most common reaction to the Council's statement has been to see it as novel – a radical departure from the principles that had governed liturgy: it is part of the 'newness' of

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<sup>3</sup> 'Mission and Inculturation: East Asia and the Pacific' in G. Wainwright and K. Westerfield Tucker eds, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (Oxford, 2006), 661.

the Council and, consequently, for some a matter of suspicion. This claim to novelty is perhaps the most specious part of discussions; for if it is a new aspect of liturgical thinking, it is but a relative novelty. Since the late nineteenth century and the work of Louis Duchesne (1843-1922) it had been known, if strenuously denied, that the liturgy was continually adapting to the various cultures in which it was celebrated – hence Chupungco’s comment; ‘as the liturgies of the Eastern and Western Churches attest’ – and that the post-Trent period of rigid uniformity was the anomaly within the history of the liturgy rather than the norm.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, those advocating inculturation and presenting it as a departure made their own task more difficult by not pointing out that such cultural adaptation had been the norm across the churches. While those who have criticised the notion on the basis of its novelty have not ignored the historical scholarship that was part of preparation for the Council especially in the area of liturgy.

Moreover, this study of the cultural adaptation of liturgy has not only continued but now can be seen to have exerted a far greater influence on the development of the liturgy than was ever imagined by Duchesne, Baumstark or Jungmann (1889-1975). The most important historical revision is in our understanding of how the meal pattern that is at the heart of what Christians now refer to as the Eucharist was adapted to the culture of the Greco-Roman symposium. While the exact historical sequence is, as always a matter of dispute among historians, few would see the now token meal as anything but the result of a process of contraction to the most minimal point of what was once a Greco-Roman evening meal, and that the symposium is the earliest liturgical form we can reconstruct for we can only infer the meal practice of Jesus through the sympotic lens.<sup>5</sup> Second, the shift from an evening meal / celebration to a morning event and to a stratified event of clergy and laity was yet another adaptation to Greco-Roman master-client structures. In effect, the eucharistic

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<sup>4</sup> This was pointed out by Anton Baumstark (1872-1948) in his *On the Historical Development of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN, 2011 [original: 1923]), 89-97.

<sup>5</sup> See D.E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis, MN, 2003).

gathering ceased being a symposium and became a *salutationes*.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, that the very structure of liturgical ministry, what is still often referred to as ‘the priesthood,’ was adapted so that it corresponded to the status structure of Roman society – the direct legacy is that Catholic bishops still wear, on occasion, purple soutanes while the ritual that constitutes the essential liturgical ministers (deacons, presbyters, bishops) is referred to as ‘ordination’ because it established them with the *ordo* [the elite system of the later empire] – in this case the *sacra ordo*. A fuller reception of Vatican II demands that we see inculturation as a process that is taking place de facto continuously, and that what should be seen to be called for is a more conscious and careful process that maximises the benefits while minimising the dangers of cultural adaptation.

The deeper notion underlying the Council’s statement that the Church can take over elements from any and every culture except that which is superstitious and erroneous is, itself, an ancient one – and is expressed in virtually this form by Augustine.<sup>7</sup> For Augustine it was the process of ‘despoiling the Egyptians’ (cf. Ex 12:35) and noting that Moses was expert in ‘all the arts of the Egyptians’ (cf. Acts 7:22), and on the basis of this logic Augustine was able to justify the value of secular learning for Christians. Augustine’s position was based on the notion that all wisdom had originated in God and, therefore, the Christian could find the footprints (*vestigia*) of that wisdom through culture. But it is worth recalling that Augustine propounded his theory in the face of those – most famously Jerome – who saw a Christian truth as whole and entire within itself and who imagined a chasm between human truth and cultural values (represented by Cicero) and revealed truth and it being a distinct culture (represented by Christ). So not only is the basic principle of SC n. 37 not new, neither is the dispute between those who argue for a continuity between the Christian liturgy and human culture, on one side, and those who see only a disruption between the liturgy, a sacred *ens in se*, and the cultures in which those who celebrate that liturgy live.

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<sup>6</sup> See C. Leonhard, ‘Morning *salutationes* and the Decline of Symptotic Eucharists in the Third Century,’ *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 18(2014)420-42.

<sup>7</sup> *De doctrina Christiana* 2.

While not often noted as a liturgical principle, the basic inspiration of inculturation is that all truth has its origins in God and the whole of the creation somehow and to some extent reveals the divine nature: every human heart can know God – the basis of the traditional Catholic commitment to ‘the natural knowledge of God’ – and each heart can only find completion in God (Augustine’s *cor inquietum*). So perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the position of those who have criticised inculturation as a danger to ‘the substantial unity of the Roman rite’ or as a slippery slope towards syncretism is that they seem unaware of the impeccable intellectual pedigree upon which it calls. Since the Jewish theologians of the Second Temple Period adopted Greek language for the Scriptures and modified Greek philosophical categories for theological exposition, and that trajectory was continued by the followers of Jesus in their adoption of the Septuagint and their continuing in the Philonic path, inculturation – a dialogue of faith with the surrounding culture – has been the Christian mainstream.

### **The missiological agenda**

Coming as it does in the *liturgy* constitution (as distinct from other places in the Council’s deliberations on the Church in the world or its mission or dialogue with other religions) we have to see nn. 37-40 as the conciliar response to the Chinese Rites controversy that had been rumbling, with differing degrees of bitterness, since the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, some at the Council, probably the French in particular, were aware of the desire of several monks to seek out an Indian form of Christian monastic life and the work of such men as Henri Le Saux / Abhishiktananda (1910-73) and Bede Griffiths / Swami Dayananda (1906-93). Thus the section was seen as referring to *foreign* cultures using an implicit binary divide between western culture (where the Church was long established and the dominant religious expression) and other cultures (where Christianity was a new arrival and did not have a monopoly as the religious expression of the area’s population). Inherent in this was a further assumption that the Roman rite was wholly suitable for the cultures it encountered in western Europe and its cultural extensions. In short, if you spoke one of the western European

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<sup>8</sup> See. R.R. Noll ed., *100 Roman Documents concerning the Chinese Rites Controversy (1645-1951)* (San Francisco, CA, 1992).

languages you were assumed to have a rite well adapted to your culture in the standard form of the Roman rite (more or less as found in its *editiones typicae*); but if you spoke another language, then the rite might need adaptation to accommodate your non-western culture. This mission-lands perspective – which mapped on to the Catholic Church's own administrative structures within the Curia where such non-Christendom regions come under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith – can be seen in the references to 'mission countries' and its assumption that it would need specialists in cultures to appreciate difficult cultures, and it appears that this assumes that liturgists would be in dialogue not only with theologians but cultural anthropologists – and in the early 1960s anthropology was very much a far-foreign-lands discourse.

This dual perspective (home-lands / mission-lands) does appear to be a dominant factor in the reception of this part of the Council. When one looks at the celebration of the Roman rite in Europe, North America or Australia one sees very little variation in the ritual and there is little discussion of inculturation either as a concept or as a practical agenda for liturgical change. Conversely, it is among those who have gone to 'mission lands' who are most eloquent on the need to appreciate how different cultures react to the divine in a variety of ways and that these cultural languages should find expression in the liturgy. This, in turn, has led to a suspicion that inculturation is itself part of a colonialist-discourse. In the developed world they get the Roman rite pure, but in the [former] colonies they get an adaptation.

This attitude that 'inculturation belongs to the missions' is probably the greatest failure in the reception of Vatican II in liturgy. Firstly, the notion that there is a Christian 'homeland' is no more than a quaint nostalgia – it was, after all in 1943 that Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel published *France: pays de mission?* and by the 1960s many would have said that the question mark could now be omitted from the title. Moreover, the whole notion that there is either a distinctively *Christian* culture widespread in any part of the world or that one could ever consider a culture wholly evangelised would soon be questions that many would ask. Similarly, the notion that the inherited Roman rite or, since 1969, its reformed version could be seen as already adapted – as opposed to being chronically familiar – to any contemporary European culture is a fundamental question that touches upon

inculturation being a concern that affects all culture all the time. We cannot simply assume that the Roman rite as found in Rome-promulgated forms speaks to the experience of the range of modern cultures that can be found around the world.

Even if in the 1960s one could sustain the notion that there was a 'western culture' within which the Roman rite had emerged to its then known form and that most Catholics could appreciate that rite within their culture, then that notion is virtually unsustainable today. This is a variant on the insight that each new generation is a new continent for mission. In the time since First World War western cultures have undergone cultural change not only more profound than at any time since the Renaissance but this cultural change is on-going at a rate of change unprecedented in human history. We have given many names to this phenomenon but to say that we now live in 'a secular age,' where religious identification and belonging is simply one option in a range of options, is probably the most convenient shorthand.<sup>9</sup> The fact that so many people – albeit for a variety of given reasons – no longer find that the liturgy a valuable, regular place in their lives cannot simply be explained by recourse to the hypotheses of personal sin and cultural disorder: there is a chasm between the expectations that many people in many western cultures have from religious ritual and what they experience in the liturgy.<sup>10</sup> That these dissonances between the form of the liturgy and the various expectations of contemporary 'European' cultures is not the subject of active studies of inculturation in those societies – or particular sections of those societies – must constitute a failure to receive this section of *SC*. Such adaptation is, indeed, linked back to the issue of missiology for it can be seen as a failure of mission.

### **The rejection of *SC* 37-40.**

It is fairly obvious travelling from place to place to see the extent to which the liturgy has been adapted or not by simply comparing what is celebrated on an average Sunday with the *editio typica* of the sacramentary. There are variations between areas – the style of celebration is very different in, for example,

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<sup>9</sup> See C. Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> See T. O'Loughlin, 'Eucharistic Celebrations: the Chasm between Idea and Reality,' *New Blackfriars* 91(2010)423-38.

Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking communities only a few kilometres away. In many places in Britain it is taken for granted that there will be communion *sub utraque specie*, but in most places this is unknown and not even considered as a desirable development. In North America, particularly where the surrounding Christian denominations present themselves as Bible-focused and preacher-led, there is an emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word that could not be found in Ireland, and such examples could be multiplied. But these variations are accidental – and even in the pre-1969 era the rubricians noted such stylistic variations from place to place – and do not constitute any conscious effort at adaptation. So in terms of this paper, such instances are simple evidence of the non-reception of SC 37-40.

However, while it is virtually impossible to find any explicit reject of those sections in any official documents, it is clear that the dominant Vatican voices in liturgy do not consider inculturation a desirable path in liturgical development. The most pristine example of this is the 2001 document *Liturgiam authenticam* which called for ‘a new era’ in the way the liturgy is translated – translation into living languages being *de facto* the primary act of inculturation. Moreover, it required a virtual word for word adherence to even the structure of the Latinity of the texts lest there be a departure from ‘sound doctrine.’<sup>11</sup> This document has now taken concrete expression in the most widely diffused language of the liturgy, after Latin, which is English. The 2011 English edition of the missal represents a centralisation of the style of the liturgy which runs in a wholly other direction to SC 37-40. Moreover, this move was justified, as earlier it was outlined in *Liturgiam authenticam*, as necessary as a defence of ‘sound doctrine’ in the face of threats from any source of liturgical inspiration other than the Roman rite itself.

Earlier in this paper it was pointed out that one can see SC 37-40 as the Council’s final response to the Chinese Rites Controversy in which it recognised the validity of those who had argued in favour of ‘the Chinese Rites,’ and from that perspective *Liturgiam authenticam* marks a return to the earlier positions taken by Rome from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries that condemned Chinese adaptations as the importation of corruption

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<sup>11</sup> See P. Jeffrey, *Translating Tradition: A Chant Historian Reads Liturgiam Authenticam* (Collegeville, MN, 2005).



into the liturgy. Thus viewed, *Liturgiam authenticam* is *de facto* a rejection of the conciliar text, and that rejection accord with the views on the liturgy of many in the Roman dicasteries over the past two decades.

### What constitutes ‘radical adaptation’?

Between the few who have argued learnedly and extensively for inculturation, e.g. Anscar Chupungco, and what has become the quasi-official Roman view of the matter, which took definite shape during the pontificate of Benedict XVI (2005-13), there stands the vast majority of Catholics who have only been marginally touched – the translation of the liturgy into their own languages apart – by the processes envisaged at the Council. We could go even further and say that most people who have leadership roles in the liturgy when faced with examples of inculturation wonder if it really means that much or is worth all the effort involved.

A practical example might clarify this ‘mixed reaction’ to inculturation. The Australian Church has made a long-term and serious commitment to adapting the liturgy to engage with the cultures of the indigenous people of Australia and the Torres Strait Islanders, and, indeed, that Church’s vision of inculturation was reflected in a statement by Pope John Paul II on a visit there in 1986.<sup>12</sup> Among many specific expressions was the adoption of the aboriginal ‘Smoking Ceremony’ as part of the eucharistic liturgy. This is explained as being, in its original setting, ‘a rite of purification and wholeness,’ which cannot be used as a substitution of the incensation at the beginning of the Eucharist. While the use of this native Australian ritual, merely by its presence in a formal liturgy, sends a message to all present against cultural imperialism, and visibly demonstrates that every culture is to be valued and the gospel is not to be seen as the exclusive property of any one culture, one is left with questions. Is the adoption of a single ritual item, in effect the equivalent of a word within a sentence, a case of engaging a new discourse (native to the original people of Australia) within which we, as

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<sup>12</sup> See J.F. Fitz-Herbert and C. Pilcher, ‘Towards Inculturation: An Australian Indigenous Contribution’ in C. Pilcher, D. Orr, and E. Harrington eds, *Vatican Council II: Reforming Liturgy* (Adelaide, 2013), 61-79.

disciples of Jesus, can worship God? Rather, in this adoption of the Smoke Ritual it seems we have an action that has been absorbed on the basis of inferring to it an equivalence of 'meanings.' However, meanings, while the claim to derive from a ritual, are themselves particular readings of the ritual event from within the memory and understanding of those offering the meaning as an explanation of what they are doing. This is not to decry the need for genuine 'local colour' in a ritual and the need for all taking part to have a sense of ownership of the ritual which only engagement with the particularity of place gives. But it still falls very far short of having the ritual language of the indigenous people of Australia being a new language, added to all the existing cultural languages of Christianity, singing the new song to the Lord (cf. Ps 149:1). There is another phenomenon as old as the ritual that is externally akin to inculturation but should not be confused with it: the import of the exotic. Is the adoption of the Smoke Ritual simply a case of having a new kind of thurible and incensation? One could do it Roman style, Byzantine style, or Australian style: but it is taken to mean the same whichever mode one adopts.

If we are to engage in deep inculturation we shall have to confront the reality that it opens the possibility of there being a new language – understood here as the equivalent of a ritual system – which addresses God rather than borrowing occasional words into our language on the basis that they are synonyms of words we already use. If the radical inculturation imagined in *SC* 37-40 is to take place we need not only the skills of the anthropologist and liturgist, but the creative imagination of the poet who recognises in the particular a universal need within the human condition. This in turn depends on a faith in the *missio Dei*: that God is already at work in every human heart and that the Spirit is already there in every human culture. We do not 'take over' bits, suitably purged of superstition and error, but offer to people what is distinct in the gospel for them to graft in to their culture and see how it brings this culture to a new finality.

### **Deep reception: searching for analogues**

If we think about inculturation in this more radical way the task is not to carry on a search for items familiar to one society that can be retained within the structures of Christian worship. Rather

it is to find structures within that new society which share in some ways the same visions and purposes as those which belong to the inherited Christian liturgy. It is a search for elements that are at once different (for they belong to the new society) but also similar in that they answer needs, hopes and desires within that society which can be given a new finality through the Christ. So the question facing the missionary – here understood as someone who is more likely to have to learn the language of a new generation who live in a ‘place’ very different from that of the missionary’s historical culture than a missionary who arrives on a geographically foreign shore and then, like Captain Cook, sees if he can speak with the natives – is whether there are structures in the new situation that reveal *some* of the same desires as those underlying Christian liturgy.

If we can imagine what these might look like, then we would have made some start in the process of this more demanding reception of SC 37-40. Here are three possibilities which are more sketches of ways of thinking than as concrete suggestions.

#### a. Meal sharing

Christians believe that the divine *vestigia* are rooted deep within human nature by the creator – indeed they assert a continuity between the laws within our nature and the divine will. Christians then go even further and assert that, in the light of the Logos becoming incarnate, our human nature is the place of our encounter with the divine. This, indeed, is the basis of a liturgy that takes place within the world rather than apart from it within a temple. The tent of meeting (*tabernaculum*) has been pitched among us in Jesus of Nazareth (Jn 1:14) and so ‘the true worshipers ... worship the Father in spirit and truth’ rather than in a specific sacral place (Jn 4:23). But nothing is so central to our humanity as our need for food and drink, and nothing is more central to human culture – and virtually all the cultures that make up that totality – than sharing of meals. We are not simply food consuming beings, but we are meal-sharing animals. Wherever there is a human society, there we find people working together to provide themselves with food, then there is further collaboration in preparing it and then that society celebrates itself in the sharing of food and drink. So close is this food

sharing to the spread of human cultures that we can generate an anthropology not only of food but of feasting.<sup>13</sup>

Now the task of the missionary is to observe – in both senses – those feasts and in those feasts, assuming that whatever is contrary to Christian faith is removed, offer the Christian thanksgiving to the Father and, in addition to the established sharing of that feast to share the loaf and cup in the fashion of Jesus. Eucharist arises within the human situation and is celebrated there. It takes its expression from the experience of those taking part and from the experience of the communities of Christians. This is a new ritual arising out of the Christian memory and a specific human culture. Just as the *cena Domini* was relocated at an administrator's breakfast,<sup>14</sup> so the location of our eucharistic praying may need to move again within a new cultural situation but this time with deliberation and care.

#### b. Celebrations of human unity

A logical presupposition of a shared culture is a rationale of some unity underlying our human collaboration: we sense we are not singletons but 'members.' That bond is familiar, local, linguistic, and practical – we live and work as groups. We then mythologize that sense of belonging in such notions as nations, and we do mythologize it positively (e.g. we promote common care) and negatively (e.g. we all too frequently define our boundaries in opposition to those outside us: 'the others' who may be dangerous, inferior, or not even equally human). How is that unity celebrated? Are those celebrations compatible with the Christian call to universal love and the demands of building peace on earth? It is in answering these questions – rather than asking the details of the interpreted 'meaning' of ritual acts – that we can discover those assemblies that can be the basis of our liturgical assemblies where we perform the Christian vision of belonging, being members of a body, and that body being the body of the Christ.

#### c. Thanksgiving and dependence

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<sup>13</sup> From the vast literature, see M. Jones, *Feast: Why Humans Share Food* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> See Leonhard, 2014.

At the core of all Christian worship is the acknowledgement of our dependence on God as the unique source of being – an awareness that has taken any number of expressions within Judaism and Christianity – intimately intertwined with this is the expression of thankful praise. In praise and thanksgiving we discover our dependence, and in discovering our dependence we become aware of the appropriateness of thanksgiving – eucharistic action – as our response to the divine generosity. Inchoate expressions of this way of relating to the divine is what our missionary must seek out in each human society, and then offer to it a name. Searching out this awareness may mean we discover the value of a particular ritual which then can become a Christian ritual. But our search must start with the awareness rather than with the detail of a ritual which can then be adopted as a splash of local colour.

In Acts, Luke presents us with this process of discovery and then offering a name (Acts 17:18-32), and in the aftermath of the Council theologians such as Karl Rahner (1904-84) took up the variant of this in the notion of the Anonymous Christian: that in the midst of human experience there is already an inchoate awareness of that which is seen in its named fullness in the Christ. It is this dynamic engagement with culture that is then given Christian value as Christian liturgy that would constitute the fuller reception of SC 37-40, and the sort of radical adaptation that it recognised as sometimes being needed.

### **Where is mission?**

Any study of the reception of a conciliar text must reckon with two distinct factors. First, it must study the varying speeds with which the new perspective or practice is adopted by those who look to it as normative: in this the history of reception can be seen as parallel to the history of the adoption of any human artefact. So, for example, one can study the gradual adoption of the Vulgate translation of the Scripture and its slow but steady advance from place to place between the fifth and ninth centuries, or indeed the adoption today of a particular computer programme, and assess the level of penetration and acceptance of the idea of inculturation. However, the ideas discussed in a council also belong to the dynamic environment of the evolution of doctrine, so that what is inspired by a council is as important as its formal adoption. This process of evolution happens whether

or not it is desired or welcomed by those who propound it: religious faith does not stand still even when religious authorities so decree. This process can be seen in the manner the questions and terminology of christology evolved between Nicaea (325 CE) and Chalcedon (450 CE), and it can be seen in relation to these sections of *SC*. It is equally clear that there are many who are deeply resistant to this notion that a council begins a process larger than what can be found in its texts. This discomfort can be seen in those who seek to limit the impact to a literal reading of the texts as if history stands still, and this usually takes the form of insisting on the council's words as judicial facts in opposition to 'the spirit of the council.' However, consideration of those who reject the fact of the evolution of ideas within any group would not add anything here.

In 1963 the question of adapting the liturgy – then still wholly in Latin – was envisaged in terms of translating a known, relatively fixed reality, the Roman rite, into specific new situations 'on the missions.' Today the situation of Catholic liturgy is wholly different: in every community the challenge is to translate the liturgy into the new cultural situations we find ourselves. This translation is not simply some quest for modernity, but so that the liturgy can achieve the same ends for which it came into being and the quality of that translating will be judged not by its fidelity to inherited forms but its effectiveness in achieving those objectives. Presented in these terms, the reception of *SC* 37-40 has hardly begun.