

# To Find a Synthesis Between What is Permanent and What Changes

**This is the full text of the talk given by Cardinal Paul-Emile Leger of Montreal at last week's Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church, a five day meeting of the world's top theologians at Toronto. Reports of other talks given there will be published in subsequent issues of the Courier.**

stallized a whole movement in the renewal of the theology in answer to the needs of his century. It is this sort of boldness of which we have need today.

Is this to say that a mere translation or even a transposition of the thought of Aquinas into the modes of contemporary thought can be considered as the substance of the renewal? A renewal which the Church must quickly effect if it is going to be able to answer to the questions of our contemporary world. I do not think so. There is much more to be done than this. What must then be said? The answer will be the result of your work. For, just as the Summa of the Angelic Doctor is an effort to synthesize both the secular and religious knowledge of the Middle Ages, so the theologian in the final years of the twentieth century must seek to harmonize our knowledge of the world of satellites and elec-

errors of the past have given the Church and the nations some hard lessons. At the present time they are beginning to achieve a greater mutual respect in the understanding of the areas of authority, and a better understanding of freedom of the individual, especially where religion is concerned. This change in mental habits merits the name of renewal for it applies the Gospel principles concerning the distinction of powers and the respect of conscience.

And here I must make mention of one of the most significant events of our time: I mean the meeting of the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth with the rulers of this world at the United Nations on October fourth, 1965. Pius IX resisted the Kings who sought the territory of the Papal States. For him it was the way at that moment in history of being faith-

of her life, as much because of the normal evolution of all living beings as because of the perpetual relapses caused by human weakness and stupidity.

The grain of mustard seed develops and grows; the plant to which it gives birth renews itself without cease until it has reached perfection. The yeast in the dough stretches and extends its action until all is leavened. The spouse of Christ put all her joy into the preparations for the wedding day in order to find herself before Him "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, as she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). The temple which builds itself through time, and which Christ is building constitutes, according to the word of Paul VI, "a fundamental conception of the life of the Church."

We do not have to destroy the Church to construct it anew in each century, but we would be wrong to believe that each one of the stones which have been put in place throughout the ages forms an integral part of its structure. We must have courage to knock down the now superfluous wall and useless tower. We must take care to see we do not disturb the foundations or obliterate the outlines. Above all, we must understand that our duty is to know how to fit our century, like a living stone, into the spiritual edifice.

of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit, and the unity of the Spirit.

### a) The Truth of the Spirit

Christ has told us two essential things concerning the Holy Spirit in the Church. He will "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26) and "he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13). In his book "Le Mystere du Temps," Jean Moroux has an admirable echo of these words when he writes that the help of the Spirit creates at the same time in the Church both memory and prophecy. When the Church takes account only of the present, she does nothing but change; if she looks only to the future, she does nothing but dream; only when she is conscious of being the living tradition of Christ is she truly renewed. When she considers the whole of time, past, present and future, she gathers strength from the revelation she has received, she gives it to the present and so prepares for the tomorrow of God. Without the Holy Spirit, we may see only what surrounds us and forget what has gone before.

Distrust or ignorance of tradition no doubt stirs up confusion and change, but it does not promote renewal. On the contrary, it endangers it. Renewal demands that we should be humble before the times and not think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

The truth of the Spirit commands that we submit ourselves to a continual and rigorous self-criticism. It is easy to talk about necessary changes in the Church, to take note, for example, of the principles of renewal enunciated by the Council to comment favorably and even to eulogize the renewal now going on. It is more difficult to seek out the ways in which the renewal must correct our own short-comings, disturb our habits and encourage our zeal. Without the Holy Spirit we will never get beyond words or become deeply and personally involved. The craze for change, especially in external matters, may easily become a first class excuse for putting off, into a more or less probable future, those real changes of the spirit and heart. If we judge with severity all meaningless routine which all too often degenerates into a vain and empty succession of mere sounds, we must also be cautious in the face of changes which are not brought about in the course of that unique search for real holiness which is one of the marks of the Church.

### b) The Witness of the Spirit

Change which seeks the path of least resistance is not evangelical, and cannot claim the dignity of renewal. Renewal is never accomplished by laziness, parody, or complacency. Since Pentecost the Church has been placed as a prophet before men. We must take on ourselves all that this vocation entails. We have to speak to the world in a language which it cannot understand without a gift of God. If we dilute the Christian message to the point where it does not surprise anyone who hears us, we are no longer prophets. The renewal I should make us abandon everything which, in our vocabularies, or our attitudes, hurts our brothers uselessly, and impedes their progress towards the truth, but the desire to speak an intelligible language must not make us forget that we speak of things, which are beyond the bounds of reason. Without the Holy Spirit our testimony before the world is empty and without weight. We are always exposed to the danger of saying nothing in an agreeable way, but then we are as Isaiah says as seers who see not, and prophets who do not prophesy (Is. 30:10). A true renewal cannot eliminate the folly of the cross, nor can it replace personal integrity.

It is by the witness of his life that a Christian best fulfills the witness of the Spirit. Even if the Christian paradox allows that we can be for others the truth of Christ if we do not live ourselves, it remains true as Pius XI said: "when the zeal of the reformer has not personal integrity, but is the expression and the explosion of passion, he has mudied rather than clarified, destroyed rather than built. It takes more than wishing to be a reformer! No one can arrogate to himself the right to renew the life of the Church. The Christian who sees himself placed in circumstances which tempt him to criticize the established order, and to set up new forms of thought, or prayer, or of action, must first of all try to put himself in the presence of the Holy Spirit. If he fails in this his action even without ill-will on his part, can become a counter-witness. And it is thus that the unity of the Christian community is imperilled.

### c) Unity of the Spirit

The ecumenical movement dominates the present scene and animates a great deal of today's renewal. . . . unless it is more true to say that it is the renewal of the Church which has instituted it and rendered it more effective. The tremendous effort of rapprochement among Christians, which can only come from the Spirit, carries more than one paradox with it. It is only two of these. Ecumenism, no matter how outgoing it may be, is impossible without the fidelity of each of us to his own tradition, and the love of our own brethren.

If the ecumenical movement is to be a leaven of renewal, it must not encourage people to underestimate the disparity of the different Christian traditions in the interests of a supposed common heritage satisfactory to all only so long as its nature remains vague and imprecise. Each one must, therefore, try to be as faithful as possible to his own Church. The Churches, which renew themselves in order to be more truly themselves in faithfully following Christ will certainly one day be united, for their renewals arise from the same source, and their faithfulness converges.

Paradoxically unity will not be achieved unless each one, guided by the Holy Spirit, endeavors to be himself in Christ and to respect the other as an other. We do not have to copy each other to join together; it is enough to go to the end of the path laid down before us by our own tradition. Following that path will, no doubt, discover that we are not so far from each other, and at the end Christ will meet us in that unity which he has always willed.

Each Church must walk in unity towards unity. If the division line between the Churches is blurred today, it all too often, alas, permits the development within the different Churches of dangerous internal divisions. Enlightened minds have a tendency to rejoice too soon in their common victories against those they view as being the arriere garde of their own community. If we must congratulate ourselves for having overcome prejudices, we must be careful not to provoke, in the name of an ill-conceived ecumenism, new divisions. Those who, in the presence of ecumenism hesitate for valid reasons (such as the desire to be faithful to their tradition), may in their hesitation prove to be a precious help in defining the objects to be attained. In any case we will not arrive at unity by breaking up our own communities.

Ecumenism between our Churches must rest on ecumenism within each Church, for the saying is still true, here more than elsewhere, that a well-ordered charity begins with oneself. The Church is a people on the march. All renewal hastens this process, and we must know how to create the conditions for a progressive and unified renewal.

### Conclusion

We have seen how the Church, faithful to the truth, in the witness and the unity of the Holy Spirit, may fearlessly take the road to renewal which is a constant of her history and a law of her life. It is in this spirit that I ask you to begin the work inscribed on the agenda of the present Congress. An immense task awaits you of which your debates and your studies will be little more than a beginning. The renewal of the Church in her doctrine demands an effort of reflection which goes beyond what is possessed by even the most endowed of the theologians. Together, however, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in company with the whole Church you may hope to shed some light on the most pressing problems.

Theology must become more flexible and diversified, and the progress in Biblical research and the study of the Fathers of the Church have already made this clear. But we must soon go further and deal frankly with the question of theological language in the face of a secularized world in order to move forward effectively with the renewal of the Church in her doctrine.

Theological language is indispensable. It is the necessary vehicle through which we understand and say what we can about God, Christ, the Church, sin and redemption. Faith is not simply an ineffable response to the Word of God, but it is social and must therefore be expressed in propositions which do not falsify it. Yet a constant vigilance must be exercised because modes of expression grow old quickly, and when it is too late we may find that they are empty. Father Karl Rahner reminds us that to do nothing in such a case is an indication of indifference to that very truth which one wishes to defend. It betrays a lack of power of appropriation and of practical assimilation which denotes a sort of concealed unbelief and which he does not hesitate to call heresy, "a heresy in which dead orthodoxy is merely the result and expression of an inner indifference towards truth." We must nonetheless be wary of an iconoclasm which unleashes itself against every ancient formula and be on our guard against idolatry which manifests itself in a worship of new forms.

In an area of such complexity, your discussion is the best way of serving the Magisterium and the Church. The golden rule in all our work will be that dictated by an unfeigned charity and for a theologian, it is not true that the highest form of this charity will be expressed in a filial love of the Church, one and holy.

The true reformers have been saints. For them, the Church was before everything else a loving mother to whom they offered an unconditional service. Their theological reflections were accompanied by hymns of praise in which they glorified their holy Mother. The "Sancta

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Cardinal Leger in inaugural of Toronto Theology Congress.

tronic machines, with the unchangeable universal salvific will of God.

I have the deepest conviction that this effort cannot be done today by a single man, even though he be a genius. Theologians must sooner or later work in groups, and organize laboratories of research just as do the chemists and biologists who submit their hypothesis to the verification of thousands of experiments before putting a simple product on the pharmaceutical market.

Take, for example, the question of the presentation of the doctrine of original sin. The theologian must take account of the findings of paleontology. And what does this new science tell us? It has pushed back the origins of man to the dim past of pre-history. We are forced to think in terms of millions rather than of the four thousand years of our little catechisms. On the other hand, the theologian must accept with respect a dogma which is based on the authenticity of the Word of God.

Holding onto these two links of the chain, he — the theologian — must seek, with an effort which at times will demand heroism, to formulate the revealed truth in a way which will not contradict the findings of science. He may, in a sense, evaluate the findings of science, yet he must also respect them, because science has its own requirements and autonomy; but, on the other hand, his research must be in perfect harmony with the affirmations of the Magisterium. If there was ever a case where the theologians should have recourse to the findings of the exegete it is here. But this is only one of a thousand cases.

The Church has often changed its ways of dealing with nations. The Church of the martyrs, under Nero, Domitian or Trajan, could not suspect that there would come a day which would see the Edict of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Empire. It would no doubt have thought it dangerous, as we today think it astonishing, to see Charlemagne kissing, one after another, all the steps of St. Peter's, and then entering the Basilica hand in hand with Adrian the First. The vicissitudes of history, and even the

ful to his role as the guardian of tradition, and in the political-sociological conditions of the time could he have acted otherwise? It is not up to us to say. But what renewal in the attitude of a Church who now claims nothing else, nothing more, and nothing less than the liberty of proclaiming to the world the message of salvation, in its own proper role of the servant of God and the servant of humanity?

The Church has changed its behaviour towards those who do not wholly share its faith. We are far from the time of anathemas, of the controversy over icons, and religious wars. Today the Ecumenical Movement discourages intemperance, condemnations and fratricidal battles and seeks to replace them by the conversion of each to Christ, and by a common witness to the Gospel in a mutual love of truth, and a profound spirit of charity. A renewal such as this may be called a revolution if we care to remember the words of Peguy: "A revolution is an appeal to a more perfect tradition." I will return later to this point of such primary importance.

The Church has also gradually changed its attitude towards secular values, and has now opened itself to sources which are not ecclesial in the strict sense. More and more, as the Council says, the Christian community "realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history." The distrust of the world and of progress — as well as an unwarranted spiritualized view of all earthly activities — appears to us today to be against the spirit of the Scriptures. From the first page of Genesis, where man receives the Universe as his portion, to the end of the Apocalypse, where he is promised a new heaven and a new earth, man is called on to complete the work of the Creation.

We need only a sense of history to understand that, in the past, the Church has renewed herself many times, and in the present, she is renewing herself before our eyes. It is a constant of her history. Why? Because it is a law of her life.

### The Law of Renewal

2. The Biblical images which evoke the mystery of the Church make us see renewal as a law

The Archbishop of Toronto must, this evening, be a very happy man. He has succeeded in re-uniting in his Church such a constellation of eminent theologians that Toronto will be, for a week, the capital of Christian thought. At the same time as we are discovering a new world created by the genius of man on the marvellous islands of the Universal Expo in Montreal, you, here, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will try to examine with prophetic eyes, the signs of the times. You will do this so as to grasp more firmly "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8), and in a way which will win the admiration of theologians of the future.

His Excellency Monsignor Pocock has led me the kindness to introduce me to this distinguished audience with words which have over-whelmed me. There is nothing more dangerous than these introductions whose literary genius often comes too close to that of fiction. . . . But I wonder if, in these matters, it would be possible to find a more sceptical group than one composed of theologians whose role is to discover, under its literary forms, the authenticity of the inspired word of God. . . . And that is why, My Lord Archbishop of Toronto, while thanking you with the deepest gratitude I would ask you to address a fraternal prayer to the Holy Spirit that this inaugural lecture may bring to its hearers the message of the mystery of Christ which the Apostle Paul sought to evoke in those to whom in addressed his words. (Eph. 3:18)

The subject in which the organizers of this Congress have asked me to speak this evening presents numerous difficulties. First of all there is the continual risk of reversing the terms, and so yield to the temptation of taking the easy way out and talk about the renewal of theology.

Well then, why do we make renewal one of the characteristics of the life of the Church? Is there not a great deal of good sense in the view of the descendant of David put forward so many years ago: "The preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven; it is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with." (Ecc. 1:12)

Happily, the exegetes will save the theologians once again by telling them not to take at face value this bantering malice, the product of the philosophy of a sceptical mind. We are faced here with a paradox of the Holy Spirit who uses such means to warn us never to accept the means for the end, and that in sum, our being men entails us to accept with courage the human condition in which God has placed us. And this condition demands that we turn our eyes with confidence towards that new heaven which was promised to us by the seer of the Apocalypse. (Apoc. 21:1) No, truthfully, when we ponder the matter we perceive that nothing is more foreign to the true vocation of the Church than stale custom and the debility of age. Notwithstanding the fact it has been divinely established and that from it springs the promise of eternity, the Church can never be satisfied with its attempt to be ever more like Christ and to follow his Gospel given to mankind. To be truly faithful the Church must continually renew itself. Those who refuse to accept the renewal because they believe themselves to be faithful to the Church could endanger its real faithfulness.

Renewal is not easy to define. Not all change is renewal: a thing can change for better or for worse; one can even, by changing after the canon, or by changing forms which have an abiding usefulness, which are, indeed, indispensable. The renewal demands we respect what is unalterable and that we cooperate in the unfolding of the true tradition. Nonetheless, renewal is not simply a return to many years of the past. It is rather what in French we call a ressourcement. A return to the sources in the sense that the life which gave birth to the Church must spring up ever more vigorously without endangering her own proper and unalterable nature.

The renewal tries to understand better God's revelation given once and for all to the Church, in order to put it into terms which are meaningful for the past and the present. It is a more faithful listening to the Word in order that it may be proclaimed more effectively.

"In his gracious goodness," says the Council "God has seen to it that what he has revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations." Renewal cannot change the Word of God nor allow any part of what has been revealed to be lost. Otherwise it could not be termed renewal, and far from revitalizing the Church, would cut it off from what is vital to its life. Renewal, in sum, must not only renew the leadership of the Magisterium, respect Tradition and Scripture, must be based upon them.

There is, in the Church, more than any other historical community, a tension between fidelity to the unalterable and the necessary adaptation which life imposes. The Magisterium, the servant of the Word, must

therefore remain in constant touch with Tradition and Scripture without ever divorcing itself from the present, and the self from the circumstances in which the Church exercises her mission. It is to witness to your attachment to this Magisterium, much more than to ask me to display a competence which I do not possess in theological matters, that you have asked me to inaugurate, in my capacity as bishop, this international Congress of Theology. The Magisterium is a guide in your reflection and a constant reminder of the ecclesial reality. It seeks to find, as do you, although in a different manner, the synthesis between what is permanent and what changes. It is its duty to maintain harmony between that which cannot change and that which must be renewed.

To fulfill this task properly, the Magisterium needs you, and you need freedom. Your freedom is not only of importance, but is essential for your work. The fidelity of the theologian to the Magisterium must not be interpreted as a passive obedience which excludes all initiative. Rather must it be understood in the light of different gifts bestowed by the Spirit on the Church for different (Eph. 4:11) functions and charisms.

The Council recognized that theologians had "a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence." Such a freedom well understood, and accompanied by sincere self-criticism, will put your efforts at the service of a true renewal of the Church, and, in collaboration with the Magisterium, ensure that the Word of God is heard in a world which is changing constantly.

In order to clarify the sense of renewal in the Church, and the practice of your essential freedom, let us seek together to find why the Church must renew herself. I see three reasons which have provided me with three topics. The Church renews herself because it is:

- 1) a constant of her history
- 2) a law of her life
- 3) a condition of her faithfulness.

### Always Renewed

1. God has entered into history. The Gospel is lived in time and the Church evolves in a world of change. Two thousand years of life is a relatively short time, but it is long enough to enable us to sketch an outline of the important changes which have happened in the Church.

The Church has changed its ways of prayer many times, without altering the essentials of its liturgical and sacramental life. The Latin Church, for example, prayed in Greek so long as Greek was spoken in Rome; in the Middle Ages she changed to Latin; today her liturgical languages are as diversified as the many living languages required for her expansion in depth and in width. These changes presupposed courage and self-denial. We have had to abandon in large measure ways of expression of undeniable beauty in order not to smother, by unnecessary retention, that which they sought to expose. We have had, as Father Comarieu said, "to be faithful to the principle in depth, and as be faithful to the forms which it has taken on the surface." This is an example of a healthy change which was not the result of following fashion, of feebleness, or of a policy of concessions, all of these strangers to the Gospel.

Here, however, the bishop wishes to comment on these changes. These remarks are suggested by that charity which remains the supreme law of the Church of Christ.

Impatient people do not understand the slowness, which seems to be impeding all the efforts of renewal while the pusillanimous have the idea that the least change in detail undermines discipline and is even a danger for the faith. Where, then, are we going to find the true renewal? In a sincere seeking for the truth. There have always been explorers in the Church. Their presence is useful, even essential. Their vocation reminds us of that of the prophets in Israel. But the prophetic action did not according to the design of Providence, supplant the role of the judges, the administrators and the priests of the old covenant.

In the Church prudence must inspire and balance the action of the bishops who have been chosen by the Holy Spirit himself to guide and sanctify the People of God. Impatience as well as inertia may compromise all real renewal which must, even if this involves delay in its application, receive the approbation of the Magisterium.

The Church has changed its ways of expressing the Christian Mystery through our mental categories. After the rabbinical sort of exegesis of St. Paul and the early Fathers of the Church, after countless confrontations with the Greek and Arab philosophers, St. Thomas Aquinas wonderfully expressed the Christian faith using the categories of Aristotle. We forget too easily the scandal this genius provoked among his contemporaries. Thomas Aquinas innovated, but his boldness merits the name of renewal because, without losing a particle of the revealed truth, he cry-



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Lawyers' M September

Bishop Sheen will be the annual Lawyers' F in St. Joseph Church, Sept. 18 at 9 a.m. to opening of the court Rochester diocese area

Judges, attorneys and officials will attend T. The public is invited to Supreme Court Justic J. O'Mara, general chaital plans will be a next week.

Missionary Jesuit F Greetings M

Father Merlin A. S.J. who has served Jesuit missions for 34 on his third trip he past week, and visited activities in the Rochester

The veteran mission served as a parish priest colony chaplain, team construction administrin World War II, he ed a parish on the four years in the mountains.

He is a native of N.Y. and spent much past three months with hundreds of relatives abouts. Over the past he was at the home of in (Mrs. William Glas Carfer St. Occasion 25th anniversary of the sion of her vows by the sister, Sister M. Annun Sister of Mercy assign year to St. Louis School, Pittsford.

Two months ago, wi ing another cousin

Rochester Names H

Gilbert A. Henner, ident and treasurer o ter Telephone Corpor board elected to the c board of directors, C Benetti, Rochester president, announced

Henner replaces J Wilson on the board. son, who was vice operations for Rochester phone, died earlier th

Henner joined Telephone in 1931 as the statistical section. served as staff accountant, intern and general accountant. He was named assistant and in 1960 controller elected vice president in 1962 and vice president a year later

Henner, a native of ter, was graduated from High School and the University of Rochester graduating from Business Institute in

Henner is president Rochester chapter of tional Association of tants, vice president, Rochester chapter of tial Executives Instit president of Genesee Telephone Pioneers o ica, a member of the