

3

HERMENEUTIC OF CONTINUITY AND THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

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Abstract

The foundation of theology is Scripture. In an attempt to give a necessary clarification of this statement, I allude to the words of Anthony Akinwale: “The Bible contains the word of God. But the word of God is not contained by the Bible...” Since theology is fundamentally a speech about God, that speech has to be first of all ‘a speech from God’ before it can be ‘a speech about God’. In other words, theology is a reflection on God who speaks (*Word – Logos*) and about his word that he speaks in Scripture and Tradition. This is the sense in which one understands Akinwale’s statement, and how one ought to understand the basis of theology in Scripture. *Hermeneutics* is the branch of theology that deals with the principles of Biblical interpretation. Correct hermeneutical approach is therefore essential to a proper understanding of the truth revealed by God. For example, it is essential to the full understanding of the OT to employ a hermeneutic that many OT texts are types or prefigurations of Christ and his fulfilment of Scripture in the NT. One very important interpretive principle that Augustine enunciates in his *De Doctrina Christiana* is that one text of Scripture cannot be preferred to another or played off against another. The real truth conforms to everything that has been revealed. What this paper attempts to do is to apply this same principle of interpretation to how theology is done. In this understanding, Scripture cannot be reflected upon to the exclusion of the Magisterium and the tradition of the Christian faith, rooted in the Apostles and reflected upon by the Fathers of the Church.

Keywords: Hermeneutic, Magisterium, Apostolic Faith, Fathers of the Church, Continuity

Introduction

It is important to note that one cannot sufficiently discuss the subject of theological formation without also broaching the subject of theological method. In this sense, theological formation is formation in method. In his epic work, *Method in Theology*, which reflects on the operations theologians perform as they do theology, Bernard Lonergan says: “A Theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix.”¹ Two things stand out in this statement: firstly, ‘a cultural matrix’, which is loosely interpreted as that from which a culture originates, develops, or takes form, and secondly, ‘role of a religion’, which can be here understood as the function of religion in the process of forming, shaping, and developing a culture. In this regard, religion plays a significant role in shaping a culture. What Lonergan proposes in his statement shows that theology mediates the role a religion plays in shaping a culture. The question is, with what special tool does theology carry out this mediation? Theology mediates as a speech about God. Therefore, how religion shapes a culture must necessarily relate a people and their cultural terrains to God as their beginning and their end. And since theology is fundamentally a speech about God, that speech has to be first of all ‘a speech from God’ before it can be ‘a speech about God’. In other words, in theology we seek explanation and understanding of what God has revealed. In this context of mediation, theology sheds light on how religion shapes culture, so that in forming and shaping culture, the practice of religion is a response to what God has revealed. Consequently, every religious speech is a speech about God because it is a response to the word of God.

In laying out the framework for speaking about method in theology, Lonergan says: “Method is not a set of rules to be followed meticulously by a dolt. It is a framework for collaborative creativity. It would outline the various clusters of operations to be performed by theologians when they go about their various tasks.”² He highlights eight distinct tasks for contemporary theology: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. What he refers to as functional specialties explains how he arrives at this list of eight distinct tasks. Again, when Lonergan speaks of method, he is not referring to a set of rules to be followed blindly but a framework for creativity. Within such dynamism, what is underscored is not ‘writing theology’ but ‘method in theology’. According to him, the task of writing method in theology is not concerned with objects that theologians expound but with the operations that theologians perform. One must, however, avoid a hasty interpretation of Lonergan that opposes object of theology to theological method. No matter the method, there is always the fundamental object

of theology that method must not detract from, namely, the First Truth. Whatever the operation of the theologian, his task is denominated by the First Truth. In this way, theological method is not opposed to the object of theology, because the object determines the operation. As a matter of fact, God is not the object but subject of theology, and he determines the operation of the theologian.

For the purpose of this paper, we shall attempt to transpose the idea of Lonergan on how method works generally to how ‘hermeneutic of continuity’ functions in theological method and formation. According to Lonergan, “A method is a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.”³ Two things are fundamental in this assertion: ‘distinct operations’ and ‘relatedness of the operations.’ From these two, Lonergan describes the function of method in such a way that shows the integrity and continuity of operations, yielding cumulative and progressive results. He says:

There is a method, then, where there are distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms a pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not repetitious, but cumulative and progressive.⁴

What Lonergan states here gives the broad framework for speaking about hermeneutic of continuity and method in theology. Every authentic theological method must explore the interrelatedness of the distinct approaches to understanding the reality that is revealed and proposed for belief. This paper aims to show that hermeneutic of continuity in theological method and formation entails proper interpretation of scripture, tradition of the faith, and ecclesiastical texts, in order to emphasize their unity. The task of theology is to work for this unity rather than the too prevalent “hermeneutic of rupture.” In this understanding, “Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God,”⁵ and its authentic interpretation has been entrusted to the teaching office of the Church. For this reason, “sacred tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.”⁶ Thus, interpretation of the word of God is a task of the Magisterium of the Church: it is a task it carries out in fidelity to the tradition of the Christian faith; in fidelity to the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God; with fidelity to the apostolic origins of Christianity; and with profound reference to the reflections upon the Christian faith by the Fathers of the Church.

The Function of Hermeneutics in Theological Method

The fact that Scripture is the foundation of theology shows that every theological enterprise is a reflection on the Word of God. It means theology is a reflection on God who speaks (Word – *Logos*), and about his word that he speaks in Scripture and Tradition. *Hermeneutics* is the branch of theology that deals with the principles of Biblical interpretation. Correct hermeneutical approach is therefore essential to a proper understanding of the truth revealed by God. This approach underscores the integrity of the whole of Scripture, and how theological interpretation functions in fidelity to the unity of the truth that is revealed. It is along this line that St. Augustine, in his *On the Christian Doctrine*⁷, recommends that when interpreting Scripture, one text cannot be preferred to another or played off against another. Since everything the Holy Spirit intends to teach in Scripture is true, all texts which relate to a given problem must be examined for what they say about it, and the correct understanding will necessarily be an understanding which permits every text to retain its full force—that is, the real truth will conform to everything that has been revealed. Working against this “hermeneutic” is any tendency to interpret Scripture according to the “plain meaning” of a favorite text, while ignoring other texts which provide additional light on the same subject. This is the practice of quoting the scripture in isolation, and it is tantamount to “hermeneutic of rupture.”

In order to highlight the function of hermeneutics in theological method, the correct principle of interpretation does not only apply to Scripture, but also to everything that God has revealed in the Christian tradition. Describing the interrelatedness of different scriptural passages, and the relation of scripture to magisterial texts, Jeff Mirus says: Because the Magisterium of the Church teaches with the same authority as Sacred Scripture (after all, the same Holy Spirit inspires and guarantees both), a Catholic can properly understand a Christian teaching only if he takes into account everything that both Scripture and the Magisterium have said on a subject. Any understanding which fastens on what Scripture says to the exclusion of the Magisterium (as Protestants typically do) or which fastens on this or that statement of the Magisterium in preference to others (as Traditionalists typically do) is doomed to be incorrect. The proper interpretation will always be the one which allows for the truth of all the relevant Scriptural and Magisterial texts.⁸

What the statement of Jeff Mirus attests to is the unity of scripture, tradition and the magisterium. In chapter II of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, where it discusses Transmission of Divine Revelation, the document states that all that God

had revealed for the salvation of all peoples should remain in their entirety, throughout the ages, and be transmitted to all generations.⁹ “Therefore, Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20; 3:16; 4:6) commanded the apostles to preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets, and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips.”¹⁰ The apostles transmitted what they received from the Lord to succeeding generations. In order to preserve the living and full Gospel in the Church, the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them “their own position of teaching authority.”¹¹ The transmission of the faith from the apostles is the characteristic feature of the *apostolicity of origin*, since the Church was first organized by the apostles chosen by Christ; it is the feature of *apostolicity of teaching*, because what the Church teaches now is essentially what was taught by the Apostles; and it is the feature of *apostolicity of succession in office*, since there has been an unbroken historical transmission of episcopal powers, through ordination, from the Apostles to all the Bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome today. This does not only guarantee faithfulness to revelation, but also to its continuity. Theology, which is a speech about God, because it is a reflection on God’s word, must therefore employ, in its method, the principle of interpretation that functions on the unity and continuity of the Christian faith tradition. According to the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, “This sacred Tradition, then, and the sacred Scripture of both Testaments, are like a mirror, in which the Church, during its pilgrim journey here on earth, contemplates God from whom she receives everything, until such time as she is brought to see him face to face as he really is (cf. Jn 3:2).”¹² In this regard, Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other; they make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church.¹³

The Council fathers further state that the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition,¹⁴ has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone.¹⁵ The authority of the magisterium in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. It is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. The document *Dei Verbum* concludes the section on the “Transmission of Divine Revelation” with the profound statement of unity of Sacred Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium: “It is clear, therefore, that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way under the action of the

one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”¹⁶ Theologians have important task to perform in giving authentic interpretation of the Word of God. Since theirs is a service of the truth, whatever method they adopt must always work for the continuity of what God has revealed in Christ, which is rooted in the apostolic faith, and which is correctly interpreted and taught by the Magisterium. Therefore, the theologian does not engage in reckless scholarship that emphasizes his subjective views over the inherent truth of the Christian tradition; rather, he functions within the hermeneutic environment that is subservient to the teaching office of the Bishops. It must be noted here that “Both the teaching office of the Bishop and the teaching office of the theologian are at the service of the truth. For this reason, they are not at variance. However, the teaching office of the theologian is at the service of the teaching office of the Bishop.”¹⁷ A more specific scrutiny of the mission of the theologian is necessary to see how his service of the truth works for continuity rather than rupture.

Mission of the Theologian and Formation in Method¹⁸

The profound mission of the theologian is silence and contemplation. This seems both strange and paradoxical, since theology is fundamentally a speech. Yet, this is the primary mission of the theologian, because the purpose of silence and contemplation, as Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, once said, is that “they serve, in the distractions of daily life, to preserve permanent union with God.”¹⁹ He stressed further that the purpose is so that “that union with God may always be present in our souls and may transform our entire being.”²⁰ The theologian is one who is first and foremost called to a union with God. In contemplating God who is the First Truth, the theologian is transformed by the truth that he seeks to understand. It is only in this way that he can relate the fruits of his contemplation to others. Silence and contemplation are therefore the essential mission of the theologian. This is his mission if, in the loquacity of his every day, in the plethora of words, he makes the essential words heard. Through words, he makes present the fruits of his contemplation; he makes present the Word, the *Logos* who comes from God, the Word who is God. The theologian lives in a world where there is the possibility of the distractions that come from so many words. If he is to make the Word who comes from God present, it has to be through a process of purification of his thoughts, which in addition must be above all a process of purification of his words.

John the Evangelist says of the Word of God that was coming into the world that he was the true light that enlightens every man. “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not” (Jn 1:10). The world did not know him because the

world did not enter that silence in which John was privileged to know the *Logos* of God and made him known. We cannot open the world and, indeed ourselves, to the Word without entering into the silence of God from which his Word proceeds. And as Benedict XVI says: "For the purification of our words, hence, also for the purification of the words of the world, we need that silence which becomes contemplation, which introduces us into God's silence and brings us to the point where the Word, the redeeming Word, is born."²¹ To enter into silence and contemplation always means to hear something, to hear a speech. The one who enters into this silence is not the one who speaks, but he listens. In this regard St Thomas Aquinas, with a long tradition, says that in theology God is not the object of which we speak. This is our own normal conception. God, in reality, is not the object but the subject of theology. The one who speaks through theology, the speaking subject, must be God himself. And our speech and thoughts must always serve to ensure that what God says, the Word of God, is listened to and finds room in the world. For this reason, the practice of true theology cannot be the substitution of our words for the Word of God. In theology God speaks, and in the process the theologian must learn to forfeit his own words, so that through this process of purification his words may be nothing but the instrument through which God can speak, and, hence, that God may truly be the subject and not the object of theology.

When the theologian enters the silence in which God alone speaks, he must be attentive and seek the true word of God. A phrase from the first chapter of the First Letter of St. Peter easily comes to mind: "*Animas vestras castificantes in oboedientia veritatis*" (1 Pet 1:22). Here Peter speaks of the purification of the soul that comes from obedience to the truth. Obedience to the truth must "purify" our souls and thus guide us to upright speech and upright action. The lesson in this, as it relates to the mission of the theologian, is that when there is obedience to the truth, the theologian will avoid what Benedict XVI calls prostitution of words and of the soul. According to the Pope Emeritus, "speaking in the hope of being applauded, governed by what people want to hear out of obedience to the dictatorship of current opinion, is considered to be a sort of prostitution: of words and of the soul."²² He explains further that the "purity" to which the Apostle Peter is referring means not submitting to these standards, not seeking applause, but rather, seeking obedience to the truth. In other words, the theologian must not only learn to forfeit his own words, but he must also constantly seek to be at the service of the true word of God. Such service to the word of God is only authentic when opinions are not substituted for the truth. This can sometimes be the danger in the theological enterprise. This is why the mission of the

theologian should draw its proper life and derive its impetus from the obedience to the truth.

The words of Benedict XVI aptly convey the authentic content and method of the theological enterprise when he says:

And I think that this is the fundamental virtue for the theologian, this discipline of obedience to the truth, which makes us, although it may be hard, collaborators of the truth, mouthpieces of truth, for it is not we who speak in today's river of words, but it is the truth which speaks in us, who are really purified and made chaste by obedience to the truth. So it is that we can truly be harbingers of the truth.²³

The same message is communicated in the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch: "Those who have understood the Lord's words understand his silence, for the Lord should be recognized in his silence."²⁴ We grasp the true significance and depth of the words of Jesus only when we attain that silence of the Lord, his being with the Father from which words come. The words of Jesus are born in silence on the Mountain, as is often said that he withdrew to the mountain to pray. The theologian, who has the mission to convey the words of Jesus, must also take his instance from this communion of the Son with the Father. Indeed, "words are born from this silence of communion with the Father, from being immersed in the Father, and only on reaching this point, on starting from this point, do we arrive at the real depth of the Word and can ourselves be authentic interpreters of the Word. The Lord invites us verbally to climb the Mountain with him and thus, in his silence, to learn anew the true meaning of words."²⁵ It is when the words of the theologian are born from the silence of communion with the Father and with Christ, the *Logos* of the Father, that it can be truly said of him: "Anyone who hears you hears me" (Lk 10:16). The content and context of Evangelization is the Word of God. If it is therefore true that those who hear us hear the Lord, then the task of evangelization already has its true force and its assurance of success, since the word of God stands for ever, and it accomplishes the purpose for which it is spoken (Cf. Is 48:8; 55:11). It is the word that is born from the silence of communion with the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit that is the force of Evangelization. The theologian must always enter this silence and contemplation.

However, the nature of authentic theology is that it is both a quest and a speech. Hence, it is the mission of a theologian that he searches and that he speaks. The quest and speech is primarily about God, and also about every creature in its relation to God as its first beginning and its last end.²⁶ In proposing what the nature and task of

theology is, I allude to the words of Anthony Akinwale: “This search and this speech can only be undertaken by one who encounters God, human beings, and the universe in an attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible manner. Each and all of these four levels of conscious intentionality must be sustained in prayer such that, in this encounter, the theologian is prayerfully attentive, prayerfully intelligent, prayerfully reasonable, and prayerfully responsible.”²⁷ It follows that in its method, theology must always apply the principle of *fides quaerens intellectum*, where faith both informs and sustains the task of theology, and where the theologian does not yield to the recklessness of relativism.

We have considered how silence and contemplation are profoundly the mission of the theologian. Yet, because theology is also authentically a speech, the mission of the theologian is also essentially to speak about God. However, the one who endeavours to speak about God must also have a profound desire for God. Here is the meeting point of theology as speech and quest, because there can be no speech about God where there is no quest for God. Thus, in the larger picture of the mission of the theologian, as he speaks about God, his speech must be grounded in the silence and contemplation that we have talked about. The God who has placed in every human being the natural desire for him (*desiderium naturale in Deum*)²⁸ is at the heart of the quest that theology is. The quest is not a blind quest, but one that is born out of a sincere desire for God. In Athens the Greeks erected an altar “to an unknown God” (cf. Acts 17:23). As it were, they had a desire for what was unknown; and this is absurd. In Book VIII of his *De Trinitate*, St. Augustine establishes the principle that no one loves what he does not know. Thus, we do not love the unknown, but love to know the unknown. Here is how Augustine puts it:

For, since ‘we walk by faith, not by sight’ [2 Cor 5:7], we certainly do not yet see God, as the same one has said: ‘face to face’ [1 Cor 13:12]. Unless we love him now, we shall never see Him. But who loves that which he does not know? For something can be known and not loved; but what I am asking is, whether something can be loved that is not known? If that is impossible, then no one loves God before he knows Him. And what does it mean to love God, except to see Him and to perceive him steadfastly with our mind? For He is not a body to be sought for with bodily eyes.²⁹

It follows that to speak about God is to have a desire for God; and one cannot have a desire for what one does not know. Hence, we speak of the task of theology as a speech and a quest. And since one speaks about a person or thing to the extent that one knows the person or thing,

then the validity of what the theologian says about God must come from his deep knowledge of God. Such knowledge comes from the silence and contemplation into which the theologian enters. As a result, the knowledge is the fruit of both faith and reason.

The Church teaches that “God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason.”³⁰ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states further: “In the historical condition in which he finds himself, however, man experiences many difficulties in coming to know God by the light of reason alone.”³¹ Consequently, the knowledge of God that comes from reason must be from reason that is ennobled, enlightened, empowered and elevated by faith. What the Church teaches in the two instances is true and valid. In the first instance, from the things that have been made (cf. Rom 1:20), any reasonable and intelligent person can come to the conclusion that God exists. On the other hand, there are reasonable and intelligent people who have not been able to come to the conclusion that God exists. For the latter group, what is missing is faith. That God exists is self-evident in itself since the predicate is included in the essence of the subject. But it is not self-evident to us because we do not know the essence of God. It is for this reason that the proposition needs to be demonstrated by the things that are more known to us, though less known in their nature – namely, by effects.³² From what we have said, it is true and valid that God can be known by the natural light of human reason from the created world. But because God is Mystery – not in the sense that God is unintelligible, but in the sense that who God is cannot be exhausted – to attempt to know God by the light of reason alone is fraught with so many difficulties. Reason must be enlightened and elevated by faith. The God whom the theologian seeks to speak about is a *mystery*, so the theologian must recognize that the created intellect cannot know God perfectly. God is knowable, and he is knowable infinitely. Yet the infinitely knowable God cannot be known infinitely by the finite intellect of the creature. And because the theologian cannot exhaust the meaning of who God is, he must fall in love with the *mystery* that God is, so that he may be purified, and so that his speech may truly be about God whom he has fallen in love with. He is called to live a holy life by constant conversion to God.

Furthermore, when the theologian speaks about God out of desire for God, it means “God is the subject matter of the speech that takes its inspiration from the natural desire for God and the God who fulfills that desire by revealing himself, and who gives the Church’s Magisterium as a gift to ensure that what is revealed is rightly interpreted.”³³ Theology is, therefore, a quest to understand God and what God has revealed about himself, and it is also a speech about God

who reveals himself. In this regard, “It is a search for understanding and a speech about the search, a speech in which the speaker seeks to understand for himself and seeks to explain to his audience the One he has found, or rather, the One who has found him.”³⁴ If in the task and mission of theology, quest, speech and desire are interwoven, the mission of the theologian, vis-à-vis the task of interpretation and evangelization, must flow from a profound encounter with the God whom he has found and whom he loves, and his attempt to make this God known to others so that they too may love him. His speech will always be about the God of love so that those who listen to his explanation of the true word of God may also come to the knowledge and love of the God who speaks and is spoken about.

It must be noted that though theology is a speech about God, it is also a speech about creatures. However, theology cannot be reduced to discourse about creatures. As a matter of fact, when it is said that theology is a speech about creatures, that speech cannot be isolated from the speech about God. For this reason Thomas Aquinas teaches that theology is not concerned with creatures *in se*, but only as they are related to God as their beginning and end.³⁵ Thus, when the theologian speaks about creatures he is not to use the methods of the natural or social sciences – though he does not ignore the findings of these other branches of knowledge – he must speak about them as a theologian. In other words, it is in his speech about God that he must speak about creatures. As much as other branches of knowledge can be of help to theology, the office of theology must not be usurped by these other branches of knowledge. The implication of this is that the theologian must engage in the task of interpretation and evangelization as one who primarily and essentially speaks about God. What he does in his speech about God is seek to understand the God who has created all things, and this desire to understand the mystery of God gives theology its character as a quest. St. Anselm of Canterbury speaks of this effort of the human mind to understand the mystery of God when he wrote:

I am not trying, O Lord, to penetrate thy loftiness, for I cannot begin to match my understanding with it, but I desire in some measure to understand thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this too I believe, that “unless I believe, I shall not understand.”³⁶

It is clear then that, in his speech about God, the theologian does not first seek to understand before he believes, but he believes so as to understand (*credo ut intelligam*). These words of Anselm have given theology the classical character of “faith seeking understanding” (*fides*

quaerens intellectum). Long before Anselm, the Fathers of the Church, especially Augustine, demonstrated the truth in these statements. From the outset of his most profound theological work, *De Trinitate*, Augustine impressed on his reader that the starting point of his quest for the immaterial *imago Dei* was faith in the Trinity, and that throughout the quest he was going to be guided by faith. “The *De Trinitate* is a search, an *inquisitio*, as Augustine puts it. It is the embodiment of a principle of Catholic theology that Augustine constantly invoked and that St. Anselm later formulated: *fides quaerens intellectum*. Faith is, therefore, the starting point for Augustine. We cannot come to an understanding of the mystery of the trinity without the *initium fidei*.³⁷ The theologian who speaks about God must always have this *initium fidei*. The *initium fidei* of the theologian is not an isolated private revelation, nor is it a rupture from what the Christian community believes to be revealed through Jesus Christ, which the Apostles taught and passed on to succeeding generations of Christian disciples, the deposit of faith (*depositum fidei*). Thus, the mission of the theologian, in his task of interpretation, is to constantly work hermeneutic of continuity in the understanding and explanation of the Christian faith. His mission as theologian is one that he undertakes personally but on behalf of the believing community. In his regard, “The task of theology is to show that the act of faith and the act of good use of the human intellect are not incompatible.”³⁸ And to have great impact in the task of interpretation, the theologian must be a man of faith, he must be intelligent and he must be reasonable.

Conclusion

This paper examined hermeneutic of continuity as the proper principle of interpretation, in which the unity and integrity of the faith tradition is the task of theology. Theological formation must therefore consist in the proper formation of theological method, so that the one who is thus formed recognizes his mission and his teaching office to be at the service of the truth and in obedience to the truth. For the theologian to be at the service of the truth is for him to work for continuity rather than rupture in the tradition of the Christian faith. As principle of interpretation, hermeneutic of continuity allows for the truth of the relevant scriptural and magisterial texts, mediated by the faith tradition that goes back to the apostles. This principle is opposed to any interpretive technique which severs one or more Magisterial texts, or one or more passages of Scripture, from other texts. Such a technique is a “hermeneutic of rupture”. The right principle is a “hermeneutic of continuity”, and this principle lies in the heart of true theological formation and theological method. For over two centuries now, “Western intellectual life, with the deep influence of modernism, has been dominated increasingly by a

“hermeneutic of rupture”, a broad principle of interpretation of the Good which dismisses tradition and opts instead for the latest ideas, as if by the very fact of coming later in time, these ideas must be superior—a misconception arising largely from the Western notion of “progress”.³⁹ In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this hermeneutic of rupture was imported into Catholic theology by those who fell victim to Modernism. Modernism essentially finds religious truth in the current lived experience of Christians. As a remedy, this paper proposes proper theological formation that is rooted in “hermeneutic of continuity”, and in which the theologian sees his task as that of service to the integral truth of Scripture, sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium. The study of the Fathers of the Church must be an integral part of this theological formation.

Endnotes

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), xi

² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xi

³ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 4

⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 4

⁵ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 10

⁶ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 10

⁷ The following insight is an explanation of the thoughts of St. Augustine provided by Jeff Mirus in his article “Benedict’s Hermeneutic of Continuity”, written and uploaded for CatholicCulture.org, January 30, 2009. <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/benedicts-hermeneutic-continuity/>. Retrieved on December 30, 2019.

⁸ Jeff Mirus in his article “Benedict’s Hermeneutic of Continuity”, written and uploaded for CatholicCulture.org, January 30, 2009. <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/benedicts-hermeneutic-continuity/>. Retrieved on December 30, 2019.

⁹ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 7

¹⁰ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 7

¹¹ St. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 3, 1

¹² Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 7

¹³ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 9, 10

¹⁴ Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, c. 3 (on Faith): Denz. 1972 (3011).

¹⁵ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 10. Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani Generis*, 12 August 1950: Denz. 1972 (3886).

¹⁶ Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 10

¹⁷ Francis Adedara, “Marriage and Family Life in Service of Truth: Theological Perspectives on Reception of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*” in *Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 7 (2017) 80-81.

¹⁸ What I discuss in this section is the variation of a section of the paper I read at a Conference of the Southwest Association of Nigerian Catholic Theologians. See Francis Adedara, "The Mission of the Theologian and the Task of Evangelization: A Reflection on the Nigerian Context", in *The Theologian and the New Evangelization in the South-West of Nigeria, Conference Proceedings*, vol. I (Ibadan: A Publication of Southwest Association of Nigerian Catholic Theologians, 2014). The section on Mission of the Theologian is adopted and adapted for the purpose of this paper.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration with the members of the International Theological Commission, Redemptoris Mater Chapel, Apostolic Palace, October 6 2006

²⁰ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration with the members of the International Theological Commission.

²¹ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration with the members of the International Theological Commission.

²² Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration with the members of the International Theological Commission.

²³ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration with the members of the International Theological Commission.

²⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter the Ephesians*, XV, 2 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 10, pp. 84-85).

²⁵ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration with the members of the International Theological Commission.

²⁶ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* I, q. 1, a. 7

²⁷ Anthony Akinwale, "Catholic Theology and the Church in Nigeria," a paper presented at Graduate Theology Students; Colloquium, Ave Maria University, FL, September 14, 2007, p. 4

²⁸ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for" (n. 27). The Second Vatican Council says in this regard: "The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator" (GS 19).

²⁹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VIII.6

³⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 36. See Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 2: DS 3004; cf. 3026; see also Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 6

³¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 37; see Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 561, where this historical condition is rooted in the consequences of original sin.

³² See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 1 for a discussion of whether the existence of God is self-evident.

³³ Anthony Akinwale, "Catholic Theology and the Church in Nigeria," p. 4

³⁴ Anthony Akinwale, "Catholic Theology and the Church in Nigeria," p. 4

³⁵ Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, prol.: “*principalis intentio huius sacrae doctrinae est Dei cognitionem tradere, et non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est principium rerum et finis earum, et specialiter rationalis creaturae.*”

³⁶ Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, Ch. 1 in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, edited by Eugene Fairweather (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956). Cf. Is 7:9, as read by Augustine in the Old Latin version, and frequently quoted by him, for example, *Epist.* 120:1 (CSEL, 34, 706); *Sermo* 89:4 (PL, 38, 556).

³⁷ Francis Adedara, “The Image of God in Man and Original Sin in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*” (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 2011), see pp. 4-5

³⁸ Anthony Akinwale, “Catholic Theology and the Church in Nigeria,” p. 7

³⁹ Jeff Mirus in his article “Benedict’s Hermeneutic of Continuity”, written and uploaded for CatholicCulture.org, January 30, 2009. <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/benedicts-hermeneutic-continuity/>. Retrieved on December 30, 2019.