

## The Renewal of Ecclesiastical Studies: Chenu, Tübingen, and Theological Method in *Optatam Totius*

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**Grant Kaplan**

Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, MO, USA

### Abstract

Marie-Dominique Chenu remains significant not only as a scholar of the *ressourcement* but more foundationally for his contribution to method in theology. Only by tracing the influence of Tübingen on Chenu can one appreciate the methodological revolution that it inspired in him, and that the Second Vatican Council decree on priestly formation, *Optatam Totius*, subsequently reflected.

### Keywords

Marie-Dominique Chenu, Johann Adam Möhler, *Optatam Totius*, *ressourcement*, theological method, Tübingen School, Vatican II

### Introduction: *Ressourcement* and Tübingen

Theologians and scholars of *ressourcement* theology readily acknowledge the debt this movement owes to its closest theological precursor, the Catholic Tübingen School. Already in the 1920s, Tübingen, and especially its greatest theologian, Johann Adam Möhler (1796–1838), began to inspire the thought of the brightest *lumières* of French renewal, Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, and Marie-Dominique Chenu. One place to chronicle the recognition of this debt is the recent volume, *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, a landmark publication for the field.<sup>1</sup> Scholars tracing Tübingen's roots have understandably focused their attention on Yves Congar, perhaps the most influential *ressourcement* theologian. In his article in the volume Gabriel Flynn cites Congar to

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### Corresponding author:

Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University, 3800 Lindell Blvd, Adorjan 124, Saint Louis, MO 63108, USA.

Email: gkaplan1@slu.edu

this effect: “Möhler can even today be an animator. That is what he was for me for more than forty years.”<sup>2</sup> Later Flynn offers a passage from Congar explaining how Möhler embodied the very *ressourcement* with which he, along with Chenu, Daniélou, and de Lubac, came to be identified: “Möhler does not *use* the Fathers in order to *prove conclusions*; he seeks *to live* and, by communion with their spirit, to find as perfect as possible a communion with their thought and with their life.”<sup>3</sup> Congar’s autobiographical debt can be supplemented by copious references in his texts that trace, for instance, the Möhlerian roots of Congar’s ecclesiology.<sup>4</sup>

Although Congar provides the most obvious evidence of Tübingen influence, Tübingen exercised a powerful, if more subtle, impact on Congar’s fellow Dominican, Marie-Dominique Chenu. This impact was refracted in a subtle yet powerful way at the Second Vatican Council.<sup>5</sup> Raising the profile of Chenu yields several scholarly

1. *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University, 2012). The book’s index lists 20 entries for “Möhler” and another eleven for the “Catholic Tübingen School” (574, 582). The most important monograph on *ressourcement* over the last decade is Hans Boersma’s *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009). In his chapter on precursors to *Nouvelle Théologie*, Boersma treats Tübingen and Möhler first (35–52), and in later chapters he connects Möhler to several of the key figures in the movement.
2. Gabriel Flynn, “*Ressourcement*, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology: The Contribution of Yves Congar to *Nouvelle Théologie*,” in Flynn and Murray, eds., *Ressourcement* 219–35 at 221. Originally in Congar, “Johann Adam Möhler: 1796–1838,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 150 (1970) 50.
3. Flynn, “*Ressourcement*, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology” 225; cited from Congar, “L’Esprit des Pères d’après Moehler,” *Supplément à la “Vie Spirituelle”* 55 (1983) 1–25 (emphasis original).
4. Three articles focus specifically on the influence of Möhler on Congar: Thomas O’Meara, “Beyond ‘Hierarchology’: Johann Adam Möhler and Yves Congar,” in *The Legacy of the Tübingen School*, ed. Donald J. Dietrich and Michael J. Himes (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 173–91; Pablo Sicouly, “Yves Congar und Johann Adam Möhler: Ein theologisches Gespräch zwischen den Zeiten,” *Catholica* 45 (1991) 36–43; and James Ambrose Lee, “Shaping Reception: Yves Congar’s Reception of Johann Adam Möhler” *New Blackfriars* 97 (2016), doi:10.1111/nbfr.12142.
5. This is certainly the perspective of Alberigo et al. Nowhere in the German edition of these five volumes do the authors treat Chenu’s impact on *Optatam Totius*, yet they regularly note his influence, especially on *Gaudium et Spes* and its application of the term “signs of the times”. *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965) 4, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html). Klaus Wittstadt recalls Congar’s own assessment that Chenu affected the council through his personal influence: “much of what bloomed and grew fruit can be credited to [Chenu’s] sowing,” in *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995–2006) 1:461. Jan Grootaers also establishes that Chenu’s general availability and willingness to meet informally with Italian clergy gave him an influence that outweighed the historical record of his activity at the council. *History of Vatican II* 2:526.

breakthroughs: it reinforces the connection between Tübingen and French *ressourcement*, it highlights the importance of method for the massive transposition of theological learning that took place in the mid-twentieth century, and it shows how the Second Vatican Council, through the Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius*), gave decisive license to this transposition.

The importance of Chenu, and the influence of Tübingen on him in particular, has not been lost in the recent upsurge of attention given to *ressourcement*. Janette Gray draws a comparison between the “historical criticality then uncommon outside the Tübingen School” and Chenu’s own attempt to form a theological school at Le Saulchoir.<sup>6</sup> Flynn locates the influence more precisely: “Chenu suggested Möhler as a possible model for a Roman Catholic contribution to ecumenism.”<sup>7</sup> I aim to fill in these notes by looking first at Chenu’s writings in the 1930s, and then at the fallout from these writings. By doing so I will measure, for the first time in the English language, the scope of the impact of Möhler’s influence on Chenu.

More specifically, this study does not simply supplement *ressourcement* scholarship by underscoring Chenu’s significance. It attempts something more foundational by underscoring the importance of method for theology, a method that helped theology transition from what Lonergan famously called a “classical worldview” to one more “historically minded.”<sup>8</sup> Only by tracing the influence of Tübingen on Chenu can one appreciate the methodological revolution that it inspired in him. Just as manners makes the man, so method makes the theologian. From this angle, the strong reaction by Dominican and Roman authorities to Chenu’s 1937 *Une École de théologie: Le Saulchoir* made perfectly sense: for if Chenu’s methodological revolution were to work its way through seminaries, then the reigning theological paradigm—neo-Scholasticism—would not remain in place.

Nowhere does the question of method come to bear fruit more directly than in the notion of a theological school. This notion might seem further from the heart of theology than, say, Christology or trinitarian theology. Yet it lies at the heart of Chenu’s theological project. A theological school gives meaning to individual disciplines while providing an architectonic structure under which rests fundamental presuppositions about the goal and identity of theological research. What theologians do, and the values and lessons they try to impart to their students, relies on the presuppositions underlying departmental structures. Analogous to Hegel’s *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, which mediates between the individual and the state, the theological school mediates between the individual theologian and the church.

Underscoring the role of method also makes possible a retrieval of Vatican II’s document on seminary formation, *Optatam Totius*.<sup>9</sup> This reexamination lends greater force

6. Janette Gray, “Marie-Dominique Chenu and Le Saulchoir: A Stream of Catholic Renewal,” in Flynn and Murray, eds., *Ressourcement* 205–18 at 208.

7. Flynn, “*Ressourcement*, Ecumenism, and Pneumatology” 225.

8. Lonergan, “The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical Mindedness,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. W. F. J. Ryan and B. J. Tyrrell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 1–9.

9. *Optatam Totius* (October 28, 1965) (hereafter cited in text as *OT*), [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_optatam-totius\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html).

to Oscar Cullmann's memorable claim about *Optatam Totius*. In a December 1965 press conference following its promulgation, the great Protestant observer of the council noted, *Optatam Totius* "belongs, I believe, perhaps among the best and most important conciliar texts . . . The text has exceeded our expectations."<sup>10</sup> By reading *Optatam Totius* through the double filter of Chenu's *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir* and the influence of Tübingen, it becomes feasible, fifty years after the council, to substantiate Cullmann's observation by specifying what makes *Optatam Totius* so important.

Yet such claims challenge those interpretations of the council that have gained the moniker "hermeneutic of continuity." The appeal to Tübingen and Chenu makes it easier to understand the deficiencies of this hermeneutic. Anthony Akinwale's essay on the decree presents a seamless continuity between Trent and Vatican II, noting, "Continuity between Trent and Vatican II in the area of priestly formation is evident in the fact that the Tridentine objective of forming priests who are in the world but not of it is continued at Vatican II."<sup>11</sup> Even when *Optatam Totius* signals the need for altering seminary education, Akinwale minimizes this change: "There is therefore a continuity of objective although a discontinuity in strategy" (*ibid.*). By focusing on continuity, Akinwale misses the subtle but seismic shifts that led other commenters, including the future Pope Benedict, to make far bolder claims about the decree. In his final assessment, Akinwale comes to the judgment that *Optatam Totius* does no more than expand or make explicit what Trent, and thus post-Tridentine Catholicism, already implied. He states, "[*Optatam Totius*'s] explication or amplification of an implicit Tridentine teaching warrants the affirmation of continuity between Trent and Vatican II even as the defensive posture of Trent's program of priestly formation is replaced by the new and open tendency of that of Vatican II" (*ibid.* 246). The final section of this essay will offer a closer examination of the text, which will reveal how the "minor key" in *Optatam Totius* indicates a far more radical shift than those wedded to a hermeneutic of continuity care to admit.

One finds a clear contrast to Akinwale in the commentary by Ottmar Fuchs, who supports Cullmann's assertion by demonstrating how the decree changed the direction of priestly formation in important ways.<sup>12</sup> In the section on seminary studies

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10. This citation has been lifted from Josef Neuner, "Kommentar," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Teil II* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967) 310–11. Cullmann's remark finds its way into almost all of the important commentaries, including Lamberigts, "*Optatam Totius*, The Decree on Priestly Formation: A Short Survey of Its History at the Second Vatican Council," *Louvain Studies* 30 (2005) 25, doi:10.2143/LS.30.1.583235; Alois Greiler, *Das Konzil und die Seminare* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003) 7; and Ottmar Fuchs, "C. Zur Gewichtung vom *Optatam Totius*," in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil*, ed. Peter Hünemann and Joachim Hilberath (Freiburg: Herder, 2005) 3:467.
  11. Anthony Akinwale, "The Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam Totius*," in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition*, ed. Matthew Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008) 229–50 at 236.
  12. For previous analysis of this hermeneutic, in light of the debate about continuity/reform versus discontinuity, see my "Beyond Reform: Vatican II as a Constitutional Text of Faith," *Horizons* 41 (2014), doi:10.1017/hor.2014.2.

Fuchs declares, “We can deem the new manner and style of conceiving the theological disciplines—how they are to be taught, how they relate to one another, the methods that they use—as revolutionary.”<sup>13</sup> For Fuchs, something did happen at Vatican II, especially concerning the theological formation of priests (to be discussed later).

I proceed in five steps. First, I consult recent scholarship by Peter Hünemann to chronicle the development of theological departments and the role of Tübingen in this development. These developments implied a theological method that would reorganize theological knowledge. Second, I recount the influence of Tübingen on Chenu in the years leading up to Chenu’s *Le Saulchoir*. Third, I review Chenu’s “little book,” *Le Saulchoir*, by bringing together Chenu’s focus on method and his retrieval of Tübingen. Fourth, I narrate the fate of Chenu after publishing this text. Fifth, I summarize *Optatam Totius*, and expand on the claims cited above from Cullmann and Fuchs. After these steps, it will be possible to conclude that reading *Optatam Totius* in just this way brings important succor to those still committed to the mission of *aggiornamento* called for by the council and vivified by the papacy of Pope Francis.

## The Tübingen School in Departmental Context

One could hardly be loyal to Chenu without claiming that, to understand Tübingen theology, one must also understand its context. The faculty of Catholic theology, like the Catholic Church in general, was forced to acclimate itself to unprecedented social, intellectual, and political changes.<sup>14</sup> As the faculty took shape in the second decade of the 19th century, it was also affected by a profound but often ignored shift among Catholic faculties of theology in the German-speaking world. Peter Hünemann has chronicled these changes, and their impact on theological faculties, especially Tübingen.<sup>15</sup>

Of course the availability of texts and the need to master them have always to some degree conditioned the development of theology. The modern move towards

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13. Ottmar Fuchs, “B. Kommentierung” in *Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil* 384–459 at 423. Here Fuchs, as he admits in a footnote, uses the same descriptive as Neuner (“Kommentar” 337).
  14. I refer to some of these changes in, “Between Rome and Tübingen: Rethinking Johann Adam Möhler’s Political Theology,” *Journal of Church and State* 58 (2014) 234–60, doi:10.1093/jcs/csu106. For a concise account of the restructuring of church–state relations in 19th-century Germany, see Klaus Schatz, *Zwischen Säkularisation und zweitem Vatikanum* (Frankfurt: Joseph Knecht, 1986) 13–142.
  15. See Hünemann, “Johann Sebastian Drey und seine Schüler?” in *Theologie als Instanz der Moderne. Beiträge und Studien zu Johann Sebastian Drey und zur Katholischen Tübinger Schule*, ed. Ottmar Fuchs and Michael Kessler (Tübingen: Francke, 2005) 173–89; “Theologie als Wissenschaft und ihre Disziplinen,” in *Die katholisch-theologischen Disziplinen in Deutschland 1870–1962*, ed. Hubert Wolf and Claus Arnold (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999) 377–95; “Die Freiheit der Wissenschaft—die Theologie und das römische Magisterium,” *Concilium* 51 (December 2015) 618–23. This section leans heavily on these articles.

specialization stretches back to the sixteenth century. One marker of this specialization was the seminary in Salamanca, one of the first faculties to create distinct chairs of theology. These distinctions were based on orientation more rather than area. So a place like Salamanca might have chairs of Scotist, Thomist, and Augustinian theology, for instance. This paradigm continued into the eighteenth century, when, in 1761, Innsbruck advertised positions in Augustinian and Thomist theology to complement the professor occupying the chair of “Suarezian” theology.<sup>16</sup> Though jolting to twenty first-century ears (accustomed to a wholly different differentiation of labor), such distinctions nonetheless mark a modern concession. Surely in Aquinas’s Paris or Albert’s Cologne there were no chairs of Augustinian or Cappadocian theology. Already in the Tridentine period theology had become too vast for one person to master all of the theological questions. But it was still not too late to be a master over all fields within a theological orientation.

If Leibniz was the last person to know everything, then perhaps Francisco Suarez (1548–1617) was the last theologian to know everything in theology. A quick glance at a list of his writings unveils a breadth unimaginable to the contemporary mind: treatises on law, sacraments, Christology, the Trinity, angels, grace, the soul, and creation, to name a few. These treatises were not essays, but sweeping texts that quickly became classics and paradigmatic works for generations. They refract the medieval mentality that produced *summās*, a genre, as Hünemann recalls, that aims to bring all relevant theological questions under the scope of one work.<sup>17</sup> One finds the same mentality in Leibniz, Descartes, and lesser-known polymaths like Athanasius Kirchner. Although polymaths would continue to appear into the nineteenth century, they would increasingly come to represent eccentric genius rather than the learned scholar.

Hünemann notes that the medieval model still animated early modern theology, as reflected in Melchior Cano’s familiar *de locis theologicis*, which presumed a unified method for all branches of theology.<sup>18</sup> Theological faculties from the sixteenth to eighteenth century continued to make concessions like those in Salamanca, but failed to make the quantum leap into disciplinarity. For these faculties, the chair of Scotist theology, say, would build around him lecturers in patristics, Scripture, moral theology. These lecturers complemented the Scotist dogmatic and metaphysical theology by showing how to think through their “subdisciplines” in a Scotist fashion, even if the lecture positions received designation as chairs.<sup>19</sup> The practical upshot was “conclusion” theology, in which the scriptural scholar would find the texts and the history of biblical interpretation that affirmed Scotist eucharistic theology or trinitarian theology. Under such an approach the disciplines functioned for all practical purposes as subsidiary disciplines.

Jordan Simon’s 1774 plan to reform the theological faculty in Erfurt marks the epochal shift toward modern disciplinarity. Simon conceived a faculty with twelve

16. Hünemann, “Johann Sebastian Drey und seine Schüler” 177.

17. Hünemann, “Theologie als Wissenschaft” 380.

18. Ibid. 381.

19. Hünemann, “Die Freiheit der Wissenschaft” 620.

professors who would cover the relevant subjects from dogmatics to homiletics.<sup>20</sup> Such a plan organized theological faculties according to disciplines and assumed a methodological plurality. To occupy a position in Old Testament meant, increasingly, both a familiarity with languages and also supplementary disciplines like philology. Likewise, professors in church history were expected not only to think theologically, but also to understand and utilize the developing historical methods and modes of investigation that required specific training.

This plan, notes Hünemann, did not even come to pass in Erfurt, and was realized only slowly and unevenly in the rest of Catholic Germany.<sup>21</sup> Between the founding of the proto-Tübingen faculty in Ellwangen in 1812 and the eventual move to Tübingen five years later, the Vienna Congress reorganized the Holy Roman Empire that had been dissolved under Napoleon. The Congress transformed fourteen of the eighteen Catholic universities into parity or deconfessionalized universities, which carried radical consequences for theology departments.<sup>22</sup> Newly created faculties in Bonn and Tübingen were organized according to Simon's model. A brief recollection of 1820s Tübingen will shed some light on how conforming the department—more or less—according to Simon's plan affected the trajectory of the School.

In 1822 the Tübingen faculty pleaded to government officials in Stuttgart for support to teach courses in church history and canon law, both regular parts of the curriculum. In previous years the faculty did not yet have funds for a professorship in church history, so they assigned professors from other areas, like Old Testament, to read in church history. In their letter the faculty warn, "It would be deleterious to both the state and the Church if, instead of providing for these disciplines with a stipend intended for that purpose, one were to regard these disciplines as merely an add-on [*Zusatz*]."<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, a jurist trained in canon law would not have the requisite background to teach church history in the way it demands to be taught.<sup>24</sup> The church supervisory office (Königlicher katholischer Kirchenrat) in Stuttgart later added, "The more church history contributes to theology in its own unique way, the less does it deserve to be treated as an accessory to other theological disciplines."<sup>25</sup> The discussion around this appointment highlights how disciplinarity was increasingly coming to the fore. One could no longer rely on generalists to teach distinct disciplines. Church history encompassed its own distinct field of study, and teaching it required training and competence that even the best theologians did not have. Without a teacher equipped with the requisite training, Tübingen could not imagine how they would convey the subject matter to seminarians.

20. Hünemann, "Johann Sebastian Drey und seine Schüler" 177.

21. Hünemann, "Theologie als Wissenschaft" 379.

22. Schatz, *Zwischen Säkularisation und zweitem Vatikanum* 26.

23. Johann Adam Möhler, *Gesammelte Aktenstücke und Briefe*, ed. Stephan Lösch (Munich: Pustet, 1928) 1:38.

24. Möhler, *Gesammelte Aktenstücke und Briefe* 1:42.

25. *Ibid.* 1:45.

Möhler himself raised the same questions in the letters that survive from his invitations to Bonn and to Munich. In his 1834 letter to the Prussian department of education, Möhler confessed,

I could only with great effort move toward teaching other (non-historical) disciplines, in part because I very much doubt my capacity [*Geschicke*] to do so, and in part because I have taken up church history as the duty [*Aufgabe*] of my life. . . . The duty is so all-encompassing, the sources are so abundant, and the study of these sources is so necessary that I fear, if I migrated towards other fields [*Wissenschaften*] I would never get anything done.<sup>26</sup>

The same concerns come up in his letters to Döllinger about a possible appointment in Munich.<sup>27</sup> Two centuries earlier, it would have never dawned on a Suarez or a Bellarmine that there would be limits to their theological range. Yet a Möhler, hailed by many as the greatest living Catholic theologian in Germany, could not foresee covering all of the disciplines.<sup>28</sup>

The twenty first-century university, where each field has been carved into ever-more narrow disciplines requiring ever-more specialized expertise, prompts the question: Is Simon's plan good for theology? Should we not prefer Scholasticism, and all of its consequences, if it offers an architectonic that fosters greater unity? Against this backdrop, it is easy to read the rise of neo-Scholasticism, which culminated in the promulgation of *Aeterni Patris* in 1879, as an alternative to the Simon approach. Both made similar diagnoses, but proposed radically different solutions.

Tübingen's robust call for disciplinarity, it should be recalled, did not lead each branch of theology to become its own silo. The first generation of Tübingen theologians imagined the disciplines as discrete entities unified by an organic conception of a living tradition; indeed, Chenu appeals to this living tradition as a distinguishing mark of Tübingen. Johann Sebastian Drey utilized this concept in his 1819 *Brief Introduction to the Study of Theology* and the concept also constitutes a central feature of Möhler's 1825 *Unity in the Church*. Chenu saw in Tübingen a faculty that applied different disciplinary methods to shed light on and understand more deeply the reality of God. This feature is the best argument for making it, as Chenu did, a model for theological renewal. It is also the best argument for continuing to speak of Tübingen as a school, despite the difficulties that such terminology might present.<sup>29</sup>

26. Ibid. 1:186.

27. See *ibid.* 1:234, 237.

28. Ibid. 1:194.

29. The authoritative English-language overview of the debate about the Tübingen "School" comes via Bradford Hinze, "Roman Catholic Theology: Tübingen," in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David Fergusson (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 187–213. Since its publication, numerous Germanophone theologians have further questioned whether the term "Tübinger Schule" can be meaningful. See in particular Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule: Zur Geschichte ihrer Wahrnehmung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2011) 28–47, 470–583; and Andreas Holzem, "Die Tübinger Schule? Tübinger Theologie als Zeitgeschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," *Jahres- und Tagungsbericht der Görres-Gesellschaft* (2013) 13–33.



The shift in the organization of theological departments gained steam during the nineteenth century. The rise of neo-Scholasticism represented, in this context, an attempt to recover earlier, medieval forms of understanding theology and gaining theological unity. Neo-Scholastic faculties chose tractates over disciplines: these faculties employed a professor for the doctrine of grace, and the historian or scriptural scholar existed as an auxiliary theologian whose purpose was to support dogmas, not to develop and advance the state of the field for these subdisciplines as such.<sup>30</sup> This mentality persisted all the way into Chenu's time, as demonstrated by the 1931 Apostolic Constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*.<sup>31</sup> Hünemann out the consequences of the neo-Scholastic approach:

Against this backdrop one can conceive the methodological presuppositions of the neo-Scholastic manuals: the Old and New Testament texts and their interpretation can and must lead to nothing less and nothing more than the most recent magisterial statements. Investigations into the history of doctrine relating to early confessions of faith form a direct and logical path to the most recent theological developments. Canon law and practical theology are simply applied fields ruled by dogmatic formulae. Moral theology finds its principles in the *lex aeterna*, which is given in nature and revelation, and is expounded by the magisterium.<sup>32</sup>

This restructuring in part explains how Tübingen produced breakthroughs in New Testament (Kuhn's *Das Leben Jesu*), fundamental theology (Drey's *Apologetik*), patristics (Möhler's *Athanasius*), ecumenical theology (Möhler's *Symbolik*), and moral theology (Hirscher's *Die christliche Moral*). By contrast, neo-Scholasticism still imagined theology as *one* science. Even such undeniable neo-Scholastic achievements as Perrone's concept of the ordinary magisterium consisted in the creation of further distinctions within already established theological frameworks.<sup>33</sup> Möhler's *Unity in the Church* comprises a contribution to ecclesiology of a wholly different order.

The neo-Scholastic understanding of theology that led to the differences between the constitution of different theological faculties carried into the same decade in which Chenu published *Le Saulchoir. Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, which sought to regulate theological study, signaled Roman preference for the Scholastic understanding of theology. The constitution implores that theology be taught "according to both the positive and the scholastic method" (*method cum positive tum scholastic tradenda est*), and "studied and explained according to the principle and teaching of Aquinas" (*ad principia et doctrinam S. Thomae Aquinatis investigentur et illustrentur*).<sup>34</sup> As a Dominican and a Thomist, Chenu supported advancing the theology of Aquinas—he worked toward this his whole life—yet he chafed at the neo-Scholastic presuppositions that dominated the

30. Hünemann, "Theologie als Wissenschaft" 384.

31. Pius XI, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* (May 24, 1931), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/la/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_apc\\_19310524\\_deus-scientiarum-dominus.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/la/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-xi_apc_19310524_deus-scientiarum-dominus.html) (author's translation).

32. Hünemann, "Theologie als Wissenschaft" 383–84.

33. *Ibid.* 385.

34. *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* 30.

schools of his day. Hence *Le Saulchoir*. Hünemann notes that *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* really was an effort at reform, but one that did “nothing to move the underlying concept of theology.”<sup>35</sup> Thus the reform was dead on arrival. This mode of theology, at such a distance from Tübingen’s head start on the Simon reforms, was still operative in textbooks for Spanish seminarians into the 1970s.<sup>36</sup> The different understandings of theology and its disciplines, it must be said, also lends intelligibility to the struggles between theologians and the magisterium that have come to the surface over the last two hundred years.<sup>37</sup>

## Chenu and the Tübingen Connection

Before turning to Chenu’s *Le Saulchoir* it will be helpful to trace the strange course of events that led to a French Dominican Thomist embracing a German, Romantic, patristic-inspired theological school. Chenu completed his doctorate in Rome, under the direction of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not go to the front; no doubt he shared many of their concerns, after the horrors of the Great War, about handing down a theology unrelated to human experience.<sup>38</sup> Upon completion he was offered but turned down a position at the Angelicum, in part because of his growing concerns about the theological methods employed there.<sup>39</sup> He opted to teach at the Dominican seminary *Le Saulchoir* instead, which in those years was exiled to Belgium. At *Le Saulchoir* in the 1920s, Chenu’s teaching responsibilities included lectures on nineteenth-century theology, in which he covered Tübingen.<sup>40</sup> In

35. Hünemann, “Theologie als Wissenschaft” 386.

36. *Ibid.* 385.

37. For this point see Unterburger, *Vom Lehramt der Theologen zum Lehramt der Päpste*. For a more concise treatment, see Hünemann, “Theologie als Wissenschaft” 388–95, and “Die Freiheit der Wissenschaft” 619–23.

38. For one particularly deft explanation of the crater left by World War I, see Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919–1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005) esp. 8–11.

39. Gray covers this period of Chenu’s life in “Marie-Dominique Chenu and *Le Saulchoir*: A Stream of Catholic Renewal” 207–9.

40. Christian Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie. M.-Dominique Chenu im Kontext seiner Programmschrift “Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir”* (Berlin: Lit, 2010) 107. According to Bauer, this material included Georges Goyau’s 1905 edition of Möhler’s works in French, and the influential study by Edmond Vermeil, which notoriously connected Möhler to Catholic modernism. See Vermeil, *Jean-Adam Möhler et l’école de Tubingue. Étude sur la théologie romantique en Wurtemberg et les origines germaniques du modernisme* (Paris: A. Colin, 1913). For Vermeil’s importance in the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Tübingen School, see Stefan Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 322–38. See also, Georges Goyau, *Le Pensée chrétienne; textes et étude. Moehler* (Paris: Bloud, 1905). For Goyau as an antidote to Vermeil in terms of the French reception of Möhler, see Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 299–305. Bauer and Warthmann’s research unsettles O’Meara’s claim that “French resources on the history of modern German Catholic theology and of its romantic restoration were, one suspects, sparse before 1930.” “Beyond Hierarchology” 174. O’Meara correctly locates the

1928, when Congar came to study at Le Saulchoir, Chenu introduced him to Möhler.<sup>41</sup> Both Congar and Chenu recall that, upon encountering Möhler and Tübingen, they immediately appreciated how the Tübingen School found a way to be deeply Catholic without being Scholastic. Chenu recollects, “Möhler and his school in Tübingen initiated a principle of renewal in theology . . . Fr. Congar and I have, in our own way, rediscovered it.”<sup>42</sup> Chenu already had a model for restructuring theological method, which gained prescience in the following year, with the publication of *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*. Their interest in Möhler was enough for Pierre Chaillet to note in a 1936 letter to Congar, “You [Congar and Chenu] are the heart of a little Möhler movement in Saulchoir.”<sup>43</sup>

Chenu’s first published acknowledgment of Tübingen appeared in a short article from 1930.<sup>44</sup> No doubt a centenary reflection, the article compares German and French theological education in 1830. Chenu notes that at this time the French turned toward German schools, “where an extraordinary output of religious and intellectual activity blossomed.”<sup>45</sup> Although he mentions Georg Hermes as another source of renewal, Chenu specifies that only Tübingen was able to overcome both Baroque Scholasticism (of the Wolffian<sup>46</sup> and Suarezian variety) and Enlightenment rationalism by effecting a harmonization of the speculative and mystical elements of theology.<sup>47</sup> In the

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Möhler renaissance in the 1930s, but Warthmann demonstrates that the French branch of Tübingen scholarship can be traced to the 1890s, and it continued through each decade until the aforementioned renaissance. Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 290–338.

41. Congar, “Johann Adam Möhler. 1796–1838,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 150 (1970) 47–51.
42. Chenu, *Von der Freiheit eiens Theologen*, trans. Michael Lauble (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 2005) 71. This text is a translation of Chenu’s interview with Jacques Duquesne, published in 1974 as *Un théologien en liberté*. Bauer notes that in this recollection Chenu humbly neglects to give himself credit for introducing Congar to Möhler. Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 108.
43. I cite this letter from Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 352n35: “Au Saulchoir vous étiez l’âme d’un petit mouvement möhlérien” (Oct 20, 1936). Chaillet (1900–72) was an important bridge figure between Tübingen and France. He traveled to Tübingen in 1936, where he made the acquaintance of Karl Adam and Joseph Rupert Geiselman. For an overview of Chaillet’s impact on French reception, see Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 378–85. Students of *ressourcement* theology are beginning to recognize Chaillet’s pivotal role in the movement, and that role is in need of greater study.
44. Chenu, “Les hautes études religieuses en France et en Allemagne autour de 1830,” *La Vie Intellectuelle* 6 (1930) 52–56.
45. *Ibid.* 53.
46. According to Fergus Kerr, Chenu continually lamented Christian Wolff’s influence on theology. Chenu accused Garrigou-Lagrange’s theology of being unconsciously tinged with the thought of Wolff, and he lamented the influence of Wolffianism on early drafts at the Second Vatican Council. Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 29–30.
47. Chenu, “Les hautes études religieuses” 54.

penultimate paragraph Chenu declares, “The prodigious success of Möhler’s *Symbolik* was extended into France, where it was translated and went through many editions.”<sup>48</sup>

Several notable comments follow this *précis*. First, Chenu’s remarks on Tübingen and Möhler make no reference at all to historical study or patristic retrieval; he draws no comparison between Möhler’s retrieval of Athanasius and his own attempt to resurrect a fleshier understanding of Aquinas. Second, his familiarity with Tübingen seems to be secondary; he does not cite any sources, and what he says about Möhler’s *Symbolik* corresponds with what one might know from reading about it, rather than reading the text itself. Third, Chenu emphasizes how Tübingen did theology in a different key than that of Scholastic or Enlightenment counterparts. At the end of the article Chenu makes a brief reference to alterations in seminary education during the 1830s. These concerns were integrally related to Chenu’s ongoing concerns about method.

The next touchpoint for Chenu and Tübingen comes in 1935, when Chenu published “Position de la théologie,”<sup>49</sup> which Chenu bookends with a quotation from Johannes Kuhn.<sup>50</sup> According to Chenu, the article intends to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888), “who, with Kuhn and the entire Tübingen School that Kuhn represented, restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the doctrine of faith that serves as the principle for scientific theology [*la science théologique*] . . . They inaugurated the liquidation of ‘Baroque theology.’”<sup>51</sup> These nineteenth-century Germans, explained Chenu, understood that faith is more about the questions than the answers: “The impatient restlessness of the believer, within his firm assent, is a normal reaction . . . This is of the very nature of faith.”<sup>52</sup> The reality of faith necessitates a dynamic element in the knowing process, without which theology would be “still-born” (*mort-née*).<sup>53</sup> Theology in this mode responds to the free gift of divine revelation, which humans receive in history. Unlike philosophers concerned with eternal forms, theologians study an essentially historical reality. Chenu writes that the

48. Ibid. 55–56.

49. Chenu, “Position de la théologie,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 24 (1935) 232–57. The essay was republished as “La foi dans l’intelligence,” *La Parole de dieu* 1 (1964) 116–38. The English translation appeared as “What is Theology?” in *Faith and Theology*, trans. Denis Hickey (Dublin: Gill and Son, 1968) 15–35. Where the translation strays from the French, I have taken the liberty to provide my own translation. It should be noted that Stefan Warthmann makes a simple lexicographical error that leads to a mistaken judgment. He states that this essay appeared after 1925, although the article was not published until 1935. Warthmann then concludes, erroneously, that Chenu must have been engaged with the Tübingen School as early as 1925. Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 346.

50. Johannes Kuhn (1806–1887) was a student of Drey and Möhler and the leader of the “second generation” of the Tübingen School, where he taught from 1839 to 1882.

51. Chenu, “Position de la théologie” 232, 257. Chenu here cites Karl Eschweiler’s *Die zwei Wege der Theologie*, along with a French review of it.

52. Ibid. 234.

53. Ibid.

theologian “works on history. His ‘given’ [*donné*] is neither the nature of things nor their eternal form, but instead the events that constitute an economy, the realization of which unfolds in time.”<sup>54</sup> Whatever scientific legitimacy might be claimed by Christian theology, it is not one that follows from “an order of essences,” but instead one that deals with “sacred history” (*histoire sainte*). Chenu explains: “The theological ‘given’ is not a philosophical invention which can be treated as a set of physical or metaphysical principles, from which clear conclusions are logically deduced. Their given is the activities [*oeuvres*] of God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not the god of pure act.”<sup>55</sup> Chenu seeks to connect the dynamic movement of the believer toward God with the historical reality in which God self-communicates Himself to us. This connection of course had consequences for theological method and for the regnancy of neo-Scholasticism.

Only once in “Position de la théologie” does Chenu reference Tübingen. This comes in a citation that Chenu had already used as a superscript to open the article: “without rebirth there can be no theology.” Chenu references Kuhn’s 1839 article on faith and reason, and adds that the citation appears in Edmond Vermeil’s 1913 *Jean-Adam Möhler et l’école catholique de Tubingue (1815–1840)*.<sup>56</sup> It is noteworthy that the full title of Kuhn’s article reads, “On Faith and Reason, with Concern for Current Extreme Views and Tendencies.”<sup>57</sup> The “extreme views” cited by Kuhn come from Hermes and Louis Bautain, two theologians lauded by Chenu in his 1830 article. Such a disparity further confirms that Chenu’s zeal to promote the Tübingen School was not necessarily matched by an intimacy with the School’s texts.

Chenu’s 1935 article indicates no more than a second-hand knowledge of Tübingen. Instead of associating Hermes (albeit haltingly) with the School as he did in his 1930 article, Chenu chooses Scheeben here. Tübingen receives praise from Chenu, but there is little to indicate that Chenu had a clearly demarcated understanding of the Tübingen School, other than as an umbrella movement for reform-minded Catholic theology. Still, these two shorter texts mark a profound respect for the School, which would come to represent both a model and precursor to Chenu’s beloved Saulchoir.

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54. Ibid. 246. No less a scholar of the Tübingen School than Hünemann writes that Tübingen introduced “radical historicity” as a “fundamental theological presupposition.” See Hünemann, “Johann Sebastian von Drey und seine Schüler” 179.
  55. Ibid. 247; a few paragraphs later Chenu complains of “a certain theological rationalism still rampant [*sévit*], full [*féru*] of dialectic but ignorant of history, treating the articles of faith as if they were logical propositions, as if the Gospel had been written in order to supply arguments for the masters of the Schools” (ibid. 248).
  56. In the footnote Chenu adds, “Kuhn was, next to Möhler, the greatest speculative [*le plus pénétrant*] theologian of the Tübingen School.” See Chenu, “Position de la théologie” 239–40.
  57. Johannes Kuhn, “Über Glauben und Wissen, mit Rücksicht auf extreme Ansichten und Richtungen der Gegenwart,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 21 (1839) 382–503.

## Le Saulchoir: The Call for a Reorganization of Theology

The publication of Chenu's short text—*Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir*<sup>58</sup>—must have felt like a theological meteor. In some quarters it gave much-needed encouragement; in others it prompted immediate action.<sup>59</sup> *Le Saulchoir* grew from Chenu's exhortation to his Dominican brothers, given on March 7, 1936, the feast day of St. Thomas.<sup>60</sup> *Le Saulchoir* appeared near the end of 1937,<sup>61</sup> one calendar year before Congar launched the *Unam Sanctam* series, in which de Lubac's groundbreaking *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme* would appear, and two years before the new French translation of Möhler's *Unity*.<sup>62</sup> De Lubac's and Danielou's joint venture, *Sources chrétiennes*, would begin five years later. Meanwhile, in the wake of *Aeterni Patris* and the anti-modernist encyclicals in the first decade of the twentieth century, seminary education came to conceive manualist Thomism, as prescribed in the "24 Theses on Aquinas," produced by the Congregation for Studies in 1914, as the surest bulwark against modernism.<sup>63</sup> Shortly thereafter appeared the 1917 Code of Canon Law, which mandated Aquinas in seminary studies (no. 1366). *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* reinforced the vision of theology that undergirded the manuals. In response to this climate, Chenu called for a radical reorientation of studies, one that would bear fruit in the Second Vatican Council's text on seminary education, *Optatam Totius*. Yet the council and its fruits must have been practically unimaginable for Chenu, especially when Dominican authorities called Chenu to Rome in January 1938 to answer questions about his "little book."<sup>64</sup>

On a purely quantitative basis, Tübingen's influence on Chenu seems at best marginal here. Chenu praises Amboise Gardeil, a faculty member from the previous generation at Saulchoir, more readily and abundantly than he praises Tübingen.<sup>65</sup> It also appears that

58. Chenu, *Une école de théologie: Le Saulchoir*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo (Paris: Cerf, 1985). Hereafter cited as *Le Saulchoir*.

59. With fascism on the march in Europe and Europe on the eve of war, it is impossible to remove these events from the political context. For an artful treatment of this connection see Joseph Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990) doi:10.1177/004056399005100402.

60. For a discussion of this speech and its connection to *Le Saulchoir* see Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 446–58. Bauer gives a link to an English translation of the speech, but as of this writing (Spring 2016) the text was no longer available. It is worth noting that the Dominicans had already maneuvered to relocate Le Saulchoir back to Paris. This fact only strengthens the case for reading Chenu's text not simply as a reflection on theological method, but as a concrete program for action.

61. For more precise details on its publication, see Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 458–60. Bauer cites a letter from the publisher indicating its appearance in November 1937.

62. Christian Bauer, "Geschichte und Dogma," in Chenu, *Le Saulchoir: Eine Schule der Theologie*, trans. Michael Lauble (Berlin: Morus, 2003) 9–50 at 35.

63. For these theses, see *Enchiridion Symbolorum: definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, eds. Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann. 41st ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 3601–3624.

64. For the nitty-gritty details, see Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 506–8.

65. On the basis of Chenu's laudatory remarks Boersma concludes that *Le Saulchoir* "radicalized [Gardeil's] approach." Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology* 22.

Marie-Joseph Lagrange's École Biblique in Jerusalem served as a more proximate model for a school than Tübingen did. In the preface to *Le Saulchoir* Chenu mentions the École Biblique as an "admirable success" and a "shining example" of a theological school devoted to renewal through restructured methodology.<sup>66</sup> Chenu bookends this praise by stating, in *Le Saulchoir*'s final paragraphs, that, just as Marie-Joseph Lagrange insisted that one must consider the literary form and historical context of first-century Judaism in order to understand the New Testament, so must one consider the thirteenth-century context in order to understand Aquinas and his texts.<sup>67</sup> When examined more precisely, however, the ties to Tübingen become more discernible. To make this case, it is first necessary to review what *Le Saulchoir* says about Tübingen.

Chenu first mentions Möhler in the third of the book's five chapters. He connects the theory of doctrinal development with "Möhler and Newman, whose work reached a rarely achieved spiritual quality."<sup>68</sup> A few paragraphs later, Chenu offers a thicker description of Tübingen in the context of discussing living tradition:

[Living tradition] is the primary theme for the Catholic theologians of Tübingen (Drey, Möhler), and *Le Saulchoir* is happy to borrow from these masters of Catholic renaissance in nineteenth-century Germany . . . With the aid of Tübingen and Scheeben we are able to counter the abstract intellectualism of the Enlightenment and its indifference to history—two related sins—which have not failed to contaminate modern scholasticism, including countless manuals, even the Thomist ones.<sup>69</sup>

In Tübingen Chenu intuited an earlier model for the task of thinking through the theological implications of the relationship between history and truth. Tübingen found a way to address modern problems by incorporating historical methods and by retrieving patristic tropes that correlated with modern organicism. Scholasticism, despite its severely anti-modern stance, managed to share some of modernity's formal qualities, to its own detriment.<sup>70</sup> Via Pierre Chaillet, Chenu cites a "magnificent passage" from Drey, which demonstrates how Tübingen provided an alternative both to Scholasticism and to modernity.<sup>71</sup> Chenu deems this route as the surest path for maintaining Catholic theology's viability in the twentieth century.

66. *Le Saulchoir* 93.

67. *Ibid.* 170.

68. *Ibid.* 140.

69. *Ibid.* 141.

70. This accusation would be the pattern identified by Boersma, that neo-Scholasticism's purported anti-modernity contained a distinctly modern underbelly. Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology* 5. For recent genealogies of modernity centering on Suarez's centrality in the transition to modernity, see Stephen Schloesser's review essay, "Recent Works in Jesuit Philosophy: Vicissitudes of Rhetorical Accommodation," in *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 1 (2014) doi:10.1163/22141332-00101007. Schloesser affirms MacIntyre's claim in *After Virtue* that nineteenth-century neo-Thomists did not successfully elide early modernism, especially Suarezian Thomism, in their attempt to reach back to Thomas (125–26).

71. Chenu, *Le Saulchoir* 141n. Chenu cites Pierre Chaillet "L'esprit du Christianisme et du Catholicisme II: L'école de Tubingue. Drey, Baader et Moehler," *Revue des sciences*

The final mention of Tübingen comes in the fifth and ultimate chapter of *Le Saulchoir*, where Chenu makes the point that the history and development of dogmas did not simply end, or dissolve into a history of theological schools with the last of the early ecumenical councils. Chenu counters: "The entire course of Christian history is a source of theological knowledge, for this knowledge, on account of the *presence* of faith in every new generation, contains within itself an ever new intelligibility."<sup>72</sup> Just before this citation Chenu references Tübingen, noting, "Möhler and the other Tübingen theologians not only discovered the freshness of the Church Fathers, but also retrieved many of the medieval masters animated by the same spirit."<sup>73</sup> Each generation of theology, like each generation of believers, is formed by the Spirit that enlivened the earliest believers. Christian history, for both Tübingen and Chenu, is a living reality, not a set of formal propositions. Such claims, it must be admitted, can become empty slogans. Yet for Chenu, these claims carry with them a methodological imperative to investigate historical epochs as an ongoing manifestation of the salvation-historical events recorded in Scripture.<sup>74</sup> This perspective certainly explains Chenu's decision to study so many "forgotten" theologians from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Such an awareness carries the implication to fundamentally reorganize theological learning. To undergird his seemingly radical position Chenu recalls his own order's origin to find precedent for reorganization.

As both a Dominican and a medievalist, Chenu knew that the earliest Dominican seminaries were founded in cities with universities, and that St. Dominic himself even recommended that Dominicans in training should also have the opportunity, after getting their master's, to hear lectures at the local universities. Chenu notes that this model represented a stark contrast from the previous centuries, when monasteries were "the intellectual heartbeat [*lieu*] of feudal European civilization."<sup>75</sup> Although the monasteries had done much to advance theological education, they were quickly becoming otiose, at least as centers of intellectual learning, in the twelfth century. Around the urban cathedrals there arose the cathedral schools, the forerunners of the medieval universities. These schools shaped their curriculum in order to suit the new forms and modes of knowledge that the emerging bourgeois demanded, but could not receive from the cloisters, whose educational model corresponded to an older, feudal

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*philosophiques et théologiques* 26 (1937) 713–26. Geiselman gave Chaillet access to the collection of primary texts that become *Geist des Christentums und des Katholizismus* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald, 1940). Chaillet used these texts as the basis for the 1937 article. One sees already in Chaillet's title the same quality noted above in Chenu, namely, grouping figures like Baader, who never taught or studied in Tübingen, with leading members of the School.

72. Chenu, *Le Saulchoir* 169.

73. *Ibid.*

74. It is on this point in particular that Boersma wants to connect Möhler and Chenu, by means of a shared "incarnational principle." See *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology* esp. 144–48, 207–11.

75. Chenu, *Le Saulchoir* 95.



economy.<sup>76</sup> Chenu makes a rhetorically effective point: St. Dominic himself realized that the traditional method of theological education would not fit the new social and economic order. Dominicans, more than anyone, should know this, and should rethink their theological curricula accordingly.

One can easily guess what will follow in *Le Saulchoir*: just as the monastic model no longer fit the twelfth century, so the neo-Scholastic model no longer fits the twentieth century. So-called “decadent” Scholasticism, notes Chenu, was already a target at the Dominican General Council of Bologna in 1706.<sup>77</sup> Yet this form of Scholasticism continued and even gained momentum through the nineteenth century. Due to justified fears of positivism and evolutionism, modern Catholic theology by and large cut off dialogue with history. Although these dangers were real, neo-Scholasticism failed to discern the essentially incarnational, that is, historical quality of Christianity itself. Beginning with anti-Protestant polemics in the sixteenth century, Chenu recalls, Catholic theology began to convince itself that truth could be achieved one logical step at a time, which effectively undermined the mediated and graced quality of the Christian message. This truth is a living truth, not a collection of Denzinger quotations.<sup>78</sup> Therefore if theological sources are to be understood, they must be understood as part of a living, historically developing faith. Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* did not drop out of the sky into Thomas’s mind; rather, it arose from the ground prepared by Thomas’s teachers and by the scientific developments at universities like Paris. In addition, development happened within Aquinas himself, and only a chronological approach to his work, unthinkable for those opposed to history, gives a sense of the mind of the Angelic Doctor at work.

Beyond lamenting the notion of how faith relates to history, and the theological conclusions derived from this notion, Chenu also targeted the expectation of theological uniformity regnant among Catholic theologians. If the church tolerates a diversity of spiritualities—Ignatian, Franciscan, Carmelite, and so on—then why can it not make space for a diversity of theologies? There is no need to lament the emergence of a plurality of theologies existing within a common dogmatic commitment. The problem comes with baptizing one theology and anathematizing all the others. Chenu extrapolates: “For Thomism, whose original intent was to lend validity to Christian claims, there could be no greater disgrace than treating Thomism as an ‘orthodoxy.’”<sup>79</sup> Chenu heaps even greater scorn on *philosophia perennis*, a suspect term invented by a

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76. Ibid. 96.

77. Ibid. 99.

78. See especially the section titled, “The Primacy of the Revealed Given,” in Chenu, *Le Saulchoir* 130–34.

79. Ibid. 149. This line infuriated some Thomists, as Christian Bauer relays. Mariano Cordovani, who along with Michael Browne and Garrigou-Lagrange led the investigation against Chenu, was particularly perplexed by this claim. This perplexity remains both in the written record (as Bauer says, Emilio Panelli has examined the copy of *Le Saulchoir* used by Cordovani) and in the recollection of an encounter with Henri-Marie Féret and Cordovani. Féret was dumbfounded to learn that Cordovani took the passage as equating Thomism with heterodoxy. See Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 510–12.

Renaissance philosopher, Augustine Steuchus, seeking to unify medieval Scholasticism with the theism then popular in Padua.<sup>80</sup> *Philosophia perennis* posed the danger of removing the arguments from the philosophers who made them, and of radically truncating the field of philosophy itself. By critiquing this mode of enquiry, Chenu called into question many Scholastic models of formation, especially those that began with Aristotelian metaphysical principles.

Chenu intended *Le Saulchoir* to initiate fundamental conversations about the nature of seminary education in light of the theological enterprise itself. Chenu saw the Tübingen School as a forerunner for realigning seminary education. Although Chenu's written work does not betray a deep engagement with primary sources from Tübingen, this is no reason to deny or underplay his debt to Tübingen. In what follows, this assertion will be strengthened reviewing Chenu's subsequent comments about the basis for censorship.

### After the Meteor of *Le Saulchoir*

Chenu was one of the first of the *ressourcement* theologians to chart the course for the movement, and one of the first to be censored. Eight years before Garrigou-Lagrange's infamous claim that *nouvelle théologie* would lead straight back to modernism,<sup>81</sup> Chenu's work came under the microscope. As Fergus Kerr tells it, "The result of his manifesto [*Le Saulchoir*], however, was a summons to Rome in 1938 to be interrogated by a handful of his fellow Dominicans, headed by Garrigou-Lagrange."<sup>82</sup> This interrogation led Chenu to sign a statement affirming certain theses that his interrogators felt had been denied in *Le Saulchoir*. Although there is some indication that these measures were taken to keep worries about the book's orthodoxy in-house, Roman concerns resurfaced in 1942, when *Le Saulchoir* was put on the Index and Chenu was stripped of his teaching post. He would land on his feet, at the École des Hautes Études in Paris, but *Le Saulchoir* would never become the kind of school that Chenu had hoped for.

*Le Saulchoir's* impact stands in inverse proportion to its dissemination. Less than 1,000 copies were printed, as it was only intended, according to Chenu's own recollection, for "internal (i.e. Dominican) use."<sup>83</sup> This anecdote explains why the book, despite its impact, received only one review prior to its 1985 re-edition.<sup>84</sup> Yet according to a February 1938 letter from Garrigou-Lagrange to Roland de Vaux, the Dominicans in

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80. Ibid. 154.

81. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, "La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle," *Angelicum* 23 (1946) 126–45.

82. Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* 19. The definitive account, including a review of letters in the Chenu archive, comes via Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 506–54.

83. Chenu, "Regard sur cinquante ans de vie religieuse," in *L'hommage différé au Père Chenu*, intro. Claude Geffré (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 266; cited in Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 459.

84. Friedrich Stegmüller, "Rezension," *Theologische Revue* 38 (1939) 48–51. In his concluding paragraph Stegmüller notes that in Chenu's book "there lives . . . the best of the spirit of Drey and Möhler, whom Chenu also references" (51).

Toulouse, as well as elsewhere, could not stop talking about Chenu's "little book."<sup>85</sup> The events that led Europe to war likely delayed action in Rome against Chenu. From Chenu's conversation with the Roman authorities, he learned of the reason for condemnation. Having earlier made Chenu's acquaintance, Friedrich Stegmüller, sole reviewer of *Le Saulchoir* and professor of dogmatic theology in Würzburg, was the most obvious person to mediate Chenu's concerns. In a letter dated to June 1942, shortly after *Le Saulchoir* was put on the Index, Chenu wrote to Stegmüller,

It is to be feared that this prohibition stems most primarily (although there are certainly other reasons), on account of the influence and debt attributed to Moehler. It seems to me appropriate to inform the professors in Tübingen about these measures. Given that I do not know them personally and do not know how to contact them, please permit me to address this "note" to you, with the request that you convey it to them.<sup>86</sup>

Chenu then writes that the same forces in Rome that had condemned his work had also delayed, from 1936 to 1938, the newer French translation of Möhler's *Unity in the Church* for the *Unam Sanctam* series.<sup>87</sup> Christian Bauer's archival work confirms that Stegmüller relayed these concerns to Geiselmann, then Dean of the Tübingen faculty and the authoritative interpreter of the School.

In his 1974 interview with Jacques Duquesne—*Un Théologien en liberté*—Chenu recalled that the Dominicans sent Thomas Philippe to bring to Chenu the news of his exile. During their meeting Philippe located Chenu's praise for Möhler as the basis for condemnation.<sup>88</sup> Chenu's recollection is supported by the historical record: earlier in the year Pietro Parente, Secretary of the Holy Office, published a column the 1942 *L'Osservatore Romano*, which at that time served as an unofficial voice of the Vatican. In his column Parente claimed that Chenu's *Le Saulchoir* and the Belgian Dominican Louis Charlier's essay on theological method embodied the dangerous trends in recent theology. Parente gave these works the pejorative description, in French, "*nouvelle théologie*."<sup>89</sup> Parente then identified Möhler as a precursor to the modernists, noting

85. See Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 506.

86. The contents of this letter were communicated from Stegmüller to Geiselmann. I have cited it from Warthmann, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule* 351. Bauer notes that Stegmüller had known Chenu ever since he visited him in Paris in 1920. Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 550.

87. Chenu, *Von der Freiheit eines Theologen* 70–71; Chenu later recalled that an intervention by Georges Goyau was necessary to answer Roman concerns.

88. The reference can be found in Chenu, *Von der Freiheit eines Theologen* 155.

89. Pietro Parente, "Nuove tendenze teologiche," *L'Osservatore Romano*, February 9–10, 1942, 1–2. Gabriel Flynn notes that this was the first use of the term, a full four years before Garrigou-Lagrange's aforementioned essay, "La nouvelle théologie où va-t-elle." See Flynn, "Introduction," in *Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal* 5n23. Other essays in the volume also note that Parente's usage preceded Garrigou-Lagrange's. See, for instance, Joseph Komonchak, "*Humani Generis* and *Nouvelle Théologie*" 142; Christopher Ruddy, "*Ressourcement* and the Enduring Legacy of Post-Tridentine Theology" 186; and Brian Daley, "Knowing God in History and the Church: *Dei Verbum*

that some of these modern inclinations had already been articulated by “Mohler [*sic*], whose theories were developed and amplified by the Modernists” (*svilupate ed esagerate poi dai Modernisti*).<sup>90</sup> The genealogy is clear: *Tübingen genuit Modernisti, qui genuerunt Chenu et la nouvelle théologie*.<sup>91</sup>

The contact with Stegmüller fostered a sense of camaraderie between Chenu and Tübingen. In 1950 the Catholic faculty of theology in Tübingen offered Chenu a doctorate *honoris causa*. Chenu later noted, “I had to decline the honorary doctorate, for as a suspicious figure in the eyes of Rome, I would have compromised Tübingen. Giving me such an honor would have gone down poorly in certain places of influence.”<sup>92</sup> Before declining the invitation, Chenu had drafted a talk to be given for the occasion. Christian Bauer has located a draft of the talk, which Chenu titled, “Die ursprünglichen Faktoren der gegenwärtigen Entwicklung der theologischen Methode”—“The Roots of the Current Developments in Theological Method.”<sup>93</sup> Chenu explains that the goal of the lecture is to “raise awareness of the expansion of the problem [of confusion over method] and of its cause.”<sup>94</sup> This draft thus makes it painfully obvious how the topic of theological method lay at the basis of Chenu’s appreciation for Tübingen.

The question of theological method also lay at the root of *Le Saulchoir* and the controversy surrounding it. Chenu’s basic claim, that the location of theology affected the mode of theology and vice versa, already historicized and contextualized theology and theologians in a way that undercut central neo-Scholastic presuppositions about the relationship between truth and history. Already in *Le Saulchoir* Chenu understood that many modern Catholic theological presuppositions found their roots in sixteenth-century polemical theology. These presuppositions and the corresponding assumptions about method no longer fit in the post-Enlightenment (let alone post-World War I) intellectual milieu.<sup>95</sup> In the manuscript from 1950, Chenu relates the modernist crisis to the theological revolution of counter-Reformation theology on the basis that both paradigm shifts had to do with a restructuring of theological method.<sup>96</sup>

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and ‘*Nouvelle Théologie*’” 342. Daley calls this usage “the first published appearance of a French phrase that was to become emblematic of a revolution in perspective destined to dominate the Catholic theology of the late twentieth century” (*ibid.*). Despite the familiarity with this essay and with Möhler’s influence, none of the literature cited in this essay mentions Parente’s explicit naming of Möhler.

90. Pietro Parente, “Nuove tendenze teologiche” 1.

91. As Warthmann recalls, this influential genealogy stemmed from Vermeil’s study, the full title of which is illuminating: *Jean-Adam Möhler et l’école de Tubingue. Étude sur la théologie romantique en Wurtemberg et les origines germaniques du modernisme* (see n. 40 above).

92. Chenu, *Von der Freiheit eines Theologen* 155.

93. Bauer reviews the ten-page sketch in *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 109–11.

94. Cited from Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 111.

95. Again, see Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 27–35.

96. See Bauer’s overview in *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 109–10; see also Schloesser, “Recent Works in Jesuit Philosophy” 108–23.

The cordial exchange between Chenu and Tübingen continued. Chenu offered a contribution for Geiselmann's *Festschrift* in 1960.<sup>97</sup> Four years later, Geiselmann dedicated his book, *Die Katholische Tübinger Schule; ihre theologische Eigenart*, to Chenu. Finally, in 2004, the dean of the Tübingen faculty, Ottmar Fuchs, decided to grant Chenu the *doctor honoris causa* posthumously.<sup>98</sup> Chenu's 1950 notes for his Tübingen lecture, like *Le Saulchoir*, gesture toward the connection between the organization of a faculty and the work of individual theologians. Chenu was not aware of the changes outlined by Hünemann above, but nonetheless intuitively understood their implications.

## Did Anything Happen in Seminary Education at Vatican II? Revisiting *Optatam Totius*

The conciliar decree on priestly training, *Optatam Totius*, has for the most part avoided the spotlight in Vatican II studies. The search engines that turn up articles that concern *Optatam Totius* generally take the form of larger works about developments in the priesthood since the Second Vatican Council. In light of the argument above about method, however, what *Optatam Totius* says about seminary training merits revisiting, for, as Chenu underlined so boldly, such claims have a great deal to do with how future theologians come to understand the craft.

Scholars and students of Vatican II are well versed in the story of how so many themes that marked the council—for example, the theology of the laity, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and the relationship of Scripture to tradition—were omitted in the earliest drafts, only to emerge and gain acceptance through the course of the council. At first glance it seems implausible to tell such a story about *Optatam Totius*. Although the text reflects many of the defining themes of Chenu's methodology, it does not do so as obviously as *Lumen Gentium* reflects the eucharistic ecclesiology of de Lubac, or the theology of the laity of Congar. Yet an overview of the most important scholarship on *Optatam Totius*, when paired with the background contained in the earlier sections of this article, implies a revolutionary reorganization of the way theology is both done and handed down.

A brief overview is in order, before turning to the analysis of Fuchs and others. The discussion of seminary training takes up paragraphs 13–18 in *Optatam Totius*. After stressing the need for Latin and other relevant liturgical languages in OT 13, the council fathers state, in OT 14, that the central aim of the revisions in *Optatam Totius* concerns “a more effective coordination of philosophy and theology so that they . . . [reveal] the Mystery of Christ.”<sup>99</sup> To this end, seminary studies should instead

97. Chenu, “Tradition und Soziologie des Glaubens,” in *Kirche und Überlieferung*, ed. Johannes Betz and Heinrich Fries (Freiburg: Herder, 1960) 266–75.

98. Bauer, *Ortswechsel der Theologie* 112.

99. All translations of Vatican documents, unless otherwise noted, come from the Flannery edition or the translation from the Vatican website, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va). I have alternated on the basis of which translation sticks closer to the Latin.

introduce students, in their very first course, to “the mystery of salvation” in a way that will be intelligible. This paragraph reflects the council’s emphasis on salvation history. The repeated use of the word “mystery” nods toward *Dei Verbum*’s attempt to understand revelation more as a personal encounter and less as a transmission of information. By ending the paragraph with talk of interiority (“personal lives” and “personal dedication”), OT 14 moves away from a concern with knowing the correct information, and toward conversion of the seminarian’s heart.

In OT 15 the council fathers treat the philosophical component of studies. They write, “The students should rely on that philosophical patrimony which is forever valid, but should also take account of modern philosophical studies . . . Thus, by correctly understanding the modern mind, students will be prepared to enter into dialogue with their contemporaries.” This *patrimonio philosophico perenniter valido* seems to echo the “perennial philosophy” against which Chenu objected so forcefully in *Le Saulchoir*. Yet as Greiler, Neuner, and Lambregts recall, the term itself was chosen as an alternative to *philosophia perennis*; further, a number of the council fathers took the new phrase, and the rest of the sentence, as permission to allow for a plurality of philosophical perspectives in seminary training.<sup>100</sup> OT 15 ends with the imperative that students should learn “to perceive the connection between philosophical arguments and the mysteries of salvation which theology considers in the higher light of faith.” This conclusion hints at how philosophy and theology should move toward greater integration, in which philosophical study should undergird the *mysteria salutis*.

OT 16 emphasizes the need to teach theology such that students will “correctly draw out Catholic teaching from divine revelation.” This imperative necessitates an engagement with Scripture, “the soul of theology,” and the subsequent engagement should include “an accurate initiation into exegetical method.” In addition to this scriptural encounter, seminarians should also come to understand doctrine historically. *Optatam Totius* invokes Aquinas as a figure to help connect “all aspects of these mysteries” (*eorumque nexum perspicere*). The paragraph then stresses the need to apply these eternal truths to changing conditions and “to express them in language which people of the modern world will understand.” Each theological subject should be communicated in such a way that students replenish their faith through a “more vivid contact” with the mysteries of Christ and the church, and with the history of salvation. OT 16 thus articulates the need to integrate the renewal in seminary training with liturgical, ecclesiological, ecumenical, and inter-religious renewal, as put forth in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and *Nostra Aetate*.

OT 17 takes up pedagogy, and is the most explicitly reform-oriented paragraph on seminary training. The infusion of doctrine into seminarians should be ordered toward “a genuine and profound formation,” rather than “the mere communication of ideas.”

100. Lambregts, “*Optatam Totius*: The Decree on Priestly Formation” 44; Alois Greiler, *Das Konzil und die Seminare* 264–78, 337–38; Neuner, “Kommentar” 340–42.

As a consequence of this imperative, teaching methods should be revised, so that the training no longer covers “questions which scarcely retain any importance today.” This paragraph hints at previous pedagogical failures, and here more than elsewhere indicates the need to overcome the Tridentine model for seminary training.

As mentioned above, the lack of attention given to *Optatam Totius* likely resulted from the absence of a compelling narrative that aligns with the more familiar stories about the constitutions and decrees on the church, revelation, the liturgy, and other religions. Yet ignoring *Optatam Totius* carries the risk of failing to reimagine the orientation of theology that the document mandated. If one takes its opening sentence seriously—“that the desired renewal of the whole Church depends in great part upon a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ” (OT 1)—then it behooves Catholic theologians to understand with greater depth how the council fathers sought to underline this paradigm shift.

For our purposes we can focus on four points where Fuchs locates the revolutionary quality of *Optatam Totius*: (1) the place of philosophy in seminary formation; (2) the manner of relating scripture to theological formation; (3) the acknowledgement of the historicity of theology through the appeal to salvation history; (4) the approach to theological method.

### *The Place of Philosophy*

Although *Optatam Totius* 15 spoke of a “forever valid philosophical patrimony,” it does not explicitly recommend the neo-Scholastic method. Fuchs calls this “a massive discontinuity with the previous model of seminary formation.”<sup>101</sup> Gone were the Scholastic textbooks, which often sought to foreclose any conversation with modern philosophy on account of its errors. *Optatam Totius* replaced these textbooks with a course of study that allowed students to “enter into dialogue” with their contemporaries. Instead of providing answers, *Optatam Totius* entreats the application of methods that encourage an orientation toward the real and the true.<sup>102</sup> This shift explains Fuchs’s conviction about the lack of continuity with the Tridentine model by and large.

### *Relating Scripture to Theological Formation*

In its declarations about the role of scriptural studies in seminary education, the council fathers declared Scripture to be “the soul, as it were, of all theology” (OT 16). Theology was no longer implicitly equated with dogmatic theology. In his commentary Fuchs retrieves Joseph Ratzinger’s reflections on *Dei Verbum* 24, which

101. Fuchs, “B. Kommentierung” 428.

102. Neuner makes the same point: “The theologian should not learn philosophy with dogmatic conviction; rather, he should experience the seriousness and the struggle of searching, observing, and establishing principles.” Neuner, “Kommentar” 341.

emphasized the centrality of Scripture for theology.<sup>103</sup> No longer does the study of Scripture simply confirm what dogmatics has already told us. Nor does the creed simply roll off the sacred pages. What emerges instead, says *Optatam Totius*, are “biblical themes” that result in meanings to be “entered into,” rather than conclusions to be confirmed. Ratzinger’s commentary refers to *Optatam Totius* 16, about which he writes, “This means that in the future the Bible must be conceived, thought of, and approached on its own terms [*aus sich selbst*]. Only after having done so can the unfolding of the tradition and the dogmatic analysis be introduced [*einsetzen*].”<sup>104</sup> Fuchs not only echoes Ratzinger on this point, but also accents how *Optatam Totius* overturned the assumption that deemed the non-dogmatic theological fields as merely supplemental (*Hilfswissenschaften*).<sup>105</sup> By declaring Scripture as the soul, *Optatam Totius* overturned the assumption that deemed neo-Scholastic seminary formation “on its head” (*auf den Kopf*).<sup>106</sup> Scripture, in Fuchs’s reading, “is not only an object of study, but also its subject.”<sup>107</sup> Instead of merely cementing conclusions, the study of Scripture should orient the questions that the seminarian brings to his theological investigations.

### *The Historicity of Theology: Salvation History*

Scripture chronicles the unfolding of salvation through stories, and implores its readers to find themselves in these stories. *Optatam Totius* stresses the need for theological formation to convey theology in a manner that incorporates both the existential and the historical element of this approach. In OT 16 the council fathers call for other theological subjects to “be renewed through a more vivid contact with the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation.” When the story itself moves to the forefront, the possibility emerges for conceiving theological data organically, as part of a living tradition, in a manner similar to that deployed in Tübingen (and recalled so vividly by Chenu).

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103. “Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation. By scrutinizing in the light of faith all truth stored up in the mystery of Christ, theology is most powerfully strengthened and constantly rejuvenated by that word. For the Sacred Scriptures contain the word of God and since they are inspired, really are the word of God; and so the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology. By the same word of Scripture the ministry of the word also, that is, pastoral preaching, catechetics and all Christian instruction, in which the liturgical homily must hold the foremost place, is nourished in a healthy way and flourishes in a holy way.” *Dei Verbum* (Nov 18, 1965) 24, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html).
104. Ratzinger, “Kommentar zum VI. Kapitel der dogmatischen Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung (DV),” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Teil II* 571–81 at 577; Fuchs cites this passage in “B. Kommentierung” 433–34.
105. Hünemann and Fuchs, “Kommentierung” 332.
106. *Ibid.* 433.
107. *Ibid.* 434.



Within such a framework, Christian history does not matter solely because of its dogmas, but because of its lived, incarnated practices and liturgical forms, which are appreciated precisely because they lend greater intelligibility to the forms. Fields like church history and liturgy become important in and of themselves, and the research generated by scholars in these fields comes to be understood as part of the project to which the church calls theologians.

Theological speculation can no longer in good conscience ignore these developments, for even defined truths known by revelation still need to be applied “to the changing conditions of human affairs,” and to be expressed “in language which people of the modern world will understand” (OT 16). Fuchs cites Greiler here: “The historicity of theology emerges anew as its method. Speculative theology is engrained within a genetic presentation (of theology).”<sup>108</sup> Historical theology does not replace dogmatic or speculative theology, but with *Optatam Totius* the former comes to be seen as both gaining a legitimacy that it did not have in Chenu’s time, and decentering speculative theology by conceiving theology against the backdrop of salvation history.

### Theological Method

These points are also connected to the question of method in theology. Although Fuchs admits that the decree did not opt definitively for either Chenu’s or the neo-Scholastic approach, he still makes a strong case that *Optatam Totius* signaled a revolution in method. Recall that for Chenu, the point of studying Thomas consisted less in knowing the results, and more in understanding the process of generation that yielded the texts. Ratzinger himself recognized the implications of privileging the scriptural narrative in theological method: “The consequences for the problem of theological method must be contemplated. For it should not be difficult to see that the phrase about Scripture as the soul of theology carves out [*gewinnt*] a very concrete import [*Gewicht*].”<sup>109</sup> Fuchs follows this citation by calling the text a “revolutionary alteration of theological method.”<sup>110</sup>

### Conclusion

If the previous exegesis of Chenu’s *Le Saulchoir* established anything, it was that method mattered. Method not only reflects theological presuppositions, but also

108. Fuchs, “B. Kommentierung” 436; Greiler, *Das Konzil* 344.

109. Ratzinger, “Kommentar” 577; Fuchs, “B. Kommentierung” 433–34.

110. Fuchs, “B. Kommentierung” 434. Here is an acute example of the shortcoming of the entire approach of the editors of *Renewal within Tradition*. The book opens with a foreword by Pope Benedict XVI, in which the editors provide the text of his 2005 address on the proper hermeneutics of the council. Yet Akinwale’s attempt to shoehorn *Optatam Totius* within a hermeneutic of continuity leads to a reading that contradicts what the future Pope Benedict wrote in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*.

determines the structure of theological departments. It thus foreordains the kind of progress that theologians aim for and results that theologians produce.<sup>111</sup> In its section on seminary training, *Optatam Totius* reflects the methodological meteor that Chenu envisioned in *Le Saulchoir*, and that Tübingen had embodied one century earlier. Although Alois Greiler relates that Chenu left the session on priestly formation disappointed, one should perhaps not read too much into the anecdote.<sup>112</sup> Fuchs declares the pertinent sections of *Optatam Totius* as a victory for Chenu: “The decree on the formation of priests at the very least indirectly rehabilitates Chenu.”<sup>113</sup> If Fuchs can say this “at the very least,” then it is perhaps necessary to say more: the theological revitalization that has occurred in the last fifty years owes no small debt to Chenu. By acknowledging his contribution, inspired by his intellectual forefathers in Tübingen, and refracted through the looking-glass of *Optatam Totius*, twenty-first century theologians can more deftly implement a program of *aggiornamento* carried out in a *ressourcement* key.

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### Author biography

Grant Kaplan is an associate professor of theological studies at Saint Louis University. His latest book, *René Girard, Unlikely Apologist: Mimetic Theory and Fundamental Theology*, will be published in October 2016 by the University of Notre Dame Press.

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111. It is worth noting that the council also initiated the shift toward lay theology. As a consequence, while *Optatam Totius* may have been intended for seminary formation, it gave decisive shape to the training that lay theologians receive, and the structure that theology departments in Catholic universities have come to reflect.
  112. See Greiler, *Das Konzil und die Seminare* 338; Greiler refers the reader to Congar’s journal but does not offer a citation. My examination of all of the entries for Chenu in the index to Congar’s journal—both the French original and the English translation—did not yield a confirmation of Greiler’s claim.
  113. Fuchs, “B. Kommentierung” 386. Here Fuchs refers to the honorary degree that Fuchs himself, in his role as Dean of the Tübingen faculty, bestowed posthumously on Chenu in 2004. To this I would only offer the rejoinder that Chenu was already rehabilitated, in a much more official capacity, when his former student, Bishop Claude Rolland from Madagascar, invited Chenu to advise him at the council.