

The Identity of *Nova et Vetera*

CHARLES MOREROD, O.P.
Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas
Rome, Italy

THE PERIODICAL *Nova et Vetera* was founded in 1926 by two priests of the diocese of Lausanne, Geneva, and Fribourg: Charles Journet (1891–1975) and François Charrière (1893–1976). The first one spent his life teaching in the diocesan seminary in Fribourg (also giving weekly public conferences in his city of Geneva and preaching many retreats), even after he was made a cardinal in 1965. The second one worked for the periodical only in the initial years, and was bishop of the diocese between 1945 and 1970.¹

“Catholic Periodical for French-Speaking Switzerland”

The periodical initially had the subtitle “Catholic Periodical for French-Speaking Switzerland.”² The initial purpose was to fill a cultural gap: Switzerland was then under the domination of a mixture of the Protestant and Enlightenment mindsets. Until the University of Fribourg was founded in 1889, all Swiss universities were in Protestant cities³ and had Protestant faculties of theology. Catholic cantons were rural and poor. In the Protestant cities, Catholics were perceived as culturally inferior, an attitude that Journet noticed early in his life, since he grew up in Geneva, the city where Calvin had spent the last twenty-three years of his life and where Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born. It was usual for Catholics in Geneva to receive leaflets of Protestant propaganda in their mailboxes, and Journet replied to such attacks in books of Catholic apologetics. Before he

¹ He published most of his articles during the first four years of the periodical, a few in the 1930s, and one in 1945.

² “Revue catholique pour la Suisse romande.”

³ Basel, Berne, Geneva, Lausanne, Neuchatel, Zurich.

was forty years old, he had already published *L'esprit du protestantisme en Suisse* (1925), *L'union des Églises* (1927), and *De la Bible catholique à la Bible protestante* (1930).⁴ These books help us understand the original orientation of the periodical founded during the same period. For instance, *De la Bible catholique à la Bible protestante* expresses in the first place a joyful gratitude for the divine gifts:

Here is a God of love. He calls us to the participation in his riches, his life, his happiness, his light. . . . He thus communicates to us as of now the definitive certainties, those which in the radiance of the last day will not be the cloud which is dissipated, but the flower which opens out.⁵

Because of his Catholic joy at having received the gift of faith, whose substance remains in the beatific vision, Journet denied the Protestant claim to have—unlike Catholics—kept the Bible. He actually thinks exactly the opposite:

The Reformation took the Bible from the Church in order to give it to the whole people, without intermediary, without go-between. . . . But one soon perceives that this Bible, put naked into the world, would melt there like ice. The Reformers hurried to add their glosses to it, their elucidations, their commentaries. They made a new habit for it. It was, they said, its true habit of the Apostolic times, rediscovered intact after fifteen centuries. For the divine presentation of Scripture in the Church, they substituted, from the beginning and after they had promised a pure Bible, the divine presentation of the Bible by the Reformers. Obviously, that was a substitute. But where the commonly received Bible did not have enough room in the clothes given to it by Luther, he did not hesitate to amputate. The texts and the meanings which did not fit the doctrine of justification by faith alone . . . he excluded from the new Bible. . . . Learned people of liberal Protestantism, nowadays, have taken the Bible out of the clothes it had received from the Reformation and which are still venerated in several small cults. For them [liberals], the Bible is no longer the unique divine book. Then there is no reason any longer to present it in a divine context. Its only fitting context is the modern spirit. . . . The move of taking the Bible from the

⁴ *L'esprit du protestantisme en Suisse* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1925); *L'union des Églises* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1927); *De la Bible catholique à la Bible protestante* (Paris: André Blot, 1930).

⁵ “Voilà bien un Dieu d’amour. Il nous appelle à la participation de ses richesses, de sa vie, de sa félicité, de sa lumière. . . . Il nous communique donc dès maintenant les certitudes définitives, celles qui dans le grand soleil du dernier jour ne seront point la nuée qui se dissipe, mais la fleur qui s’épanouit” (*De la Bible catholique à la Bible protestante*, 17).

Church to give it to the world could seem to be generous. But in fact it meant taking a heart out of a living body so that it could beat more freely. This heart can be put for a while into an artificial environment. It still beats there for a certain time, perhaps even a long time. Then it becomes enfeebled, it stops. It decomposes and finally the nourishing liquid becomes no more than a watery gruel. The Bible taken from the Church was divine. They wanted to immerse it in humanity. It has so far decomposed that today it is no more than a human Bible.⁶

L'esprit du protestantisme en Suisse concludes radically: "At the same time that the Creed disintegrated, the Bible lost all its significance as divine book."⁷

The seemingly limited initial distance between the Reformation and the Catholic tradition led to two different views of the world:

Zwingli, under the guise of evangelical life, undertook like Luther to preach "angelism" to the world. . . . He protested, for example, against feast days and pilgrimages, declaring that "time and space are subject to Christians, and not conversely." . . . The ignorance of the help which the temporal things bring to the life of the spirit inaugurated, between the Protestant religion and the liturgical and plastic arts, an incompatibility

⁶ "La Réforme ôta la Bible à l'Église pour la donner au peuple toute pure, sans intermédiaire, sans écran. . . . Mais on s'aperçut aussitôt que cette Bible, mise toute nue dans le monde, allait y fondre comme un glaçon. Les Réformateurs s'empressèrent de l'entourer de leurs gloses, de leurs élucidations, de leurs commentaires. Ils lui refirent un nouvel habit. C'était, expliquaient-ils, sa vraie robe des temps apostoliques, qu'on redécouvrait intacte après quinze siècles. A la présentation divine de l'Écriture par l'Église, on substituait, dès le début, après avoir promis la Bible toute pure, la présentation divine de l'Écriture par les Réformateurs. Manifestement, c'était un ersatz. Or, la Bible communément reçue se trouvant à l'étroit dans le vêtement que lui taillait Luther, celui-ci n'hésita pas à l'amputer. Les textes et les sens qui ne cadraient pas avec la doctrine de la justification par la foi seule . . . furent exclus par lui de la nouvelle Bible. . . . Les savants du protestantisme libéral ont, de nos jours, enlevé à la Bible le vêtement que lui avait mis la Réforme et qu'on vénère encore dans plusieurs petites sectes. La Bible n'est plus, pour eux, l'unique livre divin. On n'a donc plus aucune raison de la présenter dans un appareil divin. La seule atmosphère qui lui convienne, c'est l'esprit moderne. . . . Le geste par lequel on avait ôté la Bible à l'Église pour la donner au monde avait pu sembler généreux. C'était, au vrai, le geste par lequel on enlève d'une poitrine un cœur vivant pour qu'il batte plus librement. On peut le mettre dans un milieu artificiel. Il y palpète pendant un certain temps, parfois même longtemps. Puis il s'étirole, il s'arrête. Il se décompose et ne fait plus, enfin, avec le liquide nourricier, qu'une seule bouillie. La Bible qu'on avait prise à l'Église était divine. On l'a voulu plonger en pleine humanité. Elle s'y est tellement décomposée qu'elle n'est plus aujourd'hui qu'une Bible humaine" (*De la Bible catholique à la Bible protestante*, 54–60).

⁷ "En même temps que s'est effrité le Credo, la Bible a perdu toute sa signification de livre divin" (*L'esprit du protestantisme en Suisse*, 60).

which Calvin was to worsen. . . . It prepared . . . the ruin of the belief in the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh. . . . More generally, it installed at the heart of Protestantism a mistake still more fundamental, a disembodied spiritualism, of which the increasingly radical effects today are apparent to all eyes, how essentially the spiritualism of reformed religion contradicts the spirituality of the religion of the Word made flesh. Christianity is the religion of the Incarnation and sacramentality. In [Christianity], matter became able to transmit to the world divine holiness, since it has been raised to the extraordinary dignity of being the instrument by which God pours grace into souls: instrument united with the Divinity in the humanity of Christ and the mystery of the Incarnation, separate instrument in the sacramental rites.⁸

Journet identifies these two—Catholic and Protestant—complete views of the relationship between God and the world. He is grateful to God for the Catholic view, and therefore sorry for the distortion that he sees around him. It becomes his mission to show the badly informed Swiss Catholics that they don't have any reason to accept the inferiority complex that the dominant Protestant culture tries to instill into them. Is he speaking against ecumenism? It would be an anachronism to say that. He was repelling attacks upon the joy of being Catholic. Already during the first year of *Nova et Vetera* he published several articles that laid the groundwork for his future book *L'union des Églises*,⁹ where he proposed a theological judgment on the new Movement of Faith and Order (which would merge into the World Council of Churches when it was

⁸ "Mais Zwingli, sous couvert de vie évangélique, entreprit comme Luther de prêcher au monde l'angélisme." . . . Il s'éleva, par exemple, contre les jours de fêtes et les pèlerinages, en déclarant que 'le temps et le lieu sont soumis aux chrétiens, et non inversement. . . . La méconnaissance du secours que les choses temporelles apportent à la vie de l'esprit inaugurerait, entre la religion protestante et les arts liturgiques et plastiques, une incompatibilité que devait aggraver Calvin. . . . Elle préparait . . . la ruine de la croyance au dogme de la résurrection de la chair. . . . Plus généralement, elle installait au cœur du protestantisme une méprise bien plus fondamentale encore, nous voulons parler d'un spiritualisme de la désincarnation, dont les effets de plus en plus radicaux rendent aujourd'hui sensible à tous les yeux, combien essentiellement la spiritualisme de la religion réformée contredit le spiritualisme de la religion du Verbe fait chair. Le christianisme est la religion de l'Incarnation et de la Sacramentalité. Avec lui, la matière est devenue capable de transmettre au monde la sainteté divine, puisqu'elle a été élevée à la dignité extraordinaire d'être l'instrument par lequel Dieu verse la grâce dans les âmes: instrument conjoint à la Divinité s'il s'agit de l'humanité du Christ et du mystère de l'Incarnation, instrument séparé s'il s'agit des rites sacramentels" (*L'esprit du protestantisme en Suisse*, 24–25).

⁹ "Rome et Stockholm," *Nova et Vetera* (1926): 117–40; *Nova et Vetera* (1926): 263–96; *Nova et Vetera* (1926): 445–76.

created in 1948). This book shows his approach to the ecumenical question. He did not see it as totally negative:

If, from the beginning, the Catholic Church has kept away from the great collective effort leading to the Congress of Stockholm, it is not that all, in this effort, was considered to be condemned. The Church was being careful to distinguish truth from illusion.¹⁰

The unity that Faith and Order sought was simply not good enough. Because he loved them, Journet wanted more for non-Catholic Christians:

The non-Catholics would see that if, instead of going to them, we ask them to come to us, it is not that we are lacking in love, it is that we would like to call them to the participation of a unity higher than that of their dreams.¹¹

The first period of *Nova et Vetera* was therefore first of all that of a “Catholic Periodical for French-Speaking Switzerland,” in the context of joyful defense of the beauty of being Catholic. Was it not ecumenical enough? Journet’s statements are not so different from the one expressed by Pope Paul VI during Vatican II:

If you understand this great problem of the restoration of Christians to the unity willed by Christ, if you perceive its importance and its historical maturing, you will feel rising from the depth of your soul a wonderful and precise witnessing to that Catholic safety that will tell you within yourself: I am already in the unity willed by Christ, I am already within his flock, because I am Catholic, because I am with Peter. This is a great prerogative, this is a great consolation; Catholics, enjoy it. Faithful, be conscious of that privileged position, due of course not to the merit of anybody, but to the bounty of God, who called us to such a happy position.¹²

¹⁰ “Si, dès le début, l’Église catholique s’est tenue à l’écart du grand effort collectif aboutissant au congrès de Stockholm, ce n’est pas que tout, dans cet effort, lui parût blâmable. Elle restait attentive à discerner la vérité de l’illusion.” (*L’union des Églises*, 14)

¹¹ “Les non-catholiques . . . verraient que si, au lieu d’aller à eux, nous leur demandons de venir à nous, ce n’est pas que nous manquions d’amour, c’est que nous voudrions les appeler à la participation d’une unité plus haute que celle de leurs rêves” (*L’union des Églises*, 14–15).

¹² “Se voi avete l’intelligenza di questo grande problema della ricomposizione dei cristiani nell’unità voluta da Cristo, se avete la percezione della sua importanza e della sua maturazione storica, sentirete salire dal fondo della vostra anima una meravigliosa e precisa testimonianza di quella sicurezza cattolica, che vi dirà intieramente: io sono già nell’unità voluta da Cristo, sono già dentro il suo ovile,

Both Paul VI and Journet can affirm that the joyful certainty of Catholicity and a desire for Christian unity are not in opposition: they are actually the same thing, under different forms. The similarity between Journet and Paul VI is not surprising: Giovanni Battista Montini¹³ had been an explicit disciple of Journet before he became Pope. They first met in 1945, and Archbishop Montini invited Journet to preach in the diocesan mission of Milan in 1957.¹⁴ Then, as Pope, he created Journet cardinal, and after the Council he called him weekly to ask for his advice.¹⁵

What Paul VI liked in Journet was above all his ecclesiology, the field of publication in which Journet is best known: the three volumes of the original edition of *L'Église du Verbe incarné* (The Church of the Word Incarnate),¹⁶ uniting articles first published in *Nova et Vetera*, is in fact a complete theological synthesis from an ecclesiological perspective. Fr. Congar said about this work that it “appears as the implementation of the synthesis of St. Thomas.”¹⁷ Starting from the difficult situation of Swiss Catholics—difficulty that had to do with the Church in itself—Journet built a whole theology that was much broader than the initial controversies.

An International Periodical in Time and over Time

New Series

In 1948, *Nova et Vetera* appeared with the new subtitle *Nouvelle Série* [New Series].¹⁸ The first article of the New Series was, very significantly, Jacques Maritain's speech as French ambassador to the Holy See at the Second General Assembly of UNESCO:¹⁹ it was an international open-

perché sono cattolico, perché sono con Pietro. È una grande fortuna, è una grande consolazione; cattolici, sappiate goderla. Fedeli, abbiate coscienza di codesta privilegiata posizione, dovuta certamente, non al merito di alcuno, ma alla bontà di Dio, che a sorte tanto felice ci ha chiamati” (Paul VI, General Audience, 22 Jan. 1964, *Osservatore Romano* 23 [Jan. 1964], 1).

¹³ That is, Paul VI.

¹⁴ See Guy Boissard, *Charles Journet, 1891–1975, Biographie* (Paris: Salvator, 2008), 467 and 474.

¹⁵ Personal testimony of the last secretary of Cardinal Journet, Fr. Bernard Genoud (who became bishop of Lausanne, Geneva, and Fribourg in 1999).

¹⁶ First published by Desclée de Brouwer (Paris) between 1941 and 1969, republished as part of the *Collected Works* by the Editions Saint-Augustin (Saint-Maurice) in four volumes between 1998 and 2004.

¹⁷ Yves M.-J. Congar, *Esquisses du mystère de l'Église* (Paris: Cerf, 1953), 7.

¹⁸ The subtitle was kept through the first issue of 1949. The second issue of 1949 received the subtitle *Revue trimestrielle* (Quarterly review), which the periodical still uses.

¹⁹ *Nova et Vetera* (1948): 1–14.

ing in the new season of a periodical that had become international. Nowadays, the French edition is sold on all continents, most prominently in France (first) and in Switzerland. Of course the international dimension was increased by the birth of the English Edition.

Still, the New Series of 1948 and the English Edition of 2003 do not inaugurate a new periodical. There is an important continuity with the line of the original *Revue catholique pour la Suisse romande*, for two main reasons: first, the cultural situation of the Catholics of Geneva in 1926 is in many ways similar to the contemporary global situation; second, the principles that guided the foundation of *Nova et Vetera* remain valid in different situations.

As a sign of continuity, the first issue of the English Edition of *Nova et Vetera* (Spring 2003) quoted at length the “Definition of Principles and Aims” published by Journet in the first issue of the French edition. These principles show immediately why a periodical published for a small region in a particular situation was from the beginning open to a more global role:

Our faith rests upon authenticated sources, namely, sacred Scripture as expounded and interpreted by the great Councils of Nicaea, Orange, Trent, Vatican I, and by papal documents. We seek to understand these sources by the guidance of that Doctor whose name we hold dear: St. Thomas Aquinas. Whatever the time period or culture through which these sources come to us, we believe that that which is truly Catholic will help us to live more fully and with greater integrity in our own respective cultures.²⁰

We recognize in this text Journet’s love for Revelation, and his intention to receive Scripture within Tradition. The full confidence that any culture can benefit from such a tradition reflects St. Thomas Aquinas’s confidence that “the false alone is opposed to the true”²¹ and that “every truth by whomsoever spoken is from the Holy Ghost as bestowing the natural light.”²²

Unity of New and Old

The continuity in the editorial position of the periodical over the course of its history grows out of principles expressed in its very name. There is no opposition of principle between new and old. In the very first issue of *Nova et Vetera*, Jacques Maritain defended himself against an accusation of living in the past because he had criticized Luther and Descartes:

²⁰ “Définitions” (*Nova et Vetera* [1926]), as translated in the English Edition 1 (2003): 2.

²¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book 1, chapter 7.

²² Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 109, a. 1, ad 1.

I never said . . . that the entirety of modern times bore the mark of Satan. . . . They reproach me for acting as if the will of God were absent from four centuries of history. Well! It was present also in paradise, when Adam fell. Strange Christianity, which seems to forget that the divine will allows evil, of course for a larger good!²³

In fact, as the 1926 Definitions explained, the point is not that something is old or recent. The name *Nova et Vêtera* expresses the conviction of something deeper than an unfounded temporal preference:

We consider ourselves neither retrograde nor adventurers, since both types oppose the past and future, both new things and old. Such an enterprise offers us little pleasure, particularly since it implies the choice of one over the other. We reject this dilemma. We instead seek to discover in each moment in time those numerous threads that can connect the past, present and future. We must set our sights high enough to allow the delicate hierarchy of spiritual values to reveal themselves, values that are capable of ordering, under the sign of God and of his Christ, the most noble and humble of manifestations of the intellectual and affective life, of the artistic and moral life, of the individual and corporate life, of national and international affairs, whether they be of yesterday, today or tomorrow. When they become aligned unto these spiritual values, human endeavors, works and institutions appear to possess a parcel of divine peace, no matter if they serve the usefulness of the moment or satisfy a purely passing need. At such moments, they give the impression of order, continuity and stability. They are at the same time known and unexpected, familiar and surprising, *ancient AND new*. Through them shine the rays of the Beauty that is ever ancient and ever new, *tam antiqua et tam nova*, at which St. Augustine marveled (Confessions, Bk. X, ch. 27); and the scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who, “to give joy to his family, pulls from his treasure expected yet always delightful jewels, what is old but always new,” *Nova et Vêtera* (Mt 13:52).²⁴

In constant dialogue with his friend Jacques Maritain, Journet was acutely conscious both of the permanence of principles and of the historical dimension of institutions and ideas. This double conviction, which is

²³ “Je n’ai jamais dit . . . que tout en bloc dans les temps modernes fût marqué de l’empreinte de Satan. . . . On me reproche de faire comme si la volonté de Dieu était absente de quatre siècles d’histoire. Allons donc! Elle était présente aussi au paradis, quand Adam tomba. Etrange christianisme, qui semble oublier que la divine volonté permet le mal, pour un plus grand bien certes!” (Jacques Maritain, “Réplique à M. Gillouin,” *Nova et Vêtera* [1926]: 101–2).

²⁴ “Définitions” (*Nova et Vêtera* [1926]), as translated in the English Edition 1 (2003): 3–4.

one of the aspects of the relationship between *Nova* and *Vetera*, made possible for him to speak about political questions without being a politician.

The Definitions state: "Past institutions cannot simply, and lazily, be copied."²⁵ In an article published in *Nova et Vetera* in 1933, Maritain says that "a rightly founded political philosophy . . . is likely of various practical forms, all more or less defective, because of original sin, which still wounds history."²⁶ Principles remain, some of their applications change. Journet remembered that fact during the Second World War, when he published several editorials that after the war became the book *Exigences chrétiennes en politique* (Christian requirements in politics).²⁷ Because of Journet's clear condemnation of totalitarian systems, the official censorship of the surrounded Switzerland sent him a "warning." On October 14, 1943, he replied to the captain who had "warned" him, insisting on the moral duty to say what is good and what is bad, and also distinguishing between moral principles and the system in which they are found. This distinction allowed him to say that he was not the enemy of persons or countries as such:

You reproach me for having written that 'totalitarianism rots all that it touches', then, you say, "the criticism of a foreign political regime should be formulated only with extreme care." . . . It is not . . . "a foreign political regime" as such that I am criticizing. It is a principle corruptive of any Christian and human policy. I did not say: Mr. Hitler, or Mr. Mussolini, or Mr. Stalin rots all that [he] touches. I do not here depart from my role of Christian philosopher, Christian moralist, of Christian simply.²⁸

There are cases in which a Christian may not shut up. Judging that he was confronted with such a case, he challenged censorship:

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁶ "[U]ne philosophie politique exactement fondée . . . est susceptible de réalisations typiquement différentes, toutes plus ou moins déficientes du reste, à cause du péché originel dont l'histoire reste blessée" (Jacques Maritain, "Une philosophie de la liberté," *Nova et Vetera* [1933]: 289).

²⁷ Saint-Maurice: Editions Saint-Augustin, 1945.

²⁸ "Vous me reprochez d'avoir écrit que 'le totalitarisme pourrait tout ce qu'il touche', alors, dites-vous, que 'la critique d'un régime politique étranger ne doit être formulée qu'avec la plus grande réserve'. . . . Ce n'est . . . pas à 'un régime politique étranger' comme tel, que je m'en prends. C'est à un principe corrompateur de toute politique chrétienne et humaine. Je n'ai pas dit: M. Hitler, ou M. Mussolini, ou M. Staline pourrait tout ce qu'il touche. Je ne sors pas ici de mon rôle de philosophe chrétien, de moraliste chrétien, de chrétien tout court" (Charles Journet in Guy Boissard, *Quelle neutralité face à l'horreur. Le courage de Charles Journet* [Saint-Maurice: Editions Saint-Augustin, 2000], 192).

Nobody will dare to claim that the extermination of the Jewish race, and the reduction to slavery of the Polish race, are not the object of some planning. That would be to defy the evidence.²⁹

Faced with what could not be accepted, Journet spoke. When he did so, he could not know that he would not be arrested, and that Switzerland would not be invaded. He maintained principles without which he would have lost his soul.

The conviction that the changing world must be understood in light of permanent principles, which are deepened as time goes on, is still dear to Cardinal Journet's successor as director of *Nova et Vetera*, Fr. Georges Cottier O.P. (who became director at Journet's death). As the future director explained in 1965, Revelation is necessary for a full understanding of natural right,³⁰ but natural right is also understood thanks to human reflection on historical events.³¹ Ten years later, in the last issue published by Journet, the same Fr. Cottier comments on philosophical progress: "It is in the return to the same thing that the new manifests itself to the philosopher."³²

Permanent principles are constantly deepened through history. It is difficult not to notice a convergence between this line of *Nova et Vetera* and Joseph Ratzinger's evolution. The young Ratzinger's sympathy for St. Bonaventure came in part from a historical perspective he found in Bonaventure that was in contrast to the fixedness of manualistic theology: "The Saint [Bonaventure] proposes a new theory of the interpretation of Scripture, which—unlike those of the Fathers and the Scholastics—insisted more on the historical character of Scripture than on what remains unchanged and constant."³³ Of course Ratzinger did not think that history

²⁹ "Personne n'osera prétendre que l'extermination de la race juive, et la réduction en esclavage de la race polonaise, ne fassent pas l'objet d'une planification. Ce serait s'insurger contre l'évidence" (Charles Journet in Guy Boissard, *Quelle neutralité face à l'horreur*, 192).

³⁰ See Marie-Martin Cottier, O.P., "Le droit naturel et l'histoire," *Nova et Vetera* (1965): 172–76.

³¹ See *ibid.*, 170.

³² "C'est dans la reprise du même que pour le philosophe . . . le nouveau se manifeste" (Georges Cottier, O.P., "Peut-on parler de progrès dans la recherche philosophique?" *Nova et Vetera* [1975]: 53).

³³ "Auf diese Weise kommt der Heilige aber auch zu einer neuen Theorie der Schriftauslegung, die im Gegensatz zu der stärker aufs Unveränderlich-Bleibende gerichteten Auslegung der Väter und Scholastiker den geschichtlichen Charakter der Schriftaussagen betont" (Joseph Ratzinger, *Offenbarungsverständnis und Geschichtstheologie Bonaventuras, Habilitationsschrift und Bonaventura-Studien*, in *Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 2 [Freiburg: Herder, 2009], 440).

alone could solve theological questions.³⁴ Nevertheless, he did think that the consciousness of the historical factor plays a significant role in the renewal of theology.³⁵ And this is part of the reason why, as Pope, he does not think that the mere permanence of structures is sufficient:

If there were structures which could irrevocably guarantee a determined—good—state of the world, man's freedom would be denied, and hence they would not be good structures at all. What this means is that every generation has the task of engaging anew in the arduous search for the right way to order human affairs; this task is never simply completed.³⁶

And this is precisely the task that *Nova et Vetera* has engaged. And this is simply the structure of that tradition, which was at the very heart of Journet's understanding and which is summarized by Vatican II: "This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down."³⁷

A United Spiritual Approach

Some see a contrast between Journet and Maritain, a difference in their Thomisms, in their views on the Church, and in their political "openness." This is wrong in several ways. On the one hand, nothing is less Catholic than to separate elements of Catholicism. The Definitions of the first issue insist on that:

³⁴ See Joseph Ratzinger, Discorso in apertura del Simposio, in *Il primato del successore di Pietro, Atti del Symposio teologico*, Roma, dicembre 1996, "Atti e Documenti" 7 (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 17–18: "Indubbiamente è vero che la storia come tale non può fornire una certezza apodittica della verità di fede. . . . La collaborazione tra storia e teologia può essere fruttuosa se l'accrescimento della conoscenza dei dati storici (ed esegetici, con riferimento alla Bibbia), porterà ad una visione teologica approfondita del Primato Romano e della funzione ecclesiological, che aiuti a distinguere sempre meglio ciò che è necessario e irrinunciabile e ciò che è accidentale o non essenziale alla verità di fede. D'altra parte tale collaborazione esige che la questione della valutazione dottrinale dei dati storici sia fatta alla luce della Tradizione, come luogo e criterio della coscienza veritativa della fede ecclesiale."

³⁵ See Joseph Ratzinger, "Hinweise zum Motu proprio 'Ad tuendam fidem' und zum 'Lehrmäßigen Kommentar' der Glaubenskongregation," in *Gott—Ratlos vor dem Bösen?*, ed. Wolfgang Beinert (Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 226: "Das Wachsen des historischen Bewußtseins in der Neuzeit hat langsam zur Scheidung zwischen fides divina und fides catholica oder ecclesiastica geführt."

³⁶ Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, §§24–25.

³⁷ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, §8.

[W]e should also recognize the natural tendency in each one of us, when confronted by our opponents, to diminish or divide the truth which is entrusted to the Church, a truth that remains far above us because it is divine. . . . Here Chesterton converges with Pascal: 'There is thus a great number of truths of both faith and morals which appear to be repugnant but which exist in a most admirable order. The source of every heresy is the exclusion of one of these truths. . . . This is why the best way to hinder heresies is to instruct in all the truths.' . . . It is indeed most difficult to enumerate all the aspects of our Catholic richness. We do an injustice to the Church and we divide her soul each time we separate her complementary aspects.³⁸

The Church Catholic keeps together past and present—*Nova et Vetera*—but also simultaneous truths that heresies keep separate. The social aspects of charity are not less Catholic than doctrine or than the mystical aspects of charity: to be Catholic means to keep all of that in unity. For instance, the social approach must be related to holiness, as Journet says—quoting Maritain: "A social renewal that is vitally Christian will be a work of holiness, or it will not be."³⁹ It is striking to see that Journet says the same about theology as such: "For the science of theology, that the root be alive holiness is required, or at least the state of grace."⁴⁰

Everything comes from God, and we go back to our Creator: this is the structure of Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. Therefore, "naturally," as Maritain said in 1938, "Catholic action proceeds from contemplation. Only under such a condition is it Catholic action."⁴¹ And as Journet himself wrote in 1943: "On the road that faith opens through concepts, love makes faith go further than concepts."⁴²

³⁸ "Définitions" (*Nova et Vetera* [1926]), as translated in the English Edition 1 (2003): 6.

³⁹ "Une rénovation sociale vitalemment chrétienne sera œuvre de sainteté ou ne sera pas" (Charles Journet, *Exigences chrétiennes en politique*, 2nd ed. [Saint-Maurice: Editions Saint-Augustin, 1990], 278).

⁴⁰ "Pour la science de la théologie, pour que la racine soit vivace, il faut la sainteté, l'état de grâce au moins" (Charles Journet, *Les dons du Saint-Esprit*, unpublished retreat [Fondation Cardinal Journet, 1941], 65). I found this quote in Fr. Nicolas Glasson's doctoral thesis, defended at the University of Fribourg in 2009 and not yet published.

⁴¹ "L'action catholique suppose la contemplation, elle n'est action catholique qu'à cette condition" (Jacques Maritain, "Action catholique et action politique," *Nova et Vetera* [1938]: 254).

⁴² "Sur la route que la foi ouvre par les concepts, l'amour fait aller la foi plus loin que les concepts" (Charles Journet, *Connaissance et inconnissance de Dieu* [Fribourg: Editions de la Librairie de l'Université, 1943], 109).

Somehow related to contemplation is poetry, and art generally speaking. Between 1926 and 1928, *Nova et Vetera* published eight poems or groups of poems and about forty-eight works of art or articles related to artistic works. Contemplation can lead to a poetic way of expression, which is higher than the common way of speaking, as in St. John of the Cross.⁴³ As Raïssa Maritain explained in one of her articles on poetry and mysticism published in *Nova et Vetera*, even poetry written by an atheist is religious.⁴⁴ Even philosophy is related to mysticism. As Fr. Cottier said in *Nova et Vetera* in 2001, “A mystical impulse animates any philosophy.”⁴⁵ What unites all these fields is the spiritual dimension.

Conclusion

Nova et Vetera was founded by the future Cardinal Charles Journet as a theological and cultural help to the French-speaking Swiss Catholics of the 1920s. The purpose was to show them that they could be happy to be Catholics in a culture dominated by aggressive Protestant and secular views. For this reason, the accent was often on the meaning of the Church as such, but the extension of Catholic life into all fields—for instance, into artistic dimensions—was also accented.

The basic convictions of the periodical remained when it became more clearly international. They are summarized in the name *Nova et Vetera*: new and old go together. To prefer the new or the old as a matter of principle is a mistake. Therefore the periodical expresses the unchanging certainties received from divine Revelation, taking into consideration both the changing aspects of history and the deepening of permanent faith. This is typically expressed by Journet—and Maritain—in the social field: human societies are always incomplete, but we understand them thanks to evangelical principles and we act in them because we love the human beings God loves.

Nova et Vetera is Catholic: all elements of Christian faith and life must be taken together. The way to hold them together is spiritual. Contemplation—even holiness—is the only really sufficient root of theology, and of philosophy, and of social action. . . . Everything holds together because everything is in God’s hands. At the same time, the fruit of contemplation is expressed in history, which plays a role. The identity of *Nova et Vetera* is constantly influenced by the circumstances of its foundation and by the personality of its real founders: Charles Journet and—because of their

⁴³ See Charles Journet, *Introduction à la théologie* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1947), 29.

⁴⁴ See Raïssa Maritain, “Sens et non-sens en poésie,” *Nova et Vetera* (1937): 279.

⁴⁵ “Un élan mystique anime toute philosophie” (Georges Cottier, O.P., “Métaphysique et mystique,” *Nova et Vetera* [2001]: 12).

permanent friendship—Jacques Maritain (who was not a founder, but wrote more than sixty articles for the periodical).⁴⁶ What Journet and Maritain had in common was joy in being Catholic and Thomist, together with the acute consciousness of the cultural difficulty of being so. Journet grew up in the difficult context of Geneva. Maritain converted. The second Director of *Nova et Vetera*, Fr. Cottier, also grew up in Geneva, and he wrote his doctoral dissertation on Marx's atheism.⁴⁷

This line of Thomists conscious of the cultural and religious obstacles to Catholicism is perfectly continued in the English edition. It is not surprising to see it in the hands of two converts from different trends of Protestantism—Matthew Levering and Reinhard Hüter—who both find significant value in an open minded and spiritual reading of St. Thomas Aquinas. This also reflects the initial program of *Nova et Vetera*, which is first of all interior, but has its eyes open and can receive even from opponents:

Our task is not to mold physical and moveable realities in a purely outward manner. Rather, our task consists in an interior act, in molding our minds according to a spiritual and immovable reality. We do not seek to update or remake the truth. Truth is neither made nor updated. It is discovered, it is understood and believed, it spreads without deterioration, and it reaches out. Faith of an intellectual sort is not a modernization but an actuation and contemplation of the mind, and a progress towards doctrine, that is to say, an interior, homogenous and organic growth of a spiritual heritage. . . . One of the mysterious applications of this principle is how it allows us to understand the way in which we can benefit from the errors of our opponents even if our opponents are of marked intelligence and good faith. Their errors, which usually stem from an ignorance of one or more Catholic truths and which we have been able to keep from calling to mind, prevent us from falling asleep, *oportet haereses esse*.⁴⁸

Catholics do not change the faith, but they do understand it better through the process of explaining it. Therefore, a situation in which faith is not presumed can be an opportunity. The situations of Catholics in Geneva in 1926 and Catholics in the United States in 2010 are rather similar, and divine Providence produces similar fruits in each case. Not by chance, many articles published in the English edition treat of points

⁴⁶ Journet published about 250 articles in *Nova et Vetera* during his lifetime (some articles were published after his death).

⁴⁷ Georges Cottier, *L'athéisme du jeune Marx. Ses origines hégéliennes* (Paris: Vrin, 1959).

⁴⁸ "Définitions" (*Nova et Vetera* [1926]), as translated in the English Edition 1 (2003): 4.

where Catholicity is under attack: the Church, the sacraments, moral issues . . . The continuity between the French and the English editions is not first of all material (the same title); it comes from a like interior reaction (which is the main element, coming from divine love) to similar external circumstances (which provide an opportunity). **N.V.**