

On Scheeben's Place in Nineteenth-Century Catholic Theology and the Question of His Theological Method

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Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888) is enjoying a moment in English-speaking Catholic theological circles. In recent years his thought has attracted increasing interest from scholars who view him as an important forerunner to some of the central currents of Catholic theology in the twentieth century,¹ a trend that promises only to accelerate with the recent publication of the initial volumes of the first complete translation of his monumental *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik* into English.² The much-debated question of Scheeben's proper place in the history of Catholic theology in the nineteenth century, therefore, has gained a new relevance. While the present study, of course, cannot and does not claim to bring this dispute to a definitive resolution, nevertheless it is hoped that it may at least help to clarify some common misunderstandings that can arise from hasty generalizations, and offer a few insights—which are not in fact new, but which are too often ignored by English-speaking scholars today—into the way in which the thought of the Jesuit theologians of the so-called “Roman School” may have served to influence Scheeben's unique theological method.

In the past, numerous attempts have been made to situate Scheeben's thought within a particular theological school, and members of rival schools, in turn, have sought to claim him (or indeed repudiate him) as one of their

¹ See, for example, the articles of the Scheeben symposium published several years ago in the pages of the present journal: *Nova et Vetera* (English) 11, no. 2 (2013): 407–563.

² Matthias J. Scheeben, *Handbook of Catholic Dogmatics [HCD]*, vols. 1/1, 1/2, 5/1, and 5/2, trans. Michael J. Miller (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2019–2021).

own.³ Amid the flood of divergent assessments of Scheeben's theological affinities, there at least exists some scholarly consensus about his greatness as a theologian. In 1935, during the centenary celebrations of Scheeben's birth, Pope Pius XI lauded him as a "man of genius" and proposed his thought to the students of the Germanicum as a model of the proper unity of theology's ascetical and dogmatic elements.⁴ In a *Festschrift* dedicated to Scheeben's theology published in the same year, Martin Grabmann judged that Scheeben was "the greatest dogmatic theologian of the nineteenth century,"⁵ and Carl Feckes, Scheeben's successor at the Cologne seminary, named him "the greatest Mariologist of our time."⁶ On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, no less an authority than Hans Urs von Balthasar could proclaim that Scheeben was "the greatest German theologian to-date [1961] since the time of Romanticism."⁷

Nearly all, likewise, acknowledge the great difficulty of comprehending Scheeben's theology: even a German theologian of the stature of Joseph Ratzinger laments that Scheeben "has not made it easy, either as a professor for his hearers or as a writer for his readers. His language is rigorous, marked by the laborious travail of thought." The fact that he draws abundantly from such sources as Aquinas and the Greek Fathers "lends to his work

³ See Eugen Paul, "Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888)," in *Katholische Theologen Deutschlands im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. H. Fries and G. Schwaiger (Munich: Kösel, 1975), 2:387. As Paul notes elsewhere, Scheeben has variously been identified as a representative of *both* of the opposing positions in the debate over the relationship between nature and grace, which became increasingly heated in the twentieth century: "Two opposing opinions, which in fact hardly take notice of one another and proceed beside each other, catch the eye. According to the first, Scheeben tears nature and grace apart and is thus a typical Neo-Scholastic (at least in this respect); according to the second, he emphasizes precisely the 'immanence of nature and supernature' and implements it as a reduction to the Christological problem!" (*Denkweg und Denkform der Theologie von Matthias Joseph Scheeben*, Münchener Theologische Studien 40 [Munich: Max Hueber, 1970], 18). (Unless otherwise noted, all translations of both primary and secondary sources are my own.) If such contradictory interpretations of Scheeben's theology are possible with respect to the doctrine of the supernatural—the thematic center of his theological project—so, *a fortiori*, with the rest of his thought.

⁴ See "Per le feste centenarie di Scheeben, modello di teologo e di pia vita cristiana," in *Discorsi di Pio XI*, vol. 3, 1934–1939, ed. D. Bertetto (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1985), 274.

⁵ Martin Grabmann, "Scheebens Auffassung vom Wesen und Wert der theologischen Wissenschaft," in *Matthias Joseph Scheeben: Der Erneuerer katholischer Glaubenswissenschaft*, ed. Katholischer Akademikerverband (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1935), 58.

⁶ Carl Feckes, "Die Stellung der Gottesmutter Maria in der Theologie M.J. Scheebens," in Katholischer Akademikerverband, *Matthias Joseph Scheeben*, 112.

⁷ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, trans. E. Leiva-Merikakis, ed. J. Fessio and J. Riches, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 102.

breadth and depth, but does not necessarily facilitate easy access.”⁸ Similarly, the ultramontane Cardinal Henry Edward Manning, in his preface to an English abridgment of Scheeben's *Dogmatik*, warned that Scheeben's greatest work “requires not only reading but study; and study with patient care and conscientious desire to understand.”⁹ Perhaps it is for this reason that it has become almost proverbial to observe that Scheeben's works are much praised, but seldom read.¹⁰

Far less agreement, however, exists when it comes to the question of what *kind* of theologian Scheeben was, or to what theological school he belonged. Was he, asks the great Scheeben scholar Eugen Paul, “the prototype of those theologians who represent (if not establish) the infamous ‘two-storey theory’ [*Stockwerkstheorie*] with respect to nature and grace—or does he rather belong to those who insist precisely on the transcendental unity of nature and grace?”¹¹ Is Scheeben, in other words, a Neo-Scholastic, even “the most precious flower ever granted to the spring of Neo-Scholasticism,”¹² as he was called in the first major study of his theology produced in the twentieth century? Or is he, instead, to be classed with the theologians of the Tübingen School who, under the influence of Romantic Idealism, sought to renew Catholic theology through a reappropriation of the more figurative language of Scripture and the Church Fathers?¹³ Or was he, perhaps, a mediating figure between these two theological currents?¹⁴

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, “Geleitwort,” in *M.J. Scheeben: teologo cattolico d'ispirazione tomista*, ed. Pontificia Accademia di S. Tommaso (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), 9.

⁹ Henry E. Manning, “Preface,” in *A Manual of Catholic Theology Based on Scheeben's “Dogmatik,”* ed. J. Wilhelm and T. B. Scannell (New York: Benziger, 1899), 1:vii.

¹⁰ Cf. Paul, “Matthias Joseph Scheeben,” 386: “Who, at least from the older generation of theologians, would not have heard Scheeben cited over and over again during their time of studies, to whom was the reading of *Mysterien* not recommended, and who wouldn't have bought it—and yet never (completely) read it? A theological monument thus presents itself here: respectfully mentioned and distantly admired.”

¹¹ Paul, “Matthias Joseph Scheeben,” 387.

¹² Karl Eschweiler, *Die zwei Wege der neueren Theologie: Georg Hermes—Matth. Jos. Scheeben: Eine kritische Untersuchung des Problems der theologischen Erkenntnis* (Augsburg: Benno Filser, 1926), 24.

¹³ Alfred Eröss, for instance, locates Scheeben in the current of theological renewal initiated in Tübingen in the early nineteenth century: “[Scheeben] thus understood himself and his companions as the continuators of this work of renewal. Möhler simply took the first step—Scheeben added the second. The first was perhaps the more difficult, even if the second led closer to the goal. For this reason Scheeben is fully appreciative of the first Tübingen theologians, and values and uses the positive achievements of their work” (“Zur Einführung,” in Matthias J. Scheeben, *Briefe nach Rom*, ed. H. Schaaf and A. Eröss [Freiburg: Herder, 1939], 2–3).

¹⁴ It has become increasingly popular in recent years to hold up Scheeben's thought as a

In order to answer this question, it will first be necessary for us to sketch the landscape of Catholic theology in Scheeben's age, so as to locate his place within it. As we do so, it will become clear that, although Scheeben's thought bears affinities to both the Neo-Scholastic and Romantic Idealist stamps of Catholic theology in the nineteenth century, he nevertheless came into open conflict with representatives of each, steadfastly resisting all attempts to categorize his theology according to any one school of thought. If, as we shall see, Scheeben's distinctive theological vision can be said to resemble the approach of any particular school, it is most surely that of his Jesuit professors of the Roman School. Their theological method—combining positive historical theology with an appreciation for the speculative achievements of medieval Scholasticism—itself occupied a kind of mediating position between the Neo-Scholastic and Romantic Idealist extremes. Ultimately, however, not even the clear affinities between Scheeben's methodology and that of the Roman School can fully account for many of his signature speculative achievements. Thus we will be left with the conclusion, shared by many of the most knowledgeable students of the history of Catholic theology, that Scheeben's brilliance, creativity, and originality place him in a class all his own.

The "Two Ways" of Modern Catholic Theology

The turn of the nineteenth century represents one of the clearest demarcations of a new phase in the history of Catholic theology that the Church has ever known, marking the dramatic transition from Scholastic forms of thought, which had reigned essentially unchallenged in the West since the Middle Ages, to the new forms of what has come to be known as "modern" theology.¹⁵ The epochal upheaval in the Catholic intellectual world that

kind of *via media* between the more scientific historical method of the Tübingen theologians (and their successors in the twentieth century, the theologians of the so-called *nouvelle théologie*) and the more systematic and speculative bent of Neo-Scholasticism (and its adherents in the ongoing Thomistic revival). See Thomas F. O'Meara, *Church and Culture: German Catholic Theology, 1860–1914* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 53; Aidan Nichols, *Romance and System: The Theological Synthesis of Matthias Joseph Scheeben* (Denver, CO: Augustine Institute, 2010; Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2021), 16–19; Andrew D. Swafford, *Nature and Grace: A New Approach to Thomistic Ressourcement* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 20–22, 143–97.

¹⁵ See Leo Scheffczyk, "Einleitung: Der Weg der deutschen katholischen Theologie im 19. Jh.," in *Theologie in Aufbruch und Widerstreit: Die deutsche katholische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bremen: Carl Schünemann, 1965), xi.

occurred at the dawn of the nineteenth century can, of course, be traced in part to the social and political disruption caused throughout Europe by the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars. In the space of just a few years, the *ancien régime*, the centuries-old alliance between throne and altar that had lain at the foundations of European society, began to crumble. In Germany, the patchwork system of conjoined Church and state authority known as the *Reichskirche*, which had remained essentially unchanged since the Reformation, was progressively swept away by the enforced secularization of ecclesiastical territories through the *Reichsdeputationshauptschluß* of 1803, the formal collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, and, following the defeat of Napoleon, the reordering of European political life at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.¹⁶ Just over fifty years later, another pillar of medieval Christendom, the Papal States, would also fall.

For German Catholic theologians such as Scheeben, however, the greatest threat to the Christian faith in the nineteenth century was not the aggressive advance of political liberalism unleashed by the French Revolution, but the intellectual movement that had given it birth: Enlightenment rationalism.¹⁷ In the last half of the eighteenth century, the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which limited the scope of speculative reason to the knowledge of mere appearances (phenomena) rather than realities in themselves (noumena), had effectively reduced metaphysics to epistemology, and thereby rendered all belief in a positive historical revelation such as Christianity incoherent and irrational. Since the only object of true and certain knowledge for the speculative reason is the a priori structure of human consciousness itself, "religion within the limits of reason alone" could be conceived only as a set of categorical imperatives for moral action based on the authority, not of faith in a universal historical revelation, but of the universal dictates of the practical reason.¹⁸

The Idealist philosophers who further developed Kant's thought, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, managed to rescue metaphysics by positing all of reality

¹⁶ Cf. Thomas A. Howard, *The Pope and the Professor: Pius IX, Ignaz von Döllinger and the Quandary of the Modern Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 64–69.

¹⁷ In his first published essay in *Der Katholik* in 1860, the young Scheeben identified rationalism as "the principal and fundamental evil of our time" ("Die Lehre von dem Übernatürlichen in ihrer Bedeutung für die christliche Wissenschaft und christliches Leben," in *Gesammelte Schriften* [GS], ed. J. Höfer et al., vol. 8, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. H. Schauf [Freiburg: Herder, 1967], 18).

¹⁸ Referencing here Kant's famous work *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*. See Gerald A. McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury, 1977), 32–33.

itself as the progressive self-expression of infinite reason, or the Absolute. Such post-Kantian Idealism, in turn, found an intellectual ally in the contemporaneous Romantic movement in Germany, for although the latter was in fact a kind of reaction against the cold, analytical spirit of Enlightenment rationalism, its emphasis on themes such as life and growth fit well with the Idealists' interest in finding a philosophical understanding of the historical process.¹⁹ Yet, though Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling had all begun as students of theology, the post-Kantian Idealism they advanced was in fact no more amenable to faith in revealed religion than was Kantian criticism itself. For, when once the infinite reason that manifests itself through reality is identified with God, as suggested by Hegel and made explicit by Schelling in his later thought, then the distinction between creature and Creator is lost and pantheism lies close at hand. Whereas, with Kant, faith is eclipsed by reason, with post-Kantian Romantic Idealism grace is swallowed up by nature.

This, then, was the intellectual challenge addressed to Catholic theology by the Enlightenment, and in many ways all the various forms of Catholic theology in the nineteenth century—including that of Scheeben—can be seen as attempts to answer this challenge.²⁰ One thing was certain: the decadent Scholasticism that had dominated Catholic theology in the eighteenth century was not up to the task, as it lacked the underlying philosophical consistency necessary to recover the traditional distinction between the natural and supernatural orders.²¹ There remained essentially only two alternatives.

On the one hand, Catholic theologians could accept the claims of Enlightenment rationalism, in which case they were required either to demonstrate that Christian revelation is in fact consistent with modern philosophical systems, or simply deny that unaided human reason could play any role at all in matters of religious belief. The latter approach,

¹⁹ See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, *Modern Philosophy*, pt. 1, *Fichte to Hegel* (New York: Image, 1965), 15–38.

²⁰ See McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 17: "The tension between the natural and the supernatural orders was the single theme which ran through the diverse systems of Catholic theology and served as the focus of theological controversy from the early years of the century to its conclusion. Rationalism, in its empirical or Idealistic forms, was the only adversary outside of the Church which Catholic theologians took seriously."

²¹ See Cyril Vollert, "Matthias Joseph Scheeben and the Revival of Theology," *Theological Studies* 6 (1945): 456: "Scholastic philosophy, formerly so serviceable as the basis of theological speculation, lacked the lusty vigor it had possessed during the Middle Ages . . . It had grown sick by endeavoring to assimilate indigestible blocks of the philosophies of Descartes, Leibniz, and Wolff." Cf. McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 27–30.

exemplified in the fideistic traditionalism of Louis Bautain,²² was not greatly influential among German-speaking theologians. But among those who sought, to greater or lesser extents, to harmonize revealed truth with modern philosophy, many German names are to be found. These included Georg Hermes (who employed Kantian criticism as a basis for his theology), Anton Günther (who adapted Descartes and Hegel), and Johann Sebastian von Drey and the theologians of the Catholic Tübingen School (who were greatly influenced, at least in their earlier stages, by the Romantic Idealism of Schelling).²³ Taken together, all these attempts to press modern philosophical systems into the service of Catholic truth, so as to produce a rigorous "theological science" (*theologische Wissenschaft*) that would accord with the Enlightenment account of reason, eventually came to be known simply as "German" theology.

The other alternative open to Catholic theologians in the nineteenth century was to reject the claims of Enlightenment rationalism altogether and, instead of seeking to dress revealed truth with the ill-fitting gown of modern philosophy, return to the theological and philosophical synthesis that had prevailed in the era of medieval Scholasticism, and in the thought of Thomas Aquinas in particular.²⁴ To be clear, this was no mere escapist or reactionary movement; to the contrary, its primary representatives argued forcefully that Thomism was the only coherent system of thought capable of answering precisely those questions and concerns posed to the Catholic faith by the modern age.²⁵ This was the approach that would come to be known as Neo-Scholasticism, or, because some of its most influential proponents were officials in the Roman curia or professors at Roman academic institutions, simply "Roman" theology. It would become increasingly dominant in the second half of the century, finding perhaps its greatest expression—in German-speaking lands, at least—in Joseph Kleutgen's spirited defense of the theology and philosophy of "former times" (*die Vorzeit*).²⁶

²² See McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 46–56.

²³ For an overview of the similarities and differences of the theology of the Tübingen School with that of Hermes and Günther, as well as a discussion of the influence of Romanticism upon them all, see Scheffczyk, "Einleitung," xii–xxxiv.

²⁴ See McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 81–87.

²⁵ See Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1994), 37–41.

²⁶ Kleutgen's principal works bore the titles *Die Theologie der Vorzeit* (5 vols., 1853–1870) and *Die Philosophie der Vorzeit* (2 vols., 1860–1863). Although *Vorzeit* can refer to the past more generally, in Kleutgen's idiom it carries the connotation of "pre-modern" or pre-Cartesian. See Joseph Finkenzeller, "Joseph Kleutgen (1811–1883)," in Fries and Schwaiger, *Katholische Theologen Deutschlands*, 2:334–39.

The German and Roman approaches thus represent what may be called, in the expression of the early-twentieth-century theologian Karl Eschweiler, “the two ways” of modern Catholic theology in the nineteenth century.²⁷ If modern German “scientific” theology predominated in the earlier part of the century, the Roman Scholastic renewal gradually took hold as the century wore on, and adherents of the two currents increasingly came into conflict with one another.²⁸ Evidence of the growing tension can be found, first of all, in the papal condemnations of the thought of Hermes (*Dum Acerbissimas*, 1835), Günther (*Eximiam Tuam*, 1857), and the Munich historian and philosopher Jakob Frohschammer (*Gravissimas Inter*, 1862).²⁹ Perhaps more telling, however, was the growing rift between even the more devout representatives of the Tübingen School and the early proponents of Neo-Scholasticism, as seen above all in the controversy over the doctrine of grace that erupted in 1862–1863 between Johannes Evangelist von Kuhn and Constantin von Schüzler.³⁰ Increasingly, the disconnect between the so-called German and Roman theological methods was considered a source of concern and scandal within Catholic theological circles.

Here it must be made clear, however, that the dichotomy between the two “ways” of modern Catholic theology should not be stressed excessively, for, in the constantly shifting intellectual landscape of the nineteenth century, theologians of a Roman or German stamp often found themselves battling

²⁷ See Eschweiler, *Die Zwei Wege*, esp. 25–27; cf. O’Meara, *Church and Culture*, 25–50.

²⁸ See Joseph Overath, “Matthias Joseph Scheeben als Seelsorger,” *Communio* (German) 17, no. 4 (1988): 375; Augustin Kerkvooorde, “Introduction,” in *M.J. Scheeben: Le Mystère de l’Église et de ses sacrements*, Unam Sanctam 15 (Paris: Cerf, 1946), 30.

²⁹ See Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. H. Hoping and P. Hünermann, 43rd ed. [DH], Latin–English trans. and ed. R. Fastiggi and A. Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), nos. 2738–40, 2828–31, 2850–61. See also Howard, *The Pope and the Professor*, 82–83.

³⁰ Kuhn, the most speculatively gifted of all the Tübingen theologians, had already clashed with the Neo-Scholastic Franz Jakob Clemens over the proper relationship between philosophy and theology. The controversy with Schüzler was sparked when Kuhn voiced his opposition to the foundation of a Catholic university in Germany, arguing that it would compromise the necessary independence of the various sciences and would contribute to the insularity of Catholic theology. Schüzler responded by claiming that Kuhn’s views on the question of the university stemmed from his misunderstanding of the relationship of the natural and supernatural orders as a whole. As the debate progressed, the question at issue sharpened into whether grace itself is properly conceived as a more physical and ontic (Schüzler) or moral and personal reality (Kuhn). See O’Meara, *Church and Culture*, 47–50; Scheffczyk, “Einleitung,” xxiii–xxvii.

on the same side, and in fact there were many points of contact between them. Tübingen theologians such as Drey and Johann Adam Möhler, for example, paid reverent homage to medieval Scholasticism in their works, and Kuhn and Franz Anton Staudenmaier were praised even during their lifetimes as “reborn Scholastics” (*rediviven Scholastikern*).³¹ Indeed, the revived interest in the philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages, which marked nineteenth-century theology and is now so closely associated with the rise of Neo-Scholasticism, may itself be seen as an outgrowth of Romanticism.³² On the other hand, the depiction of Neo-Scholastics as defensive antiquarians who were uninterested in engaging with modern thought or historical development is simply a caricature. Kleutgen himself resisted the Neo-Scholastic label and openly avowed in the last volume of his *Theologie der Vorzeit* that “this whole [Scholastic] philosophy is capable of—and, according to the circumstances of the time, in need of—significant perfection.”³³ The fact that Scheeben’s early elaboration of the doctrine of the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the just, which bears strong affinities with a Neo-Scholastic perspective, was criticized by Kleutgen, while his later treatment of the same theme in the *Dogmatik*, which emerged from his deeper study of the Greek Fathers, was criticized by Theodor Grandérath (yet another Neo-Scholastic) should suffice to illustrate just how often the

³¹ See Martin Grabmann, “Scheebens theologisches Lebenswerk,” in *GS*, vol. 1, *Natur und Gnade*, ed. M. Grabmann (Freiburg: Herder, 1949), xxiv. See also Scheffczyk, “Einleitung,” xxxviii.

³² See Eröss, “Zur Einführung,” 2: “Romanticism discovered anew, so to say, the Scholastic wisdom of the Middle Ages. This was a natural consequence of its fondness and love for the past and history.”

³³ Quoted in Scheffczyk, “Einleitung,” xl. See also Finkenzeller, “Joseph Kleutgen,” 328. Kleutgen’s words here bear out Scheeben’s later defense of his former teacher’s theological method: “No one who would not make himself a laughingstock will be able to brand [Kleutgen] with the catchword ‘Neo-Scholastic,’ as a devotee of a gloomy, long-forgotten movement. For Kleutgen demonstrates almost everywhere that he is at the cutting edge of our age and thoroughly knows its ideas and achievements. He wants not a repristination, but a regeneration; and therefore he values and willingly utilizes the good things of modern research (which, according to his opinion, are admittedly quite meager), even if he must consistently fight, as against the completely unbelieving philosophers, so also within Catholicism particularly against Hermes in the theological field, against Günther in the philosophical, [and] against Hirscher in the practical” (Scheeben, “P. Kleutgen’s Vertheidigung der Theologie und Philosophie der Vorzeit,” *Literarischer Handweiser* 3 [1864]: 324). This statement, of course, also serves as an apt summary of Scheeben’s own opinion of the merits and demerits of modern theological science.

two supposedly diametrically opposed theological currents could intermingle and overlap in the nineteenth century.³⁴

Notwithstanding these occasional points of contact between the German and Roman currents, the condemnation of Frohschammer and the outbreak of the controversy between Kuhn and Schüzler in 1862 caused such alarm among Catholic theologians in Germany that their undisputed leader, Ignaz von Döllinger, decided it was time to act. Together with a few like-minded colleagues, he organized a conference of leading Catholic scholars at the Abbey of Sankt Bonifaz in central Munich in September of 1863.³⁵ As the stated aim of the conference was to promote conciliation between the German and Roman wings of Catholic theology in Germany, invitations were sent not only to those who still favored the historical Idealist approach (as exemplified by the universities of Tübingen and Munich), but also to those who were proponents of the renewal of the Scholastic method (as exemplified by the University of Würzburg and the seminary at Mainz). At the opening gathering on the morning of September 28, 1863, Döllinger delivered an address “On the Past and Present of Catholic Theology” that would come to mark a decisive turning point in the history of German Catholic theology in the modern era. Ever the erudite historian, Döllinger

³⁴ In *Natur und Gnade* (see *GS*, 1:119–20n7), Scheeben had criticized Péttau’s theory of an exclusively proper indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the just, a theory which had been renewed by Passaglia and Schrader but was rejected by Franzelin, who on this point seems to have exercised the greatest influence on the young Scheeben. Kleutgen wrote to Scheeben explaining that he had misconstrued Péttau’s position, defending the latter on the basis of Aquinas and Francisco Suárez (see Scheeben, *Briefe*, 77, 89–90, 126–27, 130). In his later works, therefore, Scheeben’s position on the question shifted notably away from the theory of mere appropriation toward that of a more personal union with the Holy Spirit. See, e.g., Scheeben, *Die Mystrien des Christentums*, §§30–31, in *GS*, vol. 2, ed. J. Höfer (Freiburg: Herder, 1941), 141–54; Scheeben, *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*, bk. III (*Schöpfungslehre*; hereafter *Dogmatik* III; all *Dogmatik* bks. will use Roman numerals and will be cited by paragraph number rather than page number), 832–84, in *GS*, vol. 5, ed. W. Breuning and F. Lakner (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 393–421. This elicited the criticism of Granderath and forced Scheeben to justify his doctrine in a series of articles in *Der Katholik* in 1883–1884 (see *GS*, 8:169–302). For a closer examination of the subtleties of this controversy, see Malachi J. Donnelly, “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit According to M. J. Scheeben,” *Theological Studies* 7 (1946): 244–80, esp. 247–48, 265–66; Heribert Schaaf, “Die Lehre von der Einwohnung des Heiligen Geistes bei Karl Passaglia und Klemens Schrader,” in *M. J. Scheeben alumno suo eximio centesimo ipsius redeunte natali*, ed. Collegium Germanicum-Hungaricum (Rome: Salesian Institute “Pio XI,” 1935), 38–69, esp. 68–69; Paul, *Denkweg*, 34, 85–99.

³⁵ For an account of the Munich “assembly of scholars” (*Gelehrten Versammlung*), see Howard, *The Pope and the Professor*, 102–10.

found in the contrast between the so-called “Alexandrian” and “Antiochene” schools of patristic theology an analogue for the tensions between the Roman and German approaches to modern Catholic theology. Just as the more speculative Alexandrian method was balanced by the more exegetical and historical method of Antioch, so also today the Church requires the “two eyes” of Scholastic speculation (the Roman approach) and historical-critical scientific theology (the German approach). But, at least since the Council of Trent, the Church had relied almost exclusively on a “Scholasticism devoid of history and criticism,” which had even become at times “obscurantist and sycophantic.” It was, therefore, the “prophetic” task of German theology to restore “the light of the theological sciences” to the Church.³⁶

Among the scholars who heard Döllinger's words at Sankt Bonifaz that fateful day was the young Matthias Scheeben, still at that time a rather unremarkable seminary professor and surely unknown to most of his colleagues in the aula. His presence at this dramatic confluence of the two currents of nineteenth-century Catholic theology prompts us to ask the question: Was Scheeben a “Roman” theologian, a “German” theologian, or neither?

Scheeben and the Neo-Scholastics

Most of the scholars present at the Munich conference sympathized with the Tübingen model of German theology and accordingly supported Döllinger's views. A small group of eight scholars of a more “Roman” bent, however, vigorously opposed the Munich professor and drafted a statement of protest, which they read aloud at the conference and forwarded to Rome. Scheeben, fresh off his personal retreat at the Marian shrine of Altötting, put his name to the document. He later explained to Franz Xaver Huber, his former spiritual director at the Germanicum in Rome, “I had the luck or misfortune to figure among the eight-man strong opposition to Döllinger's speech, and for that reason in the end I had to endure a personal attack. There is good reason for the fact that Rome looks somewhat askance at the whole conference; we did as well.”³⁷ It is not difficult to guess why Scheeben felt compelled to oppose Döllinger at the Munich conference. Whereas Döllinger had sought to make scientific theologians the mouthpieces of “public opinion,” placing

³⁶ Quoted in Howard, *The Pope and the Professor*, 104–5.

³⁷ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 81. The other signatories of the letter of protest were Johann Baptist Heinrich, Christoph Moufang, Paul Leopold Haffner, Joseph Hergenröther, Franz Hettinger, George Phillips, and Constantin von Schüzler (Howard, *The Pope and the Professor*, 106, 256n236).

their authority almost on par with that of the magisterium itself, Scheeben maintained, as he later wrote, "If [theological] science is to accomplish great things, then it must not break the bond that ties it to the Church."³⁸ As the list of signatories to the letter of protest reads like a roll call of noteworthy Neo-Scholastic theologians, many later scholars have drawn the irresistible conclusion: Scheeben was a Neo-Scholastic.³⁹

Admittedly, apart from Scheeben's public stance at Munich, there was much in his theology—especially its earlier formulations—that would have marked him out as a Neo-Scholastic in the eyes of his contemporaries. He

³⁸ Matthias. J. Scheeben, "Das allgemeine Concilium und die Wissenschaft," *Das ökumenische Concil vom Jahre 1869* 1 (1870): 116. See *Matthias Scheeben on Faith: The Doctoral Dissertation of John Courtney Murray*, ed. D. Thomas Hughson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 144–45; Nichols, *Romance and System*, 17.

³⁹ As we have already noted, in his influential 1926 monograph, Eschweiler effusively referred to Scheeben as "the most precious flower . . . of Neo-Scholasticism," describing his theological method approvingly as a "theology from faith," as opposed to Hermes's "theology of critical reason" (*Die Zwei Wege*, 12, 24). There is good reason to believe that Scheeben would have strenuously resisted such a facile contrast of faith and reason. Writing in 1936, Alfred Eröss likewise spoke of Scheeben as "a mystic of Neo-Scholasticism" ("Matt. Jos. Scheeben—Ein Mystiker der Neuscholastik," *Zeitschrift für Ascese und Mystik* 11 [1936]: 173). This association of Scheeben with Neo-Scholasticism is understandable in the context of the early twentieth century, when it was still the dominant form of Catholic theology. Nevertheless, the Neo-Scholastic label has occasionally resurfaced even in more recent studies on Scheeben. Peter Müller-Goldkuhle has styled him "a Neo-Scholastic, but in a unique way" (*Die Theologie der Sünde in der Dogmatik des 19. Jahrhunderts* [Essen: Ludgerus Verlag Hubert Wingen, 1978], 110). While seeking to distinguish Scheeben from Kleutgen, Ralph Del Colle nevertheless concludes that "his longstanding interest and position on the theology of nature and grace is best characterized as Neo-Scholastic. He simply demonstrated the heights to which one could take it" ("Neo-Scholasticism," in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. D. Fergusson [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 387). It is most unfortunate that this same mischaracterization even made its way into the most recent volume of the English translation of Scheeben's *Dogmatik*, where Thomas Joseph White claims that Scheeben was "above all a Scholastic theologian," describing him as a product of "the Roman school, the Neo-Scholastic enterprise of figures like Johann Baptist Franzelin, Giovanni Perrone, and Joseph Kleutgen, the Jesuits who educated Scheeben as well as Gioacchino Pecci, who later became Pope Leo XIII" (Foreword to *HCD*, 5/2:xiii). Aside from the historical inaccuracies contained in this statement—the Roman School, as we will see, was most decidedly not a "Neo-Scholastic enterprise"; Kleutgen was not a representative of the Roman School; Perrone never taught Scheeben, and Kleutgen taught him only rhetoric; and neither Kleutgen nor Franzelin could have taught Pecci anything, as they were both some years his junior!—it will lamentably serve to further the portrayal of Scheeben as a straightforward Neo-Scholastic, which thoroughly fails to do justice to his theological originality.

welcomed the *Syllabus of Errors* when it was issued by Pius IX in 1864, and even published a popular commentary on it.⁴⁰ His frequent denunciations of rationalism and his sharp distinction between the natural and supernatural orders in *Natur und Gnade* certainly reflect some of the central preoccupations of Neo-Scholastics such as Kleutgen.⁴¹ When Alois Schmid claimed to detect a “dualism of the two orders of life” in Scheeben’s *Natur und Gnade*, he was likely voicing an opinion held by the majority of his contemporaries.⁴² And Scheeben does indeed make clear in his *Dogmatik* that, in his opinion, the medieval Scholastics had accurately conceived man’s supernatural finality, while modern theologians “have dissipated the supernatural content and character of grace and of the Christian life.”⁴³ In his brief but masterful recounting of the history of theology in the first book of the *Dogmatik*, Scheeben labels the era from 1760 to 1830 (or 1840) as the “decadent period” (*Epoche des Verfalles*), during which some Catholic theologians

imported the Protestant philosophy of the day, especially Kant’s and Schelling’s, into dogmatic theology. . . . Even in works by the best authors the idea of the supernatural order of grace—and generally the supernatural character of all Christianity—was obscured to a great degree and was absorbed into the idea of the “moral order” or the idea of the “Kingdom of God” understood along this line.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Matthias J. Scheeben, *Die Enzyklika Sr. Heiligkeit des Papstes Pius IX. vom 8. Dez. 1864. Nebst einer ausführlichen Einleitung* (Cologne: 1865). See O’Meara, *Church and Culture*, 64.

⁴¹ Indeed, in his review of *Die Theologie der Vorzeit*, Scheeben was full of praise for the work of his former rhetoric professor: “Kleutgen was the first who . . . after centuries of neglect, undertook to rehabilitate scientifically the ‘Theology and Philosophy of Former Times’—i.e. that theological-philosophical science which, in the Catholic schools of the Middle Ages, subsequent to the more scattered achievements of the Fathers, had gradually developed under the protection of the Church into a whole based on solid principles, and in its essential components became the common good of all teachers and learners. And he did so with such a vast and profound erudition, with such clarity and acuity of argument, with so much calm, taste, and nobility in the presentation, in general with such thoroughness and dignity, that his work, given the novelty and the magnificence of the task, must be recognized as truly epoch-making.” (“Kleutgen’s Vertheidigung,” 323). See Kerkvoorde, “Introduction,” 27; Paul, *Denkweg*, 35.

⁴² Alois Schmid, “Ueber Natur und Gnade: Mit Rücksicht auf die Theorien von J. Kleutgen und Dr. M.J. Scheeben,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 44 (1862): 14.

⁴³ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* III, 702 (GS, 5:324).

⁴⁴ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* I, 1109 (HCD, 1/2:263). Scheeben’s reference to the Kingdom of God here would seem to be a thinly veiled critique of the theology of Johann

During this period, perhaps only the *Institutiones theologicae dogmaticae* of the Mainz theologian Bruno Liebermann, one of the early protagonists of the (Neo-)Scholastic revival, was “entirely accurate” in Scheeben’s estimation.⁴⁵ This perspective helps to explain why Scheeben broadly praised Schüzler’s critiques of Kuhn’s theology of grace, which Scheeben agreed was too one-sidedly personalistic and led to the conception of man’s supernatural end as one of mere moral perfection.⁴⁶ Later scholars, finally, have sensed in Scheeben’s theology the lack of a truly historical sense, a tendency which they see as typical of Neo-Scholasticism.⁴⁷

For all that, however, there is an increasingly clear consensus in Scheeben scholarship that he simply cannot be called a Neo-Scholastic, at least not without significant qualification.⁴⁸ This is especially true if we define Neo-Scholasticism not merely as a set of theological positions (many of

Sebastian von Drey, the great founder of the Catholic Tübingen School, who, under the influence of the Romantic Idealism of Schelling, had made the idea of the Kingdom of God the foundational principle of the Church and its historical development (McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 69–72). O’Meara, who clearly holds little sympathy for Neo-Scholasticism, objects to Scheeben’s estimation of the first third of the nineteenth century as one of theological decline, “when in fact it was the age of Romanticism’s renewal” (*Church and Culture*, 56).

⁴⁵ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* I, 1111 (*HCD*, 1/2:264).

⁴⁶ See Paul, *Denkweg*, 30–31. Scheeben credited Kuhn with having at least partially overcome “this old Tübingen conception of the supernatural, according to which grace really appeared as a complement to nature as such” (“Die Kritik der Kuhnschen Theologie durch Herrn von Schüzler,” in *GS*, 8:77–78). Nevertheless he also complained, “on the other hand, he takes all spiritual perfection as synonymous with moral conviction [*Gesinnung*], or disposition to the same, and does not want to comprehend any supernatural change or perfection of the spirit that is not simply a moral one” (“Die neueste Gnadenlehre Kuhns,” in *GS*, 8:143n17).

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Bartz judges that Scheeben’s “outstanding dogmatic-speculative talent denied him real historical thinking” (“Das Geschichtsbild Matthias Joseph Scheebens,” *Trierer theologische Zeitschrift* 56 [1947]: 72). Similarly, Scheffczyk claims that “the historical is no longer of decisive importance for [Scheeben]” (“Einleitung,” xlii). For his part, O’Meara charges Scheeben with a supposed “lack of interest in the historical” (*Church and Culture*, 56). See also Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 1:116; Nichols, *Romance and System*, 487. To the contrary, after offering a sampling of the contradictory assessments of the historicity of Scheeben’s thought, Paul takes to his defense: “What kind of ‘living’ theology is nevertheless at the same time ‘metahistorical’? . . . The progress of theological development undoubtedly asserts itself in these judgments, [but] surely some things from Neo-Scholasticism are simply being transferred to Scheeben” (*Denkweg*, 16–17).

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Paul, *Denkweg*, 30; Hans Gasper, “Das Wirken Scheebens als Priester und Theologe,” in *Das Kölner Priesterseminar im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. N. Trippen, Studien zur Kölner Kirchengeschichte 23 (Siegburg: Franz Schmitt, 1988), 240; Overath, “Matthias Joseph Scheeben als Seelsorger,” 381; O’Meara, *Church and Culture*, 64.

which Scheeben held), but as a unitary and coherent theological method based on the consistent application of Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophical categories to the data of divine revelation. As much as he shared many of the theological and ecclesiastical-political sympathies of the Neo-Scholastics, Scheeben shied away from an exclusive reliance on the Scholastic method because, among other things, he felt it could easily lead one to present individual doctrinal points in isolation from one another.⁴⁹ Perhaps for this reason he was keenly aware that some Neo-Scholastics might be disturbed by certain peculiarities in his thought. Hence, in 1882 we find him anxiously soliciting the opinion of his friend Franz von Paula Morgott about the fifth book of his *Dogmatik*:

It would especially interest me [to know] what you, as a real Thomist, think of my Thomism itself, regarding the many questions at issue in Christology. . . The Mariology has grown large under my hand, beyond all expectation. With regard to St. Thomas, I had to differ somewhat from your results . . . although you are much more at home in St. Thomas than I.⁵⁰

Over the course of his theological career, in fact, Scheeben's unique approach to the renewal of Thomism brought him into open conflict with some of its most prominent advocates. Although he tended to support Schützler in his debate with Kuhn, Scheeben also clashed openly with the former. Scheeben simply could not agree with Schützler's "harsh manner," his unfair portrayal of Kuhn's position, and his "harsh conception" of the Thomistic doctrine of grace, which he opposed to Molinism "in the crudest and crassest form."⁵¹

⁴⁹ In the foreword to the first volume of the *Dogmatik*, Scheeben explains his chosen method of presentation as follows: "We take from the Scholastic method of presentation its precision in formulating theses, definitions, and arguments; we adapt to the newer, freer method, however, insofar as we do not isolate the individual theses as much as readily occurs with the Scholastic method, but rather weave them into a whole in a continuous presentation" ("Author's Preface," in *HCD*, 1/1:xiii).

⁵⁰ Quoted in Grabmann, "Scheebens Auffassung," 140n87. Cf. Paul, *Denkweg*, 27. Scheeben is referring here to Morgott's *Die Mariologie des heiligen Thomas von Aquin*, which he admired and used as a source for his own Mariology. The difference of opinion that Scheeben mentions in this letter may refer to his criticism of Morgott's claim that Aquinas did not deny the Immaculate Conception but only the *debitum peccati* (see *Dogmatik* V, 1708 [*GS*, vol. 6/2, *Erlösungslehre*, ed. C. Feckes (Freiburg: Herder, 1954), 416n26]).

⁵¹ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 96; Scheeben, "C. v. Schützlers 'Neue Untersuchungen'" (*GS*, 8:114); cf. Paul, *Denkweg*, 30–32.

We have already made mention, likewise, of Scheeben's later controversy with Granderath over the doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of the just and the related question of the formal cause of their divine filiation.⁵²

Scheeben's ambivalent attitude toward Neo-Scholasticism, however, is perhaps most evident in the frequent disagreements and misunderstandings that arose between him and Kleutgen throughout his career. After reading Scheeben's first published article in the pages of the Mainz journal *Der Katholik* (a leading organ of Roman and, later, Neo-Scholastic theology in Germany), Kleutgen shared with Huber his concerns about some of the conceptual liberties Scheeben took with traditional theological terms: "I fear moreover that by exaggeration he will do much harm to the cause for which he campaigns. Thus he speaks—in *Der Katholik*—of a supernatural logic, a supernatural ontology, etc. Does that have any rational sense?"⁵³ Likewise, if Alois Schmid and the majority of Scheeben's contemporaries saw in *Natur und Gnade* a prime example of the sharp distinction between nature and grace that was characteristic of Neo-Scholasticism, the more perceptive Kleutgen was worried that Scheeben's language of the transcendental "marriage" of nature and grace toward the end of the book opened the way to a dangerous supernatural intrinsicism.⁵⁴

⁵² Scheeben provides a helpful summary of his position in this debate in his preface to the third volume of the *Dogmatik*, an important text which unfortunately has been left out of the recently published English translation. (See "Vorrede Scheebens zum III. Band der *Dogmatik*, der darin mit dem dritten Hauptstück der Erlösungslehre begann," in *GS*, 6/1:x–xiv.) Granderath had effectively accused Scheeben of contradicting the doctrine of the Council of Trent, which he interpreted as teaching that created grace is the sole cause of divine filiation. In response, Scheeben points out that, in fact, Trent had said nothing of the kind, but only that the Christian's *iustitia inhaerens* is the sole cause of his justification (see DH no. 1529). Furthermore, Scheeben clarifies that he did not deny that created grace has any causal role in divine filiation, and that, by emphasizing the role played by the uncreated grace of the Holy Spirit, he envisioned the union of the human creature with the divine *Person*, not principally his divine nature as such. In Scheeben's mind, the Christological model of the marriage of nature and grace (i.e., the union of a created nature with a divine nature) must always be held together with the Mariological model (i.e., the union of a created person with a divine Person). See Paul, *Denkweg*, 77–78, 278.

⁵³ Quoted in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 130–31n116. Here we begin to understand, as Eröss observes, "why [Scheeben] seemed all too Scholastic for the Munich theologians, and not Scholastic enough for others" ("Zur Einführung," 4).

⁵⁴ After the publication of *Natur und Gnade*, Kleutgen wrote to Huber, asking him to communicate to Scheeben his concerns about the book: "Although in the main the book is good, that is the doctrine is correct, yet I fear that it will confuse minds more than enlighten them: one mustn't pour out the long-forgotten doctrine like a bucket

The most substantive disagreement between Scheeben and Kleutgen, however, arose with respect to their contrasting approaches to the analysis of the supernatural act of faith.⁵⁵ The question of how to understand the dynamics of the soul's movement under the influence of grace to assent to divine truth was, according to Scheeben, "one of the questions where an adequately clear conception is hardly possible. It is more difficult beyond compare than my controversy with Fr. Granderath."⁵⁶ In his exposition of the topic in the first book of the *Dogmatik*, Scheeben presents the act of faith in markedly personalistic and organic terms, emphasizing the role of the *pia affectio* of the will in moving the intellect to assent to God, a dynamic which he characterizes as "an upsurge toward intimate union with God" and with God's own way of knowing.⁵⁷ In doing so, Scheeben seeks to distinguish supernatural faith from a purely logical inference (as against rationalism), criticizing the view according to which "the act of faith is interpreted too *abstractly* and *mechanically* and the lively organism thereof is overlooked or diminished."⁵⁸ Among those who advance this "logical-mechanical view of faith as a syllogism [*Schlußverfahren*]," which "impoverishes the *transcendent* character of faith," Scheeben prominently lists the name of Kleutgen.⁵⁹

of water and weigh it down with endless classifications and explanations. But what I dislike more is the assurance with which, as it seems to me, so many unprovable, here and there also incorrect, or at least entirely precarious doctrines—I should say opinions—are brought forward and placed alongside the certain points of theological doctrine. Whoever reads the book should be on his guard" (quoted in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 131n116). See Paul, *Denkweg*, 33, 76–79. Kleutgen not only criticized *Natur und Gnade* for what he felt was its imprecise and confused presentation of the traditional doctrine of the supernatural, but also for Scheeben's uncritical acceptance of Franzelin's theory of the mere appropriation of the divine indwelling to the person of the Holy Spirit. Scheeben, it seems, was hurt by Kleutgen's criticisms, feeling that his former teacher was accusing him of heresy. But, as Kleutgen explained to Huber, this was a misunderstanding: "I had observed to him that this and that minor matter is a peculiar opinion of Father Petavius, but that the substance of the doctrine is so certain that according to St. Thomas and Suárez one could not deny it *sine errore*. Now he says I accuse him of an *Error in Fide*: if he draws this conclusion, then he himself decides that he had attacked the substance of the doctrine—which I did not say at all—and if that is so, then I can't help him" (quoted in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 130n116).

⁵⁵ See John Courtney Murray, "The Root of Faith: The Doctrine of M.J. Scheeben," *Theological Studies* 9 (1948): 20–46; Paul, *Denkweg*, 232–77.

⁵⁶ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 109.

⁵⁷ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* I, 681 (*HCD*, 1/2:32). See also 616–701 (1/2:1–42); Nichols, *Romance and System*, 21–39.

⁵⁸ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* I, 630 (*HCD*, 1/2:6).

⁵⁹ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* I, 681 (*HCD*, 1/2:32).

Kleutgen bristled at what he felt was an “attack” (*Angriff*) by his former student and resented the fact that, in nearly every review he read of Scheeben’s *Dogmatik*, “it was emphasized how my mistaken doctrine of faith is victoriously combatted.”⁶⁰ In response, Kleutgen included an extensive discussion of the *analysis fidei* in the second half of the third volume of his *Beilagen*, which he hoped “could give the arrogant Scheeben and his impertinent panegyrists something to think about.”⁶¹ Scheeben, in turn, briefly contemplated penning a comprehensive response to Kleutgen, but quickly abandoned the idea as requiring too much of his time. Instead, in the preface to the following volume of the *Dogmatik*, he simply notices Kleutgen’s criticism of his views, professing to be surprised at how his former teacher could have felt that such a systematic assault was necessary when all Scheeben had offered was a differing opinion on how to understand the certainty of the motive of faith.⁶² The outcome of the dispute serves to illustrate the great difference in temperament between the two men. While in his later works Scheeben began to lay a greater emphasis on the role of the intellect in the act of faith (thus implicitly recognizing the concerns of his former teacher), an exasperated Kleutgen was led to a near-total despair about the state of German theology, declaring, “I want nothing more to do with this land of confused and yet so conceited spirits.”⁶³

It was Scheeben’s conciliatory temperament, then, as much as his unique methodology, that separated him from the Neo-Scholastics. In this regard, an exchange between Scheeben and Bernhard Jungmann, a fellow alumnus

⁶⁰ Quoted in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 134n143.

⁶¹ Quoted in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 134n143. See Joseph Kleutgen, *Beilagen zu den Werken über die Theologie und Philosophie der Vorzeit*, vol. 3 (Münster: Theissingschen Buchhandlung, 1875), 49–208.

⁶² See Scheeben, “Vorrede,” in *GS*, 5:viii. Scheeben does offer a sort of reply to Kleutgen in the last scholarly article he published before his death: “Glaube,” in *Wetzer und Welte’s Kirchenlexikon, oder Encyklopädie der katholischen Theologie und ihrer humanen Hilfswissenschaften*, vol. 5, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1888), 616–74. There he presents what he calls a “somewhat modified” version of his analysis of the act of faith from the *Dogmatik*, which he argues “should hold up even against the extensive opposition [to it] by Kleutgen” (634).

⁶³ Quoted in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 134n143. Murray was of the opinion that, as his thought developed, Scheeben gradually laid more stress on the role of the will in the act of faith, and this primarily because “Scheeben’s vigorous reaction against liberalism carried him a bit off balance, and led him to exaggerate or misconceive the notion of faith as an obedience” (“Root of Faith,” 23, 40). Against Murray, Paul demonstrates that Scheeben’s doctrine of faith actually moved in the opposite direction (*Denkweg*, 237, 265). Scheeben himself said that, whereas in his youth he had “emphasized the will too one-sidedly,” in his mature years he made a greater acknowledgment of the contribution of the intellect (*Briefe*, 109).

of the Germanicum, is telling. Huber, their former spiritual director, had long cherished the hope that one of his students would one day write a new *summa* of Catholic dogmatic theology in Latin. By writing *Mysterien* in German, in fact, Scheeben had been accused by some of "excluding the accuracy of Scholastic concepts from the outset."⁶⁴ As Scheeben was beginning work on the *Dogmatik* in 1867, therefore, Jungmann advised him to compose it in Latin, since the language had fallen into such disuse in German universities.⁶⁵ Scheeben, however, chose to write his *Dogmatik* in German precisely because of this concern. As he explained to a skeptical Huber later that same year, although he had no desire to denigrate the achievements of the older theologians, "in terms of form I have at times accommodated myself to the new style, but more out of practical considerations than according to my own inclination."⁶⁶ Scheeben, ever the pastor of souls, was alert to the practical needs of his contemporaries and even of his theological opponents, which is why he could never bring himself to embrace the exclusively Neo-Scholastic and stridently ultramontane attitude of some of his ecclesiastical allies. He openly confessed that, although he warmly greeted and accepted the definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council, he had previously believed it to be inopportune, fearing it would serve to deepen the fissures in an already fractured German church.⁶⁷ A similar concern led him to criticize the tone of *Tuas Libenter* (1863), the papal brief condemning the Munich conference of Catholic scholars.⁶⁸ "I would have wished the writing of the Holy Father to be a bit more gracious," Scheeben told Huber. "It must necessarily drive away Döllinger to the extreme, and many well-intentioned participants felt deeply hurt that the shadow of an anti-Church spirit and undertaking fell upon them as well."⁶⁹ From all

⁶⁴ Eröss, "Zur Einführung," 5.

⁶⁵ Eröss, "Zur Einführung," 5–6.

⁶⁶ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 95.

⁶⁷ See Matthias J. Scheeben, "Jörg über die Definition der päpstlichen Unfehlbarkeit," *Das ökumenische Konzil vom Jahre 1869* 2 (1870): 389: "We did not, as the reader will remember, number among those who longed for the definition in question [i.e. of papal infallibility]. We trembled before the eventuality; for our age is weak of will and proud of spirit, the moral plague of the liberal claptrap has an epidemic effect among the educated, and above all we had at heart the peace of the Church, especially in the German fatherland. But once, for the first time in three hundred years, the highest authority established in the Church has spoken, then we know what we as Catholics have to do."

⁶⁸ See Howard, *The Pope and the Professor*, 109–10.

⁶⁹ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 81. In a subsequent letter, Scheeben even asked Huber to urge the students of the Germanicum to be more humble and careful in their speech: "I believe

this we may reasonably conclude that, although Scheeben's criticisms of Schüzler were severe and his disputes with Granderath and Kleutgen were contentious, his divergence from Neo-Scholasticism was as much about style as it was about substance.

Scheeben and the Tübingen School

Recognizing the inadequacy of the Neo-Scholastic label, many scholars have more recently identified certain affinities between Scheeben's thought and the Romantic Idealism of the "German" current of nineteenth-century theology,⁷⁰ and of the principal figures of the Catholic Tübingen School in particular.⁷¹ As odd as such comparisons surely would have seemed to Scheeben's theological contemporaries, there is enough scholarly substance to them that they merit further examination.

In the first place there is the undeniable fact that much of Scheeben's language—not, indeed, when he is seeking to formulate the various doctrines of the theological tradition with scientific precision, but rather when he is seeking to synthesize them in an organic unity—savors unmistakably of the thought-world of Romanticism. Scheeben's predilection for the use of concepts and imagery drawn from the natural world—such as life, organism, marriage, and generation—is well known.⁷² Scheeben once explained to his

that on our side, not at all in writing, but in speech some hurtful, disdainful words have been spoken that it would have been better to leave out. I would like to ask you urgently to recommend meekness and caution to the students, particularly in their immoderate boasting from Rome" (89).

⁷⁰ "Romantic Idealism" itself is not an altogether unproblematic term, for, as we already mentioned, Romanticism and post-Kantian Idealism were two very different reactions to the intellectual legacy of the eighteenth-century German Enlightenment. German Romanticism and Idealism, however, bore many points of contact with one another, as seen most clearly in the philosophy of Schelling and, under his influence, the theology of Drey and the early Tübingen School. See Michael J. Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation: Johann Adam Möhler and the Beginnings of Modern Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 1–42.

⁷¹ That is, Johann Sebastian von Drey, Johann Adam Möhler, Franz Anton Staudenmaier, and Johannes Evangelist von Kuhn. A brief overview of their principal works and theological themes can be found in Scheffczyk, "Einleitung," xiii–xxvii.

⁷² On the general traits of Romanticism, especially the centrality of the concept, or better, feeling of life (*Lebensgefühl*), see Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, 7/1:29–38; Paul, *Denkweg*, 308–12. Among those who emphasize the similarities of Scheeben's organic language to the Romantic movement are Mariano Valković, *L'Uomo, la donna, e il matrimonio nella teologia di Matthias Joseph Scheeben*, *Analecta Gregoriana* 152 (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1965), 38–40, 53–54 (with a special

friend and publisher Benjamin Herder that his insatiable drive to present theology synthetically arose from his observation that "everything living is round,"⁷³ a Romantic axiom if ever there was one.

Perhaps even more reminiscent of Romantic Idealism than Scheeben's use of organic language is his desire to present the whole of theology—and, indeed, all of creation, history, and reality itself—as a coherent, unified system.⁷⁴ Post-Kantian German Idealism, as we have seen, tended to conceive of all of reality as the progressive, intelligible unfolding of absolute reason, a dynamic process moving from a first principle or idea to its rational end—making the first half of the nineteenth century the golden age of the philosophy of history (Hegel) and the philosophy of religion (Schelling).⁷⁵ Although Scheeben's fundamental outlook is thoroughly *theo*-logical rather than philosophical (a crucial difference), there is no doubt that his understanding of creation and salvation history as the progressive realization of the divine ideas, and his corresponding conviction that theology's task is to reflect the beauty and systematic coherence of these ideas, is suggestive of the intellectual heritage of German Idealism.⁷⁶ As this foundational intuition finds expression throughout Scheeben's works, here a single quotation must suffice in demonstration:

emphasis on the Romantic roots of Scheeben's theology of woman); O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 63; Scheffczyk, "Einleitung," xli–xlii; Nichols, *Romance and System*, 18.

⁷³ Quoted in Julius Dornreich, "Matthias Josef Scheeben und Benjamin Herder (Aus ihrem Briefwechsel, 1861–1888)," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 116 (1936): 51.

⁷⁴ Here we must part with Nichols, for whom Scheeben's systematic impulses stand *in contrast* to his Romantic impulses, and can best be understood as stemming from the influence of Neo-Scholasticism (*Romance and System*, 18). On the contrary, Paul argues that "the affinity to the intellectual currents especially of the early nineteenth century . . . manifests itself especially in Scheeben's desire for system; as with the Tübinger—admittedly in a different form—the concept of system plays an essential role" (*Denkweg*, 316). Similarly, Josef Höfer maintains, "the fading Idealism and vanishing Romanticism influenced his mindset in the way, which has not yet been scientifically clarified, that intellectual currents are able to work beyond tangible causality. . . . The distinctiveness of his 'systematics' . . . nevertheless clearly displays this intellectual affinity" ("Die Theologie M. J. Scheebens in neuer Ausgabe" [*GS*, 1:x]). See also Thomas F. O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), 111–37.

⁷⁵ See Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, 7/1:24: "This notion of reality as the self-unfolding of absolute reason helps to explain the idealists' insistence on system. For if philosophy is the reflective reconstruction of the structure of a dynamic rational process, it should be systematic, in the sense that it should begin with the first principle and exhibit the essential rational structure of reality as flowing from it."

⁷⁶ See Paul, *Denkweg*, 319; O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 56–57.

Because the world is produced by God, not blindly, but according to a plan conceived by him, it is the realization and the expression of a divine idea. And because in the final analysis it is directed not to the attainment of some utility but to the realization of a work that is good and beautiful in itself, [it is] an *artistic idea*. But because divine ideas can only be directed to the reproduction of the *ideal*, which is God himself, and because the world is destined for the external manifestation of the beauty and glory of God, the world as a whole must be a reflection of the beauty and glory of God.⁷⁷

It is little wonder, then, that Scheeben also shared with Romantic Idealism a preoccupation with the problem of the relationship of God to the world and of the finite to the infinite.⁷⁸ For, if creation itself is presented as the realization of the divine ideas, then (if pantheism is to be avoided) it becomes all the more imperative strictly to delineate the boundary between the orders of nature and grace.

Scheeben, it should be noted, hardly ever mentions the names of Schelling or Hegel, and indeed it seems that he never studied their works directly. This is not surprising for, by the time Scheeben began his theological career, Romantic Idealism in Germany was philosophically and culturally dead.⁷⁹ If some of his language and intellectual concerns do bear the marks of the Romantic heritage, therefore, it is likely because this heritage was mediated to him through the thought of the Tübingen theologians.⁸⁰ At times, Scheeben was capable of registering his great displeasure with the mindset of some of the Tübinger, especially when they failed to understand his own thought.⁸¹ But that he engaged their theological works actively and fruitfully

⁷⁷ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* III, 119 (*GS*, 5:47). Scheeben elsewhere speaks of God's creative idea for the supernatural destiny of humanity (§173 [*GS*, 5:464–73]), of all creation in general (§174 [*GS*, 5:473–78]), and of Christ himself (*Dogmatik* V, 1378 [*GS*, 6/2:224]). See also Paul, *Denkweg*, 316.

⁷⁸ Cf. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 7/1:27, 34–35, 38–44.

⁷⁹ See Paul, *Denkweg*, 295–96, 319.

⁸⁰ Romantic Idealism, especially as expressed through the philosophy of Schelling, exercised a decisive influence upon the earlier theologians of the Catholic Tübingen School. See, e.g., Scheffczyk, "Einleitung," xiii; Paul, *Denkweg*, 309–12; O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism*, 1–15, 94–108, 138–60.

⁸¹ After the Tübingen theologian Wenzeslaus Mattes published a highly critical review of *Mysterien* in the Bonn *Theologischen Literaturblatt*, Scheeben complained to Herder: "They also did not understand the *Herrlichkeiten* in Tübingen, and say that it is mere poetry and fantasies. If I had not experienced too often the obstinate one-sidedness of the Tübinger, one should think that it was malice with which Mattes wished to do in

throughout his career, and that he found much to value and praise in them, is not in doubt.⁸² In the *Dogmatik*, Scheeben evaluates the era of German theology after 1830 as “the period of restoration,” during which there began “a new, sounder, and more fruitful development of the theological sciences” that resulted in “a modern renewal of speculative dogmatics along Catholic lines.”⁸³ Among the protagonists of this renewal Scheeben names Möhler, Staudenmaier, and even Döllinger (if only in the field of Church history). In an earlier essay on the history of Catholic theology in the nineteenth century published in *Der Katholik*, even as Scheeben speaks of “the one-sidedness and deficiencies” of some theologians of the 1830s and 1840s, he makes sure to praise “the noble sentiments, the rare talents, and the great merits of men such as Johann Baptist Hirscher, Drey, and Staudenmaier.”⁸⁴ The last, especially, was “surely one of most significant systematic theologians at that time, [who] united in himself the fullness of modern education and simultaneously sought to penetrate into the still little-known rich treasures of the older theology.”⁸⁵ But whereas Staudenmaier's thought still had not fully overcome the deficiencies it inherited from modern philosophy, in Möhler “ancient and modern theology . . . celebrated a happy marriage.”⁸⁶

Given these laudatory evaluations, it should not surprise us to find that references to the works of Tübingen theologians are not infrequent in Scheeben's writings, and that their thought exercised a discernible influence upon his own. Regarding his approach in *Mysterien*, he explained to Huber, “From the German theologians I have only cited and praised the good, out of love for peace and in the interest of the truth.”⁸⁷ And, indeed, we find in *Mysterien* approving references to such Tübingen theologians as Franz Xaver

the book” (quoted in Dornreich, “Matthias Josef Scheeben und Benjamin Herder,” 44–45).

⁸² It was Scheeben who added the works of many Tübingen theologians to the library of the Germanicum in Rome while he was a seminarian (Augustin Kerkvoorde, “La formation théologique de M.-J. Scheeben à Rome (1852–1859),” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 22 [1946]: 189). Scheeben's surprisingly positive evaluation of much of nineteenth-century German theology has been noted by many scholars. See, e.g., Grabmann, “Scheebens theologisches Lebenswerk,” xxvi; Kerkvoorde, “Introduction,” 8; Paul, *Denkweg*, 29–30.

⁸³ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* I, 1114 (*HCD*, 1/2:265).

⁸⁴ Matthias J. Scheeben, “Geschichte der Theologie,” *Der Katholik* 47, no. 1 (1867): 170.

⁸⁵ Scheeben, “Geschichte der Theologie,” 170.

⁸⁶ Scheeben, “Geschichte der Theologie,” 171.

⁸⁷ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 94. He immediately adds, “Many of our students [i.e. from the Germanicum], especially in Bavaria, have done a great deal of harm through their endless inconsiderate criticisms.”

Dieringer,⁸⁸ Möhler,⁸⁹ Döllinger,⁹⁰ and Kuhn.⁹¹ It was the theology of Möhler and Staudenmaier, two of the leading figures of the second generation of the Catholic Tübingen School, that Scheeben seems to have known the best. His understanding of the Church as a living organism, a sacramental continuation of the life of Christ which is therefore a theological mystery in its own right, and his dynamic conception of tradition and the development of doctrine owe no small debt to the thought of Möhler nearly half a century prior.⁹² And, although Scheeben cites his works only rarely (and often critically), Staudenmaier has sometimes been proposed as Scheeben's most natural counterpart among the Tübinger, since both construct their theological anthropology on the basis of the principle of the divine likeness in man, and both tend to view history as the history of ideas.⁹³

Nevertheless, notwithstanding all of these undeniable similarities and noteworthy points of contact between Scheeben and the "German" theology of his age, one still rightly resists all attempts to classify his theology alongside that of the Romantic Idealists or the Tübingen School. Scheeben himself strenuously protested that he was not an Idealist. He once sought to assure Huber of his orthodoxy by declaring that "the so-called modern theological science [*Wissenschaft*] as such is no less disgusting to me than it is to Herrn von Schüzler,"⁹⁴ and here we must take him at his word. His

⁸⁸ See Matthias J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, 2nd ed., trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1946), 114.

⁸⁹ See Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 501–2.

⁹⁰ See Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 495n33: "In general the entire presentation of the doctrine concerning the sacrifice of Christ as given by Döllinger in accordance with the teaching of St. Paul is among the best of such treatises written in recent times."

⁹¹ See Scheeben, *Mysteries of Christianity*, 122n3. There Scheeben calls Kuhn's analysis of the comprehensibility of the Trinity "one of the best and most profound discussions of this problem." In his private correspondence, Scheeben also praises Kuhn for having presented the relationship of reason to the truths of faith "so beautifully, such as no German theologian has done yet up to now, and also such as one would not have expected of him" (*Briefe*, 67).

⁹² See esp. Himes, *Ongoing Incarnation*, 328: "In one way the obvious heir to Möhler's insight that the Church is itself a mystery and not merely the guardian of the mysteries was Matthias Joseph Scheeben. . . . Scheeben never wrote the ecclesiological treatise that was to complete his *Dogmatik*, yet enough can be garnered from that work and his *Die Mysterien des Christentums* to indicate that elements of both *Symbolik* and *Einheit in der Kirche* were at work in his theology of the Church." Cf. Kerkvooorde, "Introduction," 9–11; Scheffczyk, "Einleitung," xlii; O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 63; Walter Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition in der Römischen Schule*, ed. G. Augustin and K. Krämer, Walter Kasper Gesammelte Schriften 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 68.

⁹³ See Paul, *Denkweg*, 317–19; cf. Nichols, *Romance and System*, 18.

⁹⁴ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 95–96.

consistent attempts to offer an organic synthesis of Catholic doctrine caused one contemporary to compare his thought to that of Hegel, claiming that both attempt "to unite contradictory propositions in a higher third."⁹⁵ Scheeben, however, was not flattered by the comparison to the great German Idealist philosopher, preferring instead to appeal to the example of the great masters of medieval Scholasticism:

The accusation was perhaps not meant to be as bad as it sounds; but still it contains the insinuation that I seek to balance contradictory propositions—which really and undoubtedly are such—by bold and violent operations. . . . But what guides me in this respect is not a modern German philosophy, but rather the example of our great holy theologians, especially Sts. Thomas and Bonaventure, who are known to answer so many questions *distinguendo*, instead of simply with "yes" or "no." [What guides me] is the interest of Catholic truth, of its inexhaustible richness and of its living organism, and not least of all the law of Catholic *caritas*, which wishes just as little to blur as to intensify contradictory views, but instead, wherever it can, to discover and recognize the truth.⁹⁶

For that matter, even Scheeben's marked preference for the use of organic imagery in his theological works might just as easily be traced to the example of the figurative language of Scripture and the Fathers of the Church as to the influence of Romanticism upon his thought—a point made by Scheeben himself in answer to another critic.⁹⁷ Despite the intellectual affinities that some observers have claimed to discover (whether rightly or wrongly) in Scheeben's theology, it is at least clear, therefore, that Scheeben did not in any way think of himself as a Romantic Idealist in the mold of the so-called "German" theology of his day.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Quoted in Scheeben, "Vorrede zum III. Band" (*GS*, 6/1:xii). Later scholars, too, have seen affinities between Scheeben and Hegel in this regard. See esp. Kerkvooorde, "La formation théologique," 191: "Like a Hegel of Catholic theology, he would willingly have made of all these doctrines a single amalgam, or rather a higher synthesis permeated by a single idea." See also Eröss, "Zur Einführung," 7; Paul, *Denkweg*, 289.

⁹⁶ Scheeben, "Vorrede zum III. Band" (*GS*, 6/1:xii–xiv).

⁹⁷ See Scheeben, "Vorrede zur Zweiten Abteilung": "Here too we merely imitate St. Thomas, the Holy Fathers, and Sacred Scripture itself, and as a rule our images are borrowed precisely from these sources. Our Christology will show fully how Scripture and Tradition clothe the most important dogmatic truths in images" (*GS*, 5:xi).

⁹⁸ In this connection, Paul helpfully lists some of the ways in which Scheeben's thought diverges decisively from that of Romanticism: he does not, like Franz Xaver von Baader,

Scheeben likewise consistently sought to distance himself from the thought of the Catholic Tübingen School, which, as we have seen, he was fully prepared to praise on occasion, and with which he shared some undeniable ecclesiological sympathies. His meek temperament naturally inclined him to resent what he felt was their intellectual arrogance and academic pretentiousness.⁹⁹ But the greater part of his differences with the Tübingen theologians were more substantive. With Kleutgen, he believed that they possessed only a superficial and fragmentary knowledge of the medieval Scholasticism that they criticized as insufficient to meet the intellectual challenges posed by Enlightenment rationalism. Their consequent adoption of the philosophical premises of Romantic Idealism (and of Schelling in particular), though well-intentioned, led them to advance a conception of the relationship of the orders of nature and grace that, to Scheeben's mind, failed adequately to distinguish the one from the other and thus left the door open to pantheism.¹⁰⁰

This, at any rate, was Scheeben's opinion of Staudenmaier's theological anthropology. In *Natur und Gnade*, Scheeben singles out Staudenmaier as an example of one who portrays supernature merely as the perfection of man's natural powers, with the consequence that the transcendence of supernatural grace is "watered down and explained away."¹⁰¹ In the accompanying footnote, Scheeben charges that, "by refusing to admit any middle ground between pantheistic commingling and a mere moral union with God by the development of the natural faculties, [Staudenmaier] imparts a rationalist coloring to his teaching."¹⁰² As for Kuhn, Scheeben remarks laconically that the great Tübingen scholar "does not write well about the supernaturalism of the faith."¹⁰³ It is this core deficiency, Scheeben contends, that underlies the lack of interest shown by the Tübinger toward the dogma of the

exhibit any attraction to "the darkness and power of the depths"; he does not emphasize the importance of feeling or sentiment, as does Möhler, for example, in *Einheit*; and his ecclesiology is not developed as a forceful protest against the mechanistic naturalism of the Enlightenment (*Denkweg*, 313).

⁹⁹ We have already made note of Scheeben's complaints about the hard-headedness and obstinate one-sidedness of Mattes and the other Tübinger (see above, note 81). His judgment of Kuhn's exalted stature in German academic circles was no less cutting: "In Württemberg, Kuhn is, in dogmatic terms, almost more than a pope" (*Briefe*, 80).

¹⁰⁰ See Eugen Paul, *Matthias Scheeben*, ed. H. Fries and J. Finsterhölzl, Wegbereiter heutiger Theologie 9 (Graz: Styria, 1976), 13; O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 56.

¹⁰¹ Matthias J. Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, trans. Cyril Vollert, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1954), 35.

¹⁰² Scheeben, *Nature and Grace*, 36n2.

¹⁰³ Scheeben, *Briefe*, 59.

Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, which was for him the paradigmatic illustration of the supernaturality of grace in a human person. In this respect, Scheeben observes ominously, "despite all the express opposition between the Tübingen School and both newer schools [of Hermes and Günther], it has been in agreement with these latter, up to the last few years, on most points where they transmit naturalism into theology."¹⁰⁴

If Scheeben could draw such an equivalency between the Tübinger and the semi-rationalist theology of Hermes and Günther, to which he was so ardently opposed, we may safely conclude that he did not understand himself as carrying forward the Tübingen School's theological project. He was prepared to praise the intellectual brilliance of some of its protagonists, especially of Möhler and Staudenmaier; he commended their desire to combat the influence of Enlightenment rationalism in the Church and recognized their decisive role in the renewal of German theology in the first half of the nineteenth century; he even shared, to some extent, their inclination toward the construction of an organic synthesis of all theological truths on the basis of an overarching Idealist system. But, in the end, Scheeben departed from the Tübingen School in his absolute insistence upon the "transcendental" character of theology: that is, that the only true a priori idea which the theologian can take as his point of departure is that of God himself, in his infinitely fruitful divine life, which is then mediated to creation through the supernatural grace of Christ incarnate.¹⁰⁵ It is precisely this *theological* Idealism that manifests itself, for instance, in Scheeben's Mariology in the *Dogmatik*, where his point of departure for the exploration of the mystery of Mary is not first of all her life and actions as recorded in Scripture, but rather her *Personalcharakter*—that is, her eternal predestination "in God's creative idea" as the "maternal Bride of God."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Matthias J. Scheeben, "Die theologische und praktische Bedeutung des Dogmas von der Unfehlbarkeit des Papstes," *Das ökumenische Konzil vom Jahre 1869* 2 (1870): 509n1.

¹⁰⁵ See Paul, *Denkweg*, 313, 317–18: "From the beginning, the polar opposites of his theology are all attempts to impose something upon the life of God 'from below,' whether it is called rationalism, liberalism, or pantheism/naturalism. . . . If Staudenmaier comes from the philosophy of Schelling and especially of Hegel, if he develops his theory of ideas in specifically philosophical lines of thought, Scheeben immediately begins theologically (with Augustine and Thomas). . . . Scheeben therefore likely does not mention Staudenmaier because he seemed to him to consider the issues from below, that is, he sees the 'concrete idea' too much in connection with the ontological constitution (in the sense of nature), and thus ties the divine idea to the coordinates of human and creaturely necessities."

¹⁰⁶ Scheeben, *Dogmatik* V, 1597 (HCD, 5/2:475; trans. modified).

Scheeben and the Roman School

Scheeben's distinctive theological vision, then, cannot straightforwardly be classified as belonging to either the "Roman" (Neo-Scholastic) or the "German" (Romantic Idealist) currents of Catholic theology in nineteenth-century Germany. Even as we may recognize the influence of each upon Scheeben's thought, nevertheless he also departed decisively from them both on certain key theological points, and in fact came into open conflict with several of the protagonists of each movement. Yet it is precisely Scheeben's ambivalent relationship to both the Aristotelian-Thomistic method of Neo-Scholasticism and the Romantic Idealist approach of the Tübingen School that places him squarely within yet another theological current: the so-called Roman School.

The epithet "Roman School," while potentially misleading (for it was not a school in the strict sense, nor was it identical with the quintessentially "Roman" attitude of ultramontane or Neo-Scholastic thinkers), serves as a useful descriptor of the distinctive theological method employed by a group of Jesuit professors at the *Collegio Romano* (the future Pontifical Gregorian University) in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, including Giovanni Perrone, Carlo Passaglia, Clemens Schrader, and Johann Baptist Franzelin, as well as others connected to them by ties of personal and intellectual affinities.¹⁰⁷ Karl Heinz Neufeld sees Scheeben as the continuator of the legacy of the Roman School, and even names him its "finest product."¹⁰⁸ Heribert Schauf, the great scholar of the Roman School, has likewise observed that "Scheeben is a Scholastic and a patristic theologian at the same time, and he is such in a way similar to his Roman teachers."¹⁰⁹ For this reason, Schauf argues, "without this [Roman] School, Scheeben

¹⁰⁷ The term "Roman School" was first coined by Heribert Schauf in an essay included in a volume published by the Collegium Germanicum-Hungaricum in 1935 to mark the centenary of Scheeben's birth. See Schauf, "Die Lehre von der Einwohnung," 33, 35, 68. The essay was in fact an extract from the doctoral dissertation which Schauf would defend at the Pontifical Gregorian University in 1937.

¹⁰⁸ Karl H. Neufeld, "La scuola romana," in *Storia della teologia*, vol. 3, *Da Vitus Pichler a Henri de Lubac*, ed. R. Fisichella (Rome: Dehoniane, 1996), 283: "Through numerous translations, the theology of Scheeben exercised a noteworthy influence, even in a later period, in the spirit of the Roman School. Since his conception was indebted neither to the 'Neo-Scholastic nor to the existential' model, he could be considered the finest product of the Roman School." See also Adolf Heuser, *Die Erlösungslehre in der katholischen deutschen Dogmatik von B.P. Zimmer bis M. Schmaus* (Essen: Hubert Wingen, 1963), 141: "In him [i.e. Scheeben], the Roman School reached its peak."

¹⁰⁹ Schauf, "Zur Einführung," in Scheeben, *Briefe*, 24. See Paul, *Denkwürd.* 9–10.

cannot be wholly understood."¹¹⁰ Given that most of the principal figures of the Roman School served as Scheeben's professors in Rome, it is therefore imperative for any Scheeben scholar to account for how their theological vision may have helped to shape his own.

The theological method employed by the Roman School, like that of Scheeben himself, defies easy characterization.¹¹¹ What is certain is that, although its designation as "Roman" has sometimes caused it to be confused with the Scholastic revival initiated at Rome by Luigi Taparelli, Matteo Liberatore, and Kleutgen, the theology of the Roman School most certainly cannot be described as Neo-Scholastic.¹¹² Nourished by a return

¹¹⁰ Schaaf, "Die Lehre von der Einwohnung," 33.

¹¹¹ For an overview of the principal theological themes of the Roman School, see Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition*, 70–77; Neufeld, "La scuola romana," 274–76; Franco G. Brambilla, "Il neotomismo tra restaurazione e rinnovamento," in *Storia della teologia*, vol. 4, *Età moderna*, ed. G. Angelini, G. Colombo, and M. Vergottini (Casale Monferrato: Piemme, 2001), 426–32; Joseph Carola, "La metodologia patristica nella teologia preconciare dell'Ottocento," *Gregorianum* 97, no. 3 (2016): 605–6. Gasper rightly observes that the theology of the Roman School, like that of Scheeben, exhibits elements of both Neo-Scholasticism and the Tübingen School: "The emerging Neo-Scholasticism—of which Kleutgen, for instance, may be considered a representative—is merely one of the schools that defined Scheeben. The so-called 'Roman School' (Perrone, Passaglia, Schrader, Franzelin), which formed him, certainly possesses a unique profile. It consciously draws upon a richer substance of Tradition, e.g. the Greek Fathers, it is not easily classified in the conventional Scholastic schemata, and it thoroughly appropriated the theologians of the Catholic 'Tübingen School,' above all Möhler" ("Das Wirken Scheebens," 240).

¹¹² The assessment of the dearth of scholarly understanding of the theology of the Roman School made in 1948 by Höfer unfortunately still holds true over seventy years later: "Even still today the distinctive character of the dogmatic teaching methods at the 'Gregoriana' in Scheeben's period of studies (1852–1859) is often not sufficiently familiar to many. Even the most ill-willed of observers could not speak of a 'Neo-Scholastic' method of instruction in the stricter sense of the word, which includes an explicitly desired connection to Aristotelian concepts and ways of thought. The dogmatists Passaglia and Schrader, like Franzelin later on . . . entered into dogmatics from Sacred Scripture and from the world of the Fathers. They saw Thomas and Scholasticism, as did Möhler in Germany, more in connection with these than with a given philosophical doctrine. Pétau, to whom Passaglia and Schrader dedicated a monumental (unfortunately unfinished) new edition, was their progenitor. . . . Such a judgment about [Scheeben's] dependence on 'Scholastic thinking' seems at times to be intuitively gathered simply from the fact that Scheeben was 'educated in Rome' and was 'a seminary professor'" ("Von der ersten zur zweiten Auflage von Scheebens Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik," in *GS*, vol. 3, ed. M. Grabmann [Freiburg: Herder, 1948], xv–xvii). Surprisingly, among those who fail to adequately distinguish the Roman School from Neo-Scholasticism are Scheffczyk, who calls the Roman School a "special type of

to the direct study of the Scriptures and the Fathers (in particular the Greek Fathers), the members of the Roman School sought to build a comprehensive and organic synthesis of the whole of the Church's dogmatic tradition, an approach which could be called "Scholastic" only in the broader sense of a systematic investigation into the inter-connectedness of the truths that form the *nexus mysteriorum*. This is certainly not to say that the members of the Roman School were disinterested in medieval Scholasticism or denigrated its achievements.¹¹³ But neither did they wholly adopt an Aristotelian-Thomistic epistemology, metaphysics, or psychology as the sole philosophical lens for their theological method, preferring instead the more inductive and organic approach of the Fathers. Perhaps this may explain why some of the members of the Roman School—Passaglia in particular—strongly resisted the exclusive imposition of Thomism at the *Collegio Romano*.¹¹⁴ If, therefore, we may glimpse in the thought of the Roman School the signs of the nascent Scholasticism of Catholic theology in the nineteenth century, then at most we may say that theirs, like Scheeben's, was an idiosyncratic and "eclectic" Scholasticism.¹¹⁵

Perrone was above all a positive and even apologetic theologian, and his

the Neo-Scholastic movement" ("Einleitung," xl), and Michael Schmaus, "Die Stellung Matthias Joseph Scheebens in der Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts," in Katholischer Akademikerverband, *Matthias Joseph Scheeben: Der Erneuerer*, 36–37. For a broader discussion of the error of confusing the Roman School with Neo-Scholasticism and "Roman theology" in general, see Karl H. Neufeld, "Römische Schule": Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zur genaueren Bestimmung," *Gregorianum* 63 (1982): 677–99, esp. 681–82, 692–93.

¹¹³ Thus, Schaaf argues: "We consider it incorrect to count Passaglia, during his period of faithfulness to the Church, among the enemies of Scholasticism. . . . On the contrary, the Scholastics stand [in his thought] as theologians with particular authority. An overview of Passaglia's works demonstrates an outstanding familiarity with Scholastic thought" ("Die Lehre von der Einwohnung," 51–52n46).

¹¹⁴ See McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, 31–32. Both Perrone and Passaglia are said to have largely eschewed the use of Scholastic terminology in the aula. Hettinger reports that Perrone "avoided speculative questions and was often heard to say: *quidquid sit, hoc relinquimus scholasticis*" (quoted in Kerkvooorde, "La formation théologique," 176n3). One of Passaglia's students, meanwhile, complained that "he spurned the Scholastic *termini technici* and used Greek for them, such as *ἀμέσως* for *immediate*" (quoted in Eröss, "Zur Einführung," 4). On Passaglia's resistance to the imposition of Thomism at the *Collegio Romano*, see Schaaf, "Zur Einführung," 23–24; Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition*, 86.

¹¹⁵ Grabmann was the first to speak of the theological method of the Roman School as an "eclectic" Scholasticism ("Scheebens theologisches Lebenswerk," xxiv), a characterization later echoed by many other scholars. Cf. Kerkvooorde, "Introduction," 24; McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 83; C. Michael Shea, "Ressourcement in the Age of Migne: The Jesuit

attention to the historical dimension of the dogmatic tradition enabled him to enter into fruitful dialogue with a thinker such as John Henry Newman—thus giving the lie to Döllinger's caricature of the anti-historical stance of "Roman" theology.¹¹⁶ Passaglia's theology, in turn, was deeply influenced by the Greek Fathers, characterized by a more incisive speculative penetration, and accompanied by an extensive use of organic imagery. Scheeben was deeply influenced by Passaglia's thought and highly praised his monumental *De Immaculato Deiparae semper Virginis conceptu* (1854–1855), a three-volume study of the scriptural and patristic foundations of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary.¹¹⁷ Passaglia, said Scheeben, was "well on his way to surpassing Perrone in terms of form, speculative penetration, and philological and historical-critical meticulousness," even if his "long-windedness, ponderousness, [and] affectation" compared unfavorably with the simplicity of Perrone.¹¹⁸ Although Passaglia was more of a speculative theologian than Perrone, he nevertheless avoided philosophical speculation to such an extent that he was accused by some of his students of confining his dogmatic lectures solely to philology and hermeneutics.¹¹⁹ As for Franzelin, who perhaps exhibited the greatest affinities to Neo-Scholasticism of all the members of the Roman School, Scheeben felt that, although his works devoted greater space to speculation than the polemical works of Perrone, his thought was still a classic example of the *theologia positiva* represented above all by Denis Pétau and Louis Thomassin, the great baroque masters of the history of dogma.¹²⁰ In none

Theologians of the *Collegio Romano* and the Shape of Modern Catholic Thought," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 15, no. 2 (2017): 583.

¹¹⁶ See Neufeld, "La scuola romana," 270–72.

¹¹⁷ Scheeben characterized this work, which he would utilize extensively as a resource for his own Mariology in the fifth book of his *Dogmatik*, as the apogee of Italian theology in the nineteenth century: "Nevertheless, Passaglia's work 'De Immaculata Virginis conceptione' [sic] remains a production of eminent importance, such as the theology of the nineteenth century has rarely to exhibit. Were one to want an altimeter for Italian theology, then it is here" ("Perrone's dogmatische Werke," *Literarischer Handweiser* 6 [1867]: 150).

¹¹⁸ Scheeben, "Perrone's dogmatische Werke," 150.

¹¹⁹ See Giuseppe Filograssi, "Teologia e filosofia nel Collegio Romano dal 1824 ad oggi," *Gregorianum* 35 (1954): 528–29.

¹²⁰ See Matthias J. Scheeben, review of *De virtutibus infusis: Praelectiones scholastico-dogmaticae quas in Gregoriana Universitate habebat a. D. 1878–1879*, by Camillus Mazella, *Literarische Rundschau* 6 (1880): 482: "In the works of Cardinal Franzelin, . . . the purely controversial tendency recedes significantly, and in its place the speculative treatment emerges all the more. But the predominant tendency of the work still lies in the thorough presentation of the dogmatic proof from Scripture and

of these professors, then, would Scheeben have encountered a thoroughgoing Neo-Scholasticism of the kind that would become normative after the publication of Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* in 1879. In fact, the exclusive use of Scholastic categories, which Passaglia especially had strenuously resisted, was only first introduced at the *Collegio Romano* with the new *Ordinatio Studiorum* in 1858, the year that Scheeben finished his studies.¹²¹

The theology of the Roman School, furthermore, was not untouched by modern theological currents, especially those that found their source in the German-speaking world. Although neither Perrone nor Passaglia understood German, both benefited from the translations and explanations of German works offered them by their students at the Germanicum.¹²² Perrone's interests in combating rationalism and traditionalism led him to become interested in the thought of the Catholic Tübingen School, and in the theology of Möhler in particular, whose *Symbolik* he praised in a public lecture in 1837.¹²³ Passaglia demonstrated an even greater interest in Möhler, as evidenced by the fact that he cites him frequently in his great ecclesiological treatise *De ecclesia Christi* (1853–1856) and takes as its leading idea Möhler's conception of the Church as the *Corpus Christi Mysticum*, the continuation of the Incarnation in time and space.¹²⁴ Scheeben, as we have seen, possessed some personal familiarity with Möhler's work, but it is also likely that many of the great Tübingen theologian's insights were mediated to him (perhaps unknowingly) through the thought of his Roman professors. This caused Yves Congar famously to claim, "Möhler begat Passaglia; Passaglia begat Schrader; Passaglia and Schrader begat Scheeben and Franzelin."¹²⁵ Even if the lineage presented by Congar is far too neat and suggestive of a simple

Tradition, with a stronger utilization of the history of dogma. One could thus briefly characterize the dogmatic theology of Cardinal Franzelin as what one in previous centuries called *theologia positiva*, in the sense in which it was represented by Péttau and Thomassin in their epoch-making *Dogmata theologica*." For an overview of Franzelin's theological method, and especially his understanding of the relationship between positive and speculative theology, see Scheffczyk, "Johann Baptist Franzelin (1816–1886)," in Fries and Schwaiger, *Katholische Theologen Deutschlands*, 2:348–55.

¹²¹ See Neufeld, "La scuola romana," 268.

¹²² See Karl H. Neufeld, "Zur 'Römischen Schule' im deutschen Sprachraum," in *Geist und Kirche: Studien zur Theologie im Umfeld der beiden Vatikanischen Konzilien, Gedenkschrift für Heribert Schauf*, ed. H. Hammans et al. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1991), 329–30.

¹²³ See McCool, *Catholic Theology*, 83.

¹²⁴ See Kerkvoorde, "Introduction," 20–21.

¹²⁵ Yves Congar, "L'ecclésiologie, de la Révolution française au Concile du Vatican, sous le signe de l'affirmation de l'autorité," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 34 (1960): 107.

intellectual dependence that does not exist, it nevertheless may stand as a pithy reminder of the fact that, if Scheeben's thought was influenced by the Romantic Idealism of the Tübingen School, this is due in no small measure to his intellectual formation by the great figures of the Roman School.

Perhaps the most helpful resource for grasping the fundamental coherence of Scheeben's theological method with that of the Roman School is the "Editorum Praefatio" jointly authored by Passaglia and Schrader in the first volume of their new edition of Pétau's *Dogmata theologica*.¹²⁶ At the outset of the "Praefatio," Passaglia and Schrader state that, analogous to the physical sciences, the science of theology must strive to offer a faithful reflection of reality, a "subjective perception and logical repetition" of all that refers to God as the author and restorer of the supernatural order.¹²⁷ This occurs through the twofold movement of *analysis* and *synthesis*. The first consists in the explication and interpretation of the *materiae* of theology—Scripture, Apostolic Tradition, and the various *monumenta* of the ecclesial tradition—through the use of the tools of philology, historical criticism, and hermeneutics.¹²⁸ The analytical task of theology, according to Passaglia and Schrader, is thus essentially its positive mode.

The task of synthesis begins where that of analysis leaves off, seeking to illuminate the interconnection of all the various individual truths of the faith among themselves, and to present them as a coherent system whose beauty reflects the divine beauty itself. By this means, the theologian passes from the mere repetition of the scattered truths and events of divine revelation to a deeper grasp of the divine ideas from which they spring—and ultimately of the one eternal divine idea, Christ the Logos.¹²⁹ It is in this synthetic task that philosophical speculation makes its rightful contribution to the work

¹²⁶ For a discussion of the content of the "Praefatio" and its decisive significance for understanding the theological method unique to the Roman School, see Kasper, *Die Lehre von der Tradition*, 349–57; Valfredo Maria Rossi, *Carlo Passaglia on Church and Virgin: New Perspectives in Systematic Theology in Light of Nineteenth Century Catholic Renewal*, Brill's Series in Catholic Theology 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 15–18. Neufeld relates that Schauf believed only those theologians who substantially subscribed to the method outlined in the "Praefatio" could be considered part of the Roman School. Neufeld is, moreover, of the opinion that Scheeben, who was a student of both Passaglia and Schrader at the time of the publication of the "Praefatio" in 1857, is certainly to be numbered among such theologians ("Zur 'Römischen Schule,'" 326).

¹²⁷ See Carlo Passaglia and Clemens Schrader, "Editorum Praefatio," in *Dionysii Petavii aurelianensis e S.I. opus de theologicis dogmatibus expolitum et auctum collatis studiis Car. Passaglia et Clem. Schrader* (Rome: Propaganda Fide, 1857), iii.

¹²⁸ See Passaglia and Schrader, "Editorum Praefatio," iii–viii.

¹²⁹ See Passaglia and Schrader, "Editorum Praefatio," iv.

of theology, for it is the reason that helps one to recognize the manifold connections between the various truths that are believed by faith.¹³⁰ This theological synthesis, moreover, also has a diachronic dimension, for the theologian must demonstrate not only the internal coherence of the Church's teachings among themselves but also the essential continuity between their successive historical manifestations throughout the various periods of the Church's doctrinal tradition.¹³¹

QEven for those with only a passing familiarity with Scheeben's published works and academic career, it is immediately evident that his theological program bears a remarkable likeness to the one enunciated by Passaglia and Schrader in their "Praefatio." Both Scheeben's approach and that of his Roman professors understand the whole of the Church's doctrinal tradition as an organic unity, emphasizing the essential continuity of the faith in the patristic, medieval, and baroque eras, even as they recognize that growth and development in the knowledge of the faith (*scientia fidei*, *Glaubenserkenntnis*) has occurred under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They both therefore believe it is the task of the theologian to uncover and coordinate the unchanging revealed truths to which the Church has born witness, whether implicitly or explicitly, over the course of her historical sojourn.¹³² Both Scheeben and the representatives of the Roman School,

¹³⁰ See Passaglia and Schrader, "Editorum Praefatio," xii–xiii, xviii–xix. As Kasper points out, however, the "speculation" practiced by Passaglia and Schrader was inductive rather than deductive, consisting in a reasoned reflection upon the data of divine revelation so as to see the organic connection of the individual truths of faith to one another, rather than a syllogistic inference of further truths from the *depositum fidei*. Instead of "speculative theology," Kasper prefers to describe this methodology as a "salvation-historical synopsis of the individual truths of revelation" (*Die Lehre von der Tradition*, 353).

¹³¹ While Passaglia and Schrader do not hesitate to deride the decadent Scholasticism of the late-medieval era, in which syllogistic sophistry crowded out the voice of Scripture and Christian antiquity, they nevertheless recognize the fact that the individual elements of the theology of the Church Fathers are ultimately brought together into a coherent system only by the great medieval Scholastics, and by Thomas Aquinas in particular. Furthermore, they identify examples of the use of Scholastic argumentation already in the patristic age. As is typical in the thought of the Roman School, patristic and Scholastic theology are seen in continuity with one another. See "Editorum Praefatio," xxxii–xxxvi, xliii–l.

¹³² This helps to explain why, as scholars such as Höfer have observed, Scheeben seems at times to harmonize various doctrines from the Church's theological tradition without fully taking into account the concrete historical circumstances by which they are conditioned: "He freely interweaves the thoughts of theologians from the most diverse periods with one another, without always recognizing and considering the historically conditioned, differentiated nature of the presentation of the problem and the direction

in turn, understand the individual truths of the Church's tradition as so many concrete manifestations of the divine ideas themselves. This makes it imperative for the theologian to resist all temptation to present the various doctrines as individual truths in isolation from one another, but rather to strive, as far as possible, to allow them mutually to illuminate one another so as ultimately to synthesize them into a single amalgam, like a multi-faceted jewel that reflects the beauty and glory of the One who is Truth itself.

This synthetic and even contemplative theological vision must be held firmly in mind whenever one examines any of Scheeben's particular theological views in detail. To return to the example of his Mariology, Scheeben's identification and use of Mary's "divine-bridal maternity," her *Personalcharakter*, as the structuring principle of his Mariology can seem foreign or arbitrary until one understands that, for him, it constitutes the crystallization of all her scattered titles and privileges. It is, in other words, the best possible summation of the divine *idea* of Mary's being and mission in the eternal plan of creation and redemption, as this idea is progressively expressed in the various Marian doctrines of Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and the Church's magisterium. Scheeben's notions of Mary's *Personalcharakter* and her "bridal cooperation" in the work of redemption, like so many of his bolder insights, are original to him. Nevertheless, the theological method that led him to propose them is in substantial accord with the theological method of the members of the Roman School who taught him.

The influence of the Roman School upon Catholic theology, which had been so striking in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, had begun to wane by the time of the First Vatican Council and was almost completely extinguished by the time of Scheeben's death in 1888.¹³³ It is not too much

of the line of thought. His interpretation of earlier theologians is often more theoretical [*thetisch*] than historical, and therefore in many cases it must still be examined. In the supernatural realm, his conception of history is more given to the typical than the concrete singular, even though he also understood how to characterize individual thinkers concisely" ("Die Theologie M.J. Scheebens," *GS*, 1:xiii).

¹³³ The Roman School owes its extensive influence upon Catholic thought in the nineteenth century primarily to the direct involvement of its representatives in some of the most important pronouncements of Pope Pius IX: the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception (1854), the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), and the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council (1870). It was at the Council, however, that the waxing influence of Neo-Scholasticism first began to eclipse the star of the Roman School, as the Council fathers increasingly looked to Kleutgen to improve the work of Franzelin and Schrader on the schemas that ultimately became *Dei Filius* and *Pastor Aeternus*. See Neufeld, "La scuola romana," 276–80; John W. O'Malley, *Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church* (Cambridge,

to claim, however, that the intellectual legacy of the Roman School at least partially lived on—and even today finds ongoing relevance—through his monumental theological achievements.

Scheeben's *Eigenart*

As we have been seeking to trace the outlines of Scheeben's unique theological vision, we have established that his thought can and must be located at the confluence of some of the most significant theological currents of his day. Even if many scholars rightly feel that Scheeben cannot be said to belong to any one of those currents, at least not without substantial qualification,¹³⁴ nevertheless his theological method exhibits the most striking affinities with that of the Roman School.

Scheeben's thought, like that of the other greats of the theological tradition, simply defies easy categorization. Its foundations were most certainly laid during his studies in Rome, and it was the theology of the Roman School that exercised the most lasting influence upon him throughout his life,¹³⁵ granting him the capacity to craft an organic synthesis of the Church's entire dogmatic tradition, with special attention to both Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. In this, indeed, he can also be seen as an inheritor of the best achievements of the Tübingen School. Yet, to this solid basis of positive theology he added a more marked emphasis on the speculative exploration of the *depositum fidei* as an organic whole, seeking both to illuminate the myriad connections among its various mysteries and to draw out the further doctrines that emerge from them as theological

MA: Belknap, 2018), 165–67, 180–85.

¹³⁴ Gottlieb Söhngen places Scheeben's theological originality on a par with that of Newman, saying that neither can easily be categorized in a given theological school ("Neuscholastik," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, ed. J. Höfer and K. Rahner [Freiburg: Herder, 1962], 924). See also Grabmann, "Scheebens Auffassung," 105–8; O'Meara, *Church and Culture*, 65–66.

¹³⁵ In this connection, a note of Höfer in the *Gesammelte Schriften* offers a tantalizing insight into the ongoing influence of Scheeben's Roman professors on his theological work: "The archdiocesan archive in Cologne preserves in Scheeben's papers a thick bundle of documents, with neatly formulated postscripts, of dogmatic lectures of Passaglia and Schrader. They do not come from Scheeben himself. Apparently he still consulted them in his last years, as suggested by the inserted and dated sheets" ("Von der ersten zur zweiten Auflage," xvi). Tragically, in the course of the Allied bombing of Germany during the final stage of the Second World War, most of Scheeben's archival material in Cologne, along with the entirety of his correspondence with his editors in Freiburg and Paderborn, was destroyed (xxiii).

conclusions.¹³⁶ Scheeben carried out this theological speculation, to be sure, by means of a more consistent application of Scholastic philosophical categories than any of his Roman teachers save Kleutgen—and it is in this respect that he indeed exhibits some affinities to what would come to be known as Neo-Scholasticism.

Much to Kleutgen's dismay, however, Scheeben did not hesitate to depart from Aquinas on some fundamental questions and—what is more to the point—did not present his own ideas with anything like the Scholastic philosophical precision Kleutgen thought necessary. To Kleutgen's mind, Scheeben's willingness to stray from a consistently Thomistic theological program showed him to be, not bold, but *übermütig*, “cocky.”¹³⁷ Kleutgen presented his critique to Scheeben directly; his report of Scheeben's reply tells us much about the latter's theological temperament and tastes:

He answers that God has humbled him sufficiently through adversities, but then he also says: “I do, however, have the boldness to say something new when I believed I have clearly recognized it, but always after a long struggle and effort; and so, in the doctrine of the Trinity, I even have a lot of things of which the old Scholasticism”—(which he had previously exalted above the newer [Scholasticism] and pretended to follow)—“has nothing, and which were so unknown even to me some years ago, before I had studied the Trinitarian doctrine of the Greek Fathers in context, that I simply had no clue at all about them.”¹³⁸

Scheeben, then, undoubtedly owes much of his vast erudition—with regard not only to patristic theology, but also to medieval, baroque, and modern—to his Roman teachers. Yet, at heart, he was also one who possessed both the

¹³⁶ Scheeben addresses the distinction between positive and speculative theology—indicating his preference for the latter—in *Dogmatik* I, 923–25 (*GS*, 3:407–8). However, the distinction should not be pressed too far, and Scheeben would have resisted any attempt to sever the intrinsic connection between these two modes of theological investigation. Although the young Scheeben denied that positive theology was truly theological in the strict sense (see *Mysteries*, 744–50), in his later thought he clearly recognizes the value of its function within the science of dogmatic theology (see *Dogmatik* I, §50 [*GS*, 3:409–17]). See Paul, *Denkweg*, 300–301; Nichols, *Romance and System*, 46–50.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Eröss, “Zur Einführung,” 6.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Eröss, “Zur Einführung,” 6. Kleutgen had specifically complained about Scheeben's foreword to the first volume of his *Dogmatik*. See Scheeben, “Author's Preface,” in *HCD*, 1/1:xi–xvi.

desire and the ability to “say something new.” If he was a Scholastic, even “the first Scholastic of modern times,”¹³⁹ it was not because he sought simply to re-propose Thomism for a new day. It was because he, like Thomas, had thoroughly assimilated the dogmatic tradition that had preceded him and sought to probe it with his own prodigious speculative gifts, so as to offer a systematic presentation of it, in its full supernatural beauty and richness, to his contemporaries. His theology belongs to no school because it was his stated goal to unite the best and most lasting contributions from *every* school. We may even say that, for Scheeben, the cardinal sin of the theologian is ultimately *Einseitigkeit*, “one-sidedness.”¹⁴⁰ In this respect, at least, Scheeben certainly fits the profile once sketched by Newman, his contemporary, of the ideal theologian:

A theologian is one who has mastered theology—who can say how many opinions there are on every point, what authors have taken which, and which is the best—who can discriminate exactly between proposition and proposition, argument and argument, who can pronounce which are safe, and which allowable, which dangerous—who can trace the history of doctrines in successive centuries, and apply the principles of former times to the conditions of the present. This is it to be a theologian—this and a hundred things besides.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Eröss, “Matth. Jos. Scheeben—ein Mystiker,” 173. The author further clarifies here the epithet’s intended meaning as follows: Scheeben was “a Scholastic in the deepest sense of the word, who ‘did what Thomas would do today, not what he did in his own time.’”

¹⁴⁰ See, e.g., Scheeben, “Geschichte der Theologie,” 170; Dornreich, “Matthias Josef Scheeben und Benjamin Herder,” 45.

¹⁴¹ John Henry Newman, Letter to Miss M. R. Giberne of February 10, 1869, in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. 24, *A Grammar of Assent: January 1868 to December 1869*, ed. C. S. Dessain and T. Gornall (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), 212–13.