

NEO-THOMISM AND THE THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS: A CASE STUDY ON BELGIAN AND U.S. TEXTBOOKS (1870–1950)¹

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Scholars are currently giving serious thought to Thomas Aquinas's theology of religions. This fact led the author to explore the connection between Aquinas's thought on the subject and that of the Neo-Thomists of the 19th and 20th centuries. Starting from the analysis of textbooks, he illuminates the structure of the theology of religions that characterized Catholic culture in Belgium and the United States from 1870 to 1950, and the continuity and discontinuity of it with Aquinas's thought. He thereby also illuminates Vatican II's approach to interreligious dialogue.

THOMAS AQUINAS'S THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS is currently being given serious thought. The entire January–June 2006 issue of *Revue thomiste*, for example, is devoted to this topic. In this light, it would seem of interest to explore the connection between Aquinas's thought on the subject and that of the Neo-Thomists of the 19th and 20th centuries. This I propose to do here. In pursuing this angle, my study will invoke some contemporary theological constructs such as “inclusivism” and “exclusivism” that lend themselves to the detection of Catholicism's theological attitude toward other religions.

Although one finds different meanings for these complex concepts in the

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scholarly literature,² I draw these two “sensitizing concepts” into the following working definition. By “inclusivistic” I mean the interreligious model that recognizes other religions as possibly possessing partial truth and a certain possibility of salvation, on the condition that Jesus Christ functions as the norm and constitutive element of such truth and salvation. By “exclusivistic” I mean the model that sees Christianity as holding the exclusive monopoly on truth and salvation. Using these two comprehensive theological concepts, I hope to contribute to the history of the theology of religions in the Catholic Church itself. In contemporary theological and historical literature, the majority of authors hold that exclusivism was the dominant interreligious paradigm in the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II,³ while a minority of authors hold that “inclusivism” was the dominant paradigm.⁴ My article argues for the minority position.

Why begin my research with textbooks? Few would doubt that textbooks are a crucial medium for reconstructing mentalities and realities in society, due to their comprehensive yet extremely selective character, and their usually concise or even superficial approach.⁵ Textbooks constitute part of the microeducational level that is itself an intertwining of networks and structures stemming from the macro- and mesoeducational levels (policy-making directives from government and educational authorities, dominant educational and ideological objectives, etc.) of the entire educational system.⁶ In addition to this, if in line with certain currents within historiogra-

² For an introduction to the meaning of “inclusivism,” “exclusivism,” and “pluralism,” see Peter Schineller, “Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views,” *Theological Studies* 37 (1976) 545–66.

³ See, e.g., John Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths* (London: SCM, 1995) 83; Paul Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 26–27; Stephan Leimgruber, *Interreligiöses Lernen* (München: Kösel, 1995) 30–31.

⁴ See, e.g., Gavin D’Costa “‘Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus’ Revisited,” in *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief: Studies Critical and Comparative*, ed. Ian Hamnett (London: Routledge, 1990) 130–47; Jacques Dupuis, *Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991) 135; Chester Gillis, *Pluralism: A New Paradigm for Theology* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993) 12–14; Raimundo Panikkar, “The Jordan, The Tiber, and The Ganges: Three Kairotical Moments of Christic Self-Consciousness,” in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. John Hick and Paul Knitter (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1988) 89–116, at 93–95, 98–102; Francis Sullivan, *Salvation outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York: Paulist, 1992) 123–41.

⁵ See Maria Del Mar Del Pozo Andres, “Books and Education: 500 Years of Reading and Learning: Introduction,” *Paedagogica Historica* 38 (2002) 9–20.

⁶ See Marc Depaepe and Frank Simon, “Schulbücher als Quellen einer dritter Dimension in der Realitätsgeschichte von Erziehung und Unterricht: Über neue Konzeptionen in der historisch-pädagogischen Schulbuchforschung,” in *Schulbuch-*

phy one defines an educational system as a “school culture” in the sense of an overall set of values, norms, and expectations that directs the shaping of the school and its members’ activities,⁷ then it is obvious that the textbook, as the nexus of the entire school culture, is a privileged source for detecting large “structures” or mentalities constitutive of a whole culture or subculture that surrounds the school culture. Starting from the analysis of textbooks, therefore, I hope to illuminate the theological structure that characterized Catholic culture in Belgium and the United States from 1870 to 1950. In looking for the continuity and discontinuity with Aquinas’s thought, I want to enlarge the scope of the Catholic theology of religions to the Middle Ages.

I begin, therefore, by analyzing textbooks on apologetics used in Catholic secondary schools in Belgium and the United States from 1870 until 1950⁸ and comparing them first with their sources, namely, the Church’s “great” and official apologetic tracts. Then I will look for parallels with and differences from Aquinas’s teaching. I limit myself to apologetic textbooks for three reasons: (1) Within the corpus of religion textbooks, those on apologetics and church history are the most suited to the kind of analysis carried out here. Other religion textbooks emphasize almost exclusively the internal aspects and development of the Church, whereas textbooks on apologetics and church history focus more on the external history and relations of the Catholic Church. (2) I do not include church history textbooks here because they do not explicitly refer to the underlying theology

forschung in Europa: Bestandsaufnahme und Zukunftperspektive, ed. Werner Wiater (Bad Heilbrunn: Klinkhardt, 2003) 65–77, 73–75.

⁷ Paul Mahieu and C. Dietvorst, quoted in Chris Hermans, *Professionaliteit en identiteit: Over professionele ethische verantwoordelijkheid van leraren in relatie tot de identiteit van katholieke scholen* (The Hague: ABKO, 1994) 25.

⁸ For the Belgian source material, I had recourse to the collection of textbooks in the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven’s Archives and Documentation Centre for History of Education. This collection constitutes a comprehensive and representative depository of nonrecent (1830–1970) school textbooks used in the Belgian Catholic school system. While it is likely that this collection can be considered at least representative and that the likelihood of information loss is low, caution is advised since not all the textbooks have yet been catalogued and made accessible. For the U.S. sources, I used the archives of the Hesburgh Library of the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, where the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism is located. The Cushwa Center is reputed to be the most important place for research in Catholic studies in the United States, and the Hesburgh Library is thought to possess one of the most extensive collections of scholarly literature and source material for the history of the Catholic Church and Catholic education in the United States. The ultimate chronological framework (1870–1950) was determined by the apologetic textbooks: they were introduced in education around 1870 and disappeared around 1950 as a textbook genre.

of religions. (3) Extending my research to every textbook of religion that in one way or another treats non-Christian religions would expand the sources beyond what can be thoroughly analyzed within the scope of a single article.

I propose to argue two theses: (1) The paradigm of the relation between Christianity and the non-Christian religions that lies at the base of the representation of non-Christian religions in the textbooks of apologetics used in Belgian and U.S. education between 1870 and 1950 was not exclusivist, but, indeed, inclusivist. (2) The principles of the Christian interreligious paradigm harken back to the similar positions of Thomas Aquinas. To corroborate this thesis, I consult the parallel texts of Aquinas. In many cases, it will be simple to show the correlation between Aquinas and the apologists of the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. To avoid burdening the reader with an excess of citations, in each case I limit myself to but one reference.

APOLOGETICS

One cannot adequately appreciate the precise scope of the interreligious doctrine in the textbooks under consideration without insight into their literary genre. In particular, if one consults the introductory considerations of the textbooks, one sees in Belgian⁹ and U.S. texts¹⁰ that their respec-

⁹ See Karel Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* (Bruges: Schoonbaert-Goes, 1942) 9–20; Walter Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne ou exposition raisonnée de la foi* (Paris: Casterman, 1914²²) 1–2; Emiel Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging: Een leerboek voor de scholen en studiekringen* (Bruges: Excelsior, 1931⁴) 13–14; Henricus Carolus Lambrecht, *Het roomsch katholiek geloof in 't kort bewezen* (Ghent: Huyshauwer & Scheerder, 1883) 5–8; Aimé Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne: Démonstration religieuse* (Namur: Wesmael-Charlier, 1929²) 13, 377–78; W. Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging voor normaal en middelbaar onderwijs* (Lier: Jozef van In, 1924³) 5; Martinus Hubertus Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne* (Brussels: Société Belge de Librairie, 1897²) xi–8; Paul Emiel Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle des fondements de la foi catholique: Eléments d'apologétique* (Brussels: Jules De Meester, 1909) 1–2; Jozef Van Brabant and Robrecht Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk: Het ware christendom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1942) v–vi; François Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* (Brussels: Albert Dewit & Gabriel Beauchesne, 1915) 2–10; Verhelst, *La divinité de Jésus-Christ. Étude apologétique* (Brussels: Albert Dewit, 1918) 5–9.

¹⁰ See Charles Coppens, *A Systematic Study of the Catholic Religion* (New York: Herder, 1915) iii–v; Ambroise Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem*, trans. Ellen Mary Agnes Leahy (New York, Cincinnati: Pustet, 1917) iii–v; Walter Devivier, *Christian Apologetics: A Rational Exposition and Defense of the Catholic Religion*, trans., ed, and enl. Joseph C. Sasia, S.J., 2 vols. (New York: Wagner, 1924) 1:xi–xviii; Joseph Henry Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951 [1947]) 1–9; Paul Joseph Glenn, *Apologetics: A Class Manual in the Philosophy of*

tive authors, without exception, intended to offer apologetic treatises whose objective was the systematic defence of the Christian (read: Catholic) faith. The authors call these treatises “systematic” because they appeal to what is considered a coherent system based on philosophical “reason” and on history¹¹ (the historical study of the Bible, *Religionsgeschichte*, or comparative religion, etc.). The authors also call their treatises defensive because they aim to establish the “reasonability” and, at the same time, the truth of Christianity, namely that God has manifested Godself definitively in Jesus Christ, against certain trends that deny this claim.¹²

Although such apologetic approaches to the Christian faith are as old as Christianity itself,¹³ the genre one finds in the textbooks is “contextual-

the Catholic Religion (St. Louis: Herder, 1931²) v–vii; Franz Hettinger, *Revealed Religion*, ed. and intro. Henry Sebastian Bowden (New York: F. Pustet, 1895) v–xv; Louis Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* (New York: O’Shea, 1877) xv–xviiff.; Franz Xavier Koch, *Manual of Apologetics: Translated from the Revised German Edition by Anna Maud Buchanan*, ed. and rev. Charles Paul Bruehl (New York: Wagner, 1915) iii–vi, 1–3; Arthur Patrick Madgett, *Christian Origins*, vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Xavier University, 1939) iii–xiii; Austin Schmidt and Joseph Perkins, *Faith and Reason. An Apologetics for High-School Seniors* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1935) 1–10; Michael Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Dublin: Gill, 1925⁵) vi–viii; Thomas Joseph Walshe, *The Principles of Christian Apologetics: An Exposition of the Intellectual Basis of the Christian Religion* (New York: Sands, 1919) vii–31.

¹¹ Madgett, for example, writes: “History and philosophy, or, if you will, facts and common sense, are the principal instruments for our study of Christian Origins. We studiously avoid all questions which depend on Revelation, as Revelation; or which depend on the authority of an authentic interpreter of Revelation. Although we shall be dealing with Revelation through a large portion of this work, we approach it from a historico-philosophical point of view. This is not only advantageous but necessary if we are to achieve our purpose. We are looking into the rational foundations of faith just as a student of physics or chemistry investigates the principles on which these sciences are based. We may know on the authority of the most imposing array of great minds the truths which we shall arrive at when we have finished our quest. But our present objective is to arrive at that knowledge by our own searching into the facts and our own reasoning on those facts” (*Christian Origins* xi–xii).

¹² One finds these basic principles of apologetics variously expressed but explicit practically everywhere in the textbooks—for example, Koch writes: “The aim of apologetics is to prove the reasonableness of our faith. Faith takes for granted the existence and veracity of God and is based upon the fact of a divine revelation and of its preservation by the Church. To establish these preliminary truths is the principal aim of apologetics. Its further and secondary object is to defend the individual truths of faith against doubt and error” (*Manual of Apologetics* 1).

¹³ For an overview of the history of apologetics up to the 18th century, see Paul Schanz, *A Christian Apology*, 3 vols., trans. Michael Glancey and Victor Schobel (New York, Cincinnati: Pustet, 1891) 1:18–65. On the history of Catholic apologetics in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Avery Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005; orig. publ. 1971) xix–xxvii.

ized.” Even though the authors—like the apologists from the first centuries of Christianity up to the Middle Ages, including Thomas Aquinas—sought to defend the traditional truth claims of the Christian faith,¹⁴ they now did so not so much by reacting to pagan and Jewish tendencies as by standing against the then-ascendent rationalistic and naturalistic currents of Enlightenment-thinking generally called “modernism.”¹⁵ Here I define “modernism” broadly as a complex intellectual movement of scholars who tried to positively engage such issues of modernity as freedom of investigation, the autonomy of reason, and secularization. One expression of modernism was the rapidly growing (especially in the 19th century) field of comparative religion or the history of religion (*Religionsgeschichte*). Within this field were authors who challenged the uniqueness of Christianity on the basis of alleged parallels between Christianity and other religions.¹⁶ This tendency was regarded in Catholic circles as a typical and dangerous expression of modernism, an expression that threatened the traditional Catholic claims

¹⁴ That the need to defend Christianity was seen as urgent in those days in Catholic circles in Belgium and the United States is evident from the abundance of apologetic works, tracts, and pamphlets that surrounded the textbooks. A striking example of the reigning *Zeitgeist* is the opening sentence of an apologetic work written for new converts: “This is a War Book, in the sense that the great struggle through which we are passing has been the occasion of its appearance, and it has been written in response to the ever increasing demand, from those who have for the first time been brought in contact with the Catholic religion” (Benedict Williamson, O.S.S., *The Straight Religion* [New York: Benziger Brothers, 1917] vii). See also the guidelines for religious instruction concerning the need to defend the Catholic faith in the United States, in John Montgomery Cooper, *Religion Outlines for College*, Course III, *Christ and His Church* (Washington: Catholic Education, 1930) 131–33.

¹⁵ For U.S. examples, see Madgett, *Christian Origins* v–vi; Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 19. For Belgian examples, see Legrand, *Apologetique chrétienne* 143–58; Verhelst, *La divinité de Jésus-Christ* 9.

¹⁶ Devier and Sasia’s strong words are typical of both Belgian and U.S. texts: “There is one chief objection, more general in character than the others, which is put forth in our day with high sounding display of erudition, in public writings or lectures which treat of ‘The History of Religions’. It is well known that under this name the enemies of religion pretend to confound the only true religion with the many old and new religious errors, by which man has disfigured the divine work. By this shrewd proceeding, they mean to bring into contempt the true Faith and those that profess it. This objection is drawn from the analogies which are found to exist between Christianity and the false religions of antiquity. These men claim that these resemblances prove that the Christian religion is simply an evolution from anterior religions, and that like them, it has a human origin. Though this objection is without any value, we consider it necessary to refute it because of the popularity which it enjoys at the present time, and of the evil impression which it creates in many minds” (*Christian Apologetics* 1:514–15).

about the truth and uniqueness of Christianity and that, in the opinion of many Catholic apologists of that period, needed to be refuted vigorously.

In all this, it is also important to see that the apologetic textbooks were aimed at Catholics who supposedly had an advanced and integrated intellectual grasp of the Christian faith. In view of the educational curriculum, these textbooks were mostly intended for the highest grades of the *humaniora* (Belgium)¹⁷ or high school (United States),¹⁸ or for philosophical education in seminaries as preparation for “serious” work, that is, the study of Christian theology.¹⁹ In other words, what the authors envisioned was, meanwhile, to further undergird the fundamentals of the Christian faith with “reasonable” arguments aimed at deepening and reinforcing the belief of the faithful against the false schools of thought. The upshot was that heated polemics dominated Catholic apologetic textbooks, which emphasized the points on which Catholic teaching differed from non-Catholic and non-Christian convictions.

This style of apologetic, however, was not unprecedented. It derived from the “great” official apologetic tracts (most of which were written in French,²⁰ German,²¹ and Latin²²)—from which, as occasional references in

¹⁷ See, e.g., Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne*, xi. This work, although aimed at fourth graders claimed to be suitable also for high schoolers. See also Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 11.

¹⁸ See, e.g., Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* iii.

¹⁹ This multipurpose approach of the apologetics textbooks makes the line of separation from fundamental or dogmatic theology sometimes difficult to draw, as this introductory statement illustrates: “There are many different names for Christian Apologetics, but they are all the same in meaning and are merely synonyms for the title given to this textbook. The science is called *Fundamental Theology* because it is the rational foundation upon which doctrinal theology is built. It is called the *Evidences of Religion* because it investigates all the testimonies, and it questions all the witnesses that influence human beings to accept Christianity. It is called *Christian Origins* because it relates historically the beginnings and growth of the Christian religion. Finally, it is also called *Propaedeutics of Theology*, which means the body of principles introductory to the science of theology” (Joseph Henry Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* [Milwaukee: Bruce, 1951²] 1). For this article, I have used only books that explicitly characterized themselves as “apologetic” and not simply as “dogmatic” textbooks.

²⁰ See, e.g., Eugène Duplessy, *Apologétique*, 3 vols., vol. 1, *Démonstration de la révélation* (Paris: La Bonne Presse, 1924) v–xix; Ambroise Gardeil, *La crédibilité et l'apologétique* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1928 [1912²] 203–314); Henri Dominique Lacordaire, *Conférences de Notre-Dame de Paris*, 5 vols. (Paris: Poussielge frères, 1872) 1:263ff.

²¹ See especially Franz Hettinger, *Apologie des Christentums*, vol. 1, *Der Beweis des Christentums*, 10th ed., ed. Eugen Müller (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1914) 1–105. Here I am using the French version: *Apologie du Christianisme*, trans. Julien Lalobe de Felcourt and J.-B. Jeannin, 3 vols. (Paris: Bloud & Barrel, 1891³).

²² See, e.g., Jean-Vincent Bainvel, *De vera religione et apologetica* (Paris:

the textbooks indicate, their arguments were directly borrowed. It is also striking that authors of the “great” tracts thought that they had to focus on the challenges of comparative religion, whose results the authors attempt to turn to the advantage of the traditional truth claims of Christianity.²³ In the light of my problematic, I must observe that an identical apologetic approach, *mutatis mutandis*, is also present both in the parallel dogmatic literature²⁴ and in the more popular U.S. and Belgian Catholic publications of the time.²⁵

Beauchesne, 1914) v–141; Bernhard Jungmann, *Tractatus de vera religione*, *Institutiones theologiae dogmaticae generalis* (Cincinnati: Pustet, 1879) 1–26; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione per Ecclesiam Catholicam proposita*, *Theologia fundamentalis secundum S. Thomae doctrinam, pars apologetica*, 2 vols. (Rome: Ferrari, 1918); John T. Langan, S.J., *Apologetica* (Chicago: Loyola, 1921) 1–5; Wilhelm Wilmers, *De religione revelata: Libri quinque* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1897) iii–iv.

²³ Schanz’s work exemplifies this approach. For him, the history of religions is “the groundwork and the key of the right understanding of all history.” He uses this phrase, borrowed from anthropologist Max Müller among others, as a proof of God’s existence: “Our knowledge of antiquity has advanced by leaps and bounds: yet it offers no explanation of the fact of religion, but merely bears witness to its existence in the remotest ages. Both civilized and uncivilized races tell the same tale. If ancient writers had asserted that belief in God was universal, and that there existed no people so savage and lawless as not to worship some God or other, the statement might have been set down as a hasty or a superficial generalisation, due to their comparatively narrow knowledge of ethnography. Even the fathers and the learned men of the Middle Ages knew but little of the inhabitants of the various parts of the globe. Now, however, circumstances have altered. The discovery of two continents and numberless islands, and the exploration of the ‘Dark Continent’, have widened to an unforeseen extent the circle of human knowledge. And yet all modern discoveries in ethnography and anthropology do but confirm the ancient truth. No nation has yet been discovered wholly devoid of religion. . . . It was a favourite dodge of Bayle and the sceptical school to justify atheism by pointing to the existence of tribes with no religion. . . . It is hardly fair to test the faith of low savages by our own enlightened ideas about God. . . . A little while ago the Zulus were credited with having no religious ideas of any kind. . . . Roskoff has confuted Sir John Lubbock in detail, Quatrefages has done a similar service to the stories of the missionaries; Tyler, Peschel and Max Müller have defended the same thesis” (Schanz, *Christian Apology* 1:66–68).

²⁴ A few of the many examples from Belgian and U.S. authors: Maurice Brillant, Maurice Nédoncelle, and Joseph Coppens, *Apologetique: Nos raisons de croire, réponses aux objections* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1948); Joseph Hubert Cavanaugh, *Evidence for Our Faith: A Book on Apologetics for College Students* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1949); Cornelius Hagerty, *A Course of Apologetics*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1950); Jean Levie, S.J., *Sous les yeux de l’incroyant* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1946²).

²⁵ For U.S. authors, see, e.g., Peter Einig, *Religion—Faith—The Church: A Series of Apologetic Discourses* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1919) 1ff.; James Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers: Being an Exposition and Vindication of the Church Founded by Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Baltimore: J. Murphy, 1877⁵) 1–21; Patrick

Part of the reason for the similarity between the U.S. and Belgian textbooks naturally lies in the uniformity and universality of the fundamentals of Catholic doctrine itself that the textbooks schematically explicate. But more is at work here. The commonalities are also due to the fact that, especially in the period 1870 to 1920, the production of religious textbooks in the United States was anemic.²⁶ Most texts were imported from Europe; those not already in English were translated (and sometimes expanded) and then published in the United States.²⁷

This strong dependence of English-speaking U.S. Catholic institutions on European textbooks was undoubtedly brought about by the comparable situation concerning the “great” apologetic works that underlay the textbooks.²⁸ Due to the ghettoized situation of English-language Catholi-

Albert Halpin, *Apologetica: Elementary Apologetics for Pulpit and Pew* (New York: Wagner, 1904) v–vi, 1–15; David Goldstein and Martha Moore Avery, *Campaigning for Christ* (Boston: Pilot, 1924) 9–18; John McLaughlin, *The Divine Plan of the Church: Where Realized and Where Not* (New York: Burns & Oates, 1901); Bernard John Otten, *The Reason Why: A Common Sense Contribution to Christian and Catholic Apologetics* (St. Louis: Herder, 1921²) iii–viii; Aloysius Roche, *Apologetics for the Pulpit*, 3 vols. (London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, 1935) 1:1–6; Martin John Spalding, *Evidences of Catholicity: A Series of Lectures* (Baltimore: J. Murphy, 1875⁵) 13–30; Edward Ingram Watkins, *Some Thoughts on Catholic Apologetics: A Plea for Interpretation* (St. Louis: Manresa, 1915) 41–43.

²⁶ For evidence of this situation, see Cardinal James Gibbons’s animadversion in his popular apologetic *Faith of Our Fathers* 9–11, where he first addresses his intended reader, then crafts a fictional conversation between a Protestant minister and a convert to Catholicism: “My dear reader.—Perhaps this is the first time in your life that you have handled a book in which the doctrines of the Catholic Church are expounded by one of her own sons. . . . Minister.—But the priest who instructed you, did not teach you all. He held back some points which he knew would be objectionable to you. Convert.—He withheld nothing; for I am in possession of books treating fully of all Catholic doctrines. Minister.—Deluded soul! Don’t you know that in Europe they are taught differently? Convert.—That cannot be, for the Church teaches the same creed all over the world, and most of the doctrinal books which I read, were originally published in Europe.”

²⁷ Walshe’s work, e.g., is based on French apologete Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange’s *Dieu, son existence et sa nature* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1915) and the work of Belgian Emiel Valvekens’s, *Foi et Raison: Cours d’apologétique* (Brussels: Jules De Meester, 1904). Joseph Sasia’s work is an expanded translation of the Belgian Devivier’s *Cours d’apologétique chrétienne. Solution of the Great Problem* is a translation of a French work by Ambroise Delloe. Koch’s textbook is a translation and expansion by Anna Maud Buchanan and Charles Paul Bruehl of the original German text; Hettinger’s *Revealed Religion* is a translation of his original German textbook, *Apologie des Christentums*.

²⁸ The introduction to the translation of Schanz’s “great” German apologetic treatise, *Apologie des Christentums*, illustrates this dependence: “Questions of faith and science are now in the forefront of our modern intellectual life. . . . To enable our people to cope with them, there is needed a standard work of reference, dealing

cism—not only in America but also in Europe—appeals had long been made to translations, especially of French and German Catholic apologetic tracts,²⁹ or Catholics simply adapted Protestant or Anglican apologetic works that, in connection with the defence of Christianity against rationalism and naturalism, used the same principles as their Catholic counterparts. While the ascendancy of Catholic scholars like Cardinals John Henry Newman and Nicholas Wiseman gradually corrected the deficiency in the production of native Catholic apologetics, the parallel evolution of textbooks and the great “classic” apologetic works still lagged behind. My research indicates that the evolution occurred more quickly in Ireland and England—Irish and English apologetics textbooks began to appear at the turn of the 20th century, and their U.S. counterparts about 1920. That apologetic texts of U.S. origin often referred to a few prominent Belgian names in connection with the Catholic apologetics, such as Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier,³⁰ not only shows that the umbilical cord to Europe had not long been severed, but also underscores the global influence of the “Leuven Neo-Thomist School” in Catholic circles of the time.

UNIVERSALISM

Anyone who researches the relationship between Christianity and non-Christian religions in apologetic textbooks must ascertain what the authors understood by “religion.” The Belgian and U.S. textbooks of the time were virtually unanimous in describing religion as a “generally human” and “universal” phenomenon that originated in belief in God. The terms “generally human” and “universal” meant that each person of normal intellectual capacity could recognize the existence of an ultimate reality that transcends time and space and at the same time founds and orients existence. This transcendent reality is always identified with God.³¹ On the basis of

systematically with these questions from a Catholic standpoint. In Germany and France, several such works have been published, of which, as regards England, it may be truly said: Graeca sunt, non leguntur. It is strange that England, one of the great strongholds of physical science, should have been so long left almost wholly unprovided with works of this character. We believe, then, that we shall meet a pressing need in giving to the English-speaking world a translation of Dr. Schanz’s *Apologie des Christentums*” (*Christian Apology* 1:i–ii).

²⁹ Besides Schanz’s work, the translation of Johan Brunsmann’s *Lehrbuch der Apologetik* became very popular: John Brunsmann, *A Handbook of Fundamental Theology, by the Reverend John Brunsmann, S.V.D., Freely Adapted and Edited by Arthur Preuss*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Herder, 1928).

³⁰ See, e.g., Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 242.

³¹ Among Belgian textbooks, see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 97–125; Devivier, *Cours d’apologétique chrétienne* 4–34; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 17–26; Lambrecht, *Het roomsch kathoeliek geloof* 8–19; Legrand,

these premises, religion was soon defined as the bond that unites humanity with God.³² One finds such a definition of religion, *mutatis mutandis*, in many “great” works of apologetic literature that undergirded both the apologetic textbooks and much of the ambient pedagogical literature of the period under consideration.³³

Although most authors of apologetic textbooks did not explicitly appeal to the Scholastic *vocabularium*, their works clearly reflect the principles *ab*

Apologetique chrétienne 13–65; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 6–21; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologetique chrétienne*, 9–32; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 2–53; Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 13–19; Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologetique* 11–51. Among U.S. textbooks, see, e.g.: Coppens, *Systematic Study* 119, 121; Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 55–63; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:8–21, 31; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 18–19; Glenn, *Apologetic* 116–118; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 27; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 4–5; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 9–12, 22–23; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 11–12; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 40–48; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 10–15; Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 47–50.

³² Some texts contain variations on this definition. For Coppens religion is in principle “the virtue which disposes us to worship God” (*Systematic Study* xi); for Madgett: “The habit of mind by which man acknowledges God’s supreme dominion and his own dependence and submission to God is called the virtue of religion” (*Christian Origins* 25); for Sheenan: “the sum of man’s duties” (*Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 31). Similar variations are also found among the Belgian authors. As with Madgett, religion is seen especially as “worship of God”—thus Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 48, and Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 129. All these variations derive from Aquinas (see especially Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* (hereafter *ST*) 2–2, q. 81, a. 1, trans. English Dominicans (London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, 1920–1932) (throughout, I will use the online edition, copyright by Kevin Knight, 2006). Similar definitions are found in most textbooks; for the Belgian texts, see, e.g., Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 120–22; Devivier, *Cours d'apologetique chrétienne* 91; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 29–30; Legrand, *Apologetique chrétienne* 86; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 32; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologetique chrétienne* 51–52; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 68–69; Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 20–21; Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologetique* 48, 71. For the U.S. texts, see, e.g., Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetic* 1:187–92; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 30; Glenn, *Apologetic* 108; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 37; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 5; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 133; Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 144. As I mentioned in passing, the textbooks naturally also treat the various components that are connected to this basic definition of religion. I cannot go into this any further here; suffice it to point out the tripartite element in religion recognized by most authors who include comprehensive treatments of the articles of faith or dogmas; of regulations and/or solemn duties based on the distinction between good and evil; and rites and ceremonies, called a *cultus*. One sees the same division in Aquinas (e.g., *ST* 2–2, q. 81, a. 7).

³³ See, e.g., Brunsmann, *Handbook of Fundamental Theology* 1:75–82; Hettinger, *Apologetie du christianisme*, 3:405ff.; Schanz, *Christian Apology* 1:66–68, 79–86. Regarding the ambient literature, see Hagerty, *A Course of Apologetics* 2:368–72.

ovo of a universal model of religion such as that found in Thomas Aquinas. The authors of U.S. and Belgian textbooks who did explicitly adopt Thomist jargon reveal their debt to Aquinas most clearly when they describe religion in these terms: the human being depends on God (*Causa Prima*) as an effect depends on its cause,³⁴ and religion is nothing but the expression of this bond of dependence.³⁵ Of all possible passages from Aquinas, the following best represents the connection between him and the textbooks: "Religion may be derived from 'religare' (to bind together), wherefore Augustine says (*De Vera Relig.* 55): 'May religion bind us to the one Almighty God.' However, whether religion take its name from frequent reading, or from a repeated choice of what has been lost through negligence, or from being a bond, it denotes properly a relation to God. For it is He to Whom we ought to be bound as to our unfailing principle."³⁶

This relation between humans and God, which lies at the basis of every religion, was further framed in the apologetic textbooks within a classical Christian doctrine of creation and grace; I will highlight only the most important elements relevant to my thesis. The point of departure is that God in his omnipotence and goodness created the world with its visible and invisible "objects."³⁷ Despite contingency, the human person is the mas-

³⁴ See, e.g., *ST* 1, q. 2, a. 3.

³⁵ Among Belgian textbooks see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 97–112, 126–29; Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne* 91; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 29–30; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 66, 86; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne* 12–19; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 10–25, 68–69; Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 14–19; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 72. Among U.S. textbooks see, e.g.: Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 121–27; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:62–75; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 12–18, 23; Glenn, *Apologetic* 187; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 30; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 4, 7–8; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 17; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 6–9; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 57–64; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 17–18; Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetic* 34–40, 69.

³⁶ *ST* 2–2, q. 81, a. 1.

³⁷ Among the Belgian textbooks see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 98–119; Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne* 20–21, 57; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 17–27, 45–46; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 25–29; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 6–7, 10; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne* 9, 12–19; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 10–15, 29, 52; Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 19; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 22–43. Among the U.S. textbooks see, e.g.: Coppens, *Systematic Study* 125, 159; Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 58; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:61–66; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 11–16; Glenn, *Apologetic* 2–29ff.; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 27; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 11; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 38–60; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 8, 10; Schmidt and

terpiece³⁸ or the chosen being³⁹ of creation because he or she has been created in the image and likeness of God.⁴⁰ Moreover, God has provided humans with a spiritual and immortal principle, called the soul, wherein he placed the source of free will and “rationality,” but also, above all, the natural desire for ultimate happiness and truth of God himself.⁴¹ Through hereditary or original sin, however, humanity is no longer capable of reaching the fullness of truth and happiness through the force of reason. Yet, in his infinite goodness, God did not want humanity to fall, and therefore, in a completely free gift of love and grace (revelation), God provided every means for learning all the truth necessary for salvation.

The principles of the doctrine of creation and grace sketched above derive from Aquinas, whose argumentation and vocabulary were adopted by neo-Thomist apologists. To avoid excessively long summaries and citations, I will refer to only a few correlative texts in Aquinas regarding the definition of religion: the idea of an omnipotent⁴² and all-good God⁴³ who, out of love,⁴⁴ created the world;⁴⁵ the notion that contingent humans⁴⁶ are the masterpiece or the summit of creation because they are created in God’s image and likeness;⁴⁷ the conviction that every person is endowed with a spiritual and immortal soul,⁴⁸ the center of human rationality⁴⁹ and free will;⁵⁰ the principle of an “instinctus fidei” or an innate human desire for ultimate happiness and truth, in short, for God himself;⁵¹ the view that humans, due to the primal sin of Adam and Eve, are no longer capable on

Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 84–90; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 17–18; Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetic* 78–80.

³⁸ See Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:xiv.

³⁹ See Valvekens, *Démonstration rationelle* 88.

⁴⁰ See Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 115; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 62.

⁴¹ Among the Belgian textbooks see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 68–84, 115; Devivier, *Cours d’apologétique chrétienne* 20–25, 60, 62–90; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 28, 30–31, 36–43; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 66–85; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 23–27, 33; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d’apologétique chrétienne* 33–51; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationelle* 33, 53–68; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 70, 74–75. Among the U.S. textbooks see, e.g.: Coppens, *Systematic Study* 160–69; Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 149–61; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:109–85; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 23–28; Glenn, *Apologetic* 87–88; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 32–36; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 60–61; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 107–22; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 25–30; and Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 116–26.

⁴² See *ST* 1, q. 24, a. 2–3.

⁴³ See *ST* 1, q. 6, a. 1–4.

⁴⁴ See *ST* 1, q. 20, a. 2–3.

⁴⁵ See *ST* 1, q. 44, a. 1.

⁴⁶ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* (hereafter *SCG*) 3.75.

⁴⁷ See *ST* 1, q. 44, a. 3.

⁴⁸ See *ST* 1, q. 75, a. 6.

⁴⁹ See *ST* 1, q. 79, a. 1, 3–4.

⁵⁰ See *ST* 1, q. 83, a. 1.

⁵¹ See *ST* 1, q. 2, a. 1.

their own of reaching the fullness of truth and happiness;⁵² the image of an infinitely good God who nevertheless does not abandon humanity but, in his providence by a free gift of love and grace (revelation), supplies it with all the means necessary to arrive at truth and thus be saved.⁵³

From these citations, the reader will notice that truth and salvation are not always interconvertible. I will return to this later. Of interest here is the double universalism that shows itself immediately in the theological and philosophical premises in the cited apologetic works. In the first place, the apologists stress that God's salvific will is universal and encompasses all people from the beginning of creation to the present and into the future. In the second place, the apologetic textbooks teach that all humans are fundamentally equal as creatures of God and, moreover, are endowed with the same desire for ultimate truth and happiness. This double universalism is also present in Aquinas's works. Thus, in the *Summa theologiae*, one finds the affirmation that all people have the same origin—and hence belong to the same community—and have the same final destiny because they, without exception, are the object of God's providence, goodness, and salvific will.⁵⁴

Consideration of concepts common to most textbooks of the period leads to the discovery of how the authors determine the status of Christianity relative to other religions.⁵⁵ First, they distinguish between "natural" and "supernatural" or "revealed" religion. Natural religion has as its object the divine truth that humans can know through reason. Supernatural religion has as its object the truth about God and humanity that God has made known through special or "supernatural" revelation that does not necessarily derive from the "natural" order of things.⁵⁶ Supernatural reli-

⁵² See *ST* 2-1, q. 81, a. 3; q. 82, a. 1-3.

⁵³ See *ST* 1, q. 22, a. 2. ⁵⁴ See *ST* 1, q. 18, a. 4; q. 22, a. 1.

⁵⁵ An exception to this rule is, remarkably enough, Delloue, who does not explicitly use this terminology. Nevertheless, despite his variant formulations, his argumentation does not fundamentally differ from that of other authors.

⁵⁶ For U.S. textbooks see, e.g.: Coppens, *Systematic Study* 2-3; Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 63-66, 172-73; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:193-99; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 40-42; Glenn, *Apologetic* 131-136; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 27-43; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 42-56; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 81-90; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 49-62; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 164-69; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 34; Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetic* 168-70. For the Belgian textbooks see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 132-38; Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne* 91-93; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 57-62; Lambrecht, *Het roomsch katholiek geloof* 20-21; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 14, 94-95; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 21-23; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne* 43-44, 51-68; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationelle* 3, 87-94; Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 90-91.

gion does not exclude natural religion but confirms and corroborates it.⁵⁷ From the viewpoint of the textbook authors, this “supernatural” or “revealed” religion was deemed necessary for two reasons. (1) Supernatural revelation was *morally* or *relatively* necessary to make natural religion known to humanity. For, while in theory individuals are capable in ideal circumstances of arriving at natural religion and the knowledge of God (the existence of God, moral law, etc.), in practice, knowledge of this natural religion is not within the grasp of most. (2) Supernatural revelation in its turn was *absolutely* necessary because human reason cannot grasp the complete or “full” truth concerning God and humanity.⁵⁸

Anyone familiar with Thomas Aquinas immediately sees his Scholastic terminology emerging once again. The diptych of “natural” and “supernatural” or “revealed” religion, whereby the latter completes and fulfils the former, is based on Thomist principles. Nevertheless, the great difference between the textbook authors and Aquinas is that the apologetic and philosophical systems that the former develop are much less larded with theoretical and practical speculations. Nonetheless, to demonstrate the great dependence of textbook authors on Aquinas on these points, I will cite a few extracts from Aquinas’s *Summa contra gentiles*:

Since, therefore, there exists a twofold truth concerning the divine being, one to which the inquiry of the reason can reach, the other which surpasses the whole

⁵⁷ See Coppens, *Systematic Study* 2–3; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1: 190–93; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 31; Glenn, *Apologetic* 109–11; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 29–30; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 6, 10–11; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 25–27, 44–45; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 157–59, 164–69; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 31; and Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 167–70. For the Belgian textbooks, see: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 138; Devivier, *Cours d’apologétique chrétienne* 93; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 59–62; Lambrecht, *Het roomsch katholiek geloof* 32–34; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 95–97; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 21–23; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d’apologétique chrétienne* 57–61; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 88–91; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 90.

⁵⁸ For Belgian textbooks, see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 136, 138; Devivier, *Cours d’apologétique chrétienne* 96–98; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 62–64; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 97–99; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 22–23; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d’apologétique chrétienne* 61–68; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 88–89, 99–104; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 102–6. For the U.S. counterparts, see, e.g.: Coppens, *Systematic Study* 3–4, 167–174; Delloe, *Solution of the Great Problem* 172–81; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:194–99; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 37–39; Glenn, *Apologetic* 137–140; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 27–28, 30, 37, 44, 47–60; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 45–47, 77–93; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 82; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 54–58; Schmidt & Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 159–162, 165–166; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 33–34; and Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 170–72.

ability of the human reason, it is fitting that both of these truths be proposed to man divinely for belief. . . .

Yet, if this truth were left solely as a matter of inquiry for the human reason, three awkward consequences would follow. The first is that few men would possess the knowledge of God. For there are three reasons why most men are cut off from the fruit of diligent inquiry which is the discovery of truth. Some do not have the physical disposition for such work. . . .

Others are cut off from pursuing this truth by the necessities imposed upon them by their daily lives. . . .

Finally, there are some who are cut off by indolence. . . .

The second awkward effect is that those who would come to discover the above-mentioned truth would barely reach it after a great deal of time. . . .

There is the profundity of this truth, which the human intellect is made capable of grasping by natural inquiry only after a long training. . . .

The third awkward effect is this. The investigation of the human reason for the most part has falsity present within it. . . .

That is why it was necessary for the human mind to be called to something higher than the human reason here and now can reach.⁵⁹

From the textbooks and Aquinas, two further important universal principles concerning God's salvific economy can be distilled: (1) The whole human race needs a divine revelation that opens the way to eternal salvation, and (2) God makes Godself known without exception to all humans from the beginning to the end of the world. The textbook authors, both Belgian and U.S., without exception gradually bring together all these universal principles into another fundamental concept, the so-called "step-by-step character" of divine revelation: First came the primitive or "patriarchal" revelation of God to the first humans. This revelation was passed on through the centuries up to Moses. The Mosaic revelation then propagate all the divine revelations from Moses and the prophets after him to humanity in general and to the Hebrew people in particular. Finally comes the last and definitive revelation in and by Jesus Christ that completes and crowns all previous revelation⁶⁰—a notion exemplified in this citation from Walshe:

⁵⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, Ind. University of Notre Dame, 1975) 1.4–5. See also *ST* 1, q. 91, a. 4.

⁶⁰ For the Belgian textbooks, see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 164–65; Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne* 99–102; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 58–59; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 138–140; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 33–34; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne* 86, 121–89; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 126–130; Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 25, 46–70; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 89–90, 112, 139–140. For the U.S. counterparts see, e.g.: Coppens, *Systematic Study*

The first historical phase of Divine Revelation was that known as Primitive and Patriarchal—a revelation made by God to our first parents, and lasting until the day of Moses. During this phase belief was required in certain dogmas, and in the binding force of certain precepts . . . The Mosaic revelation included a more explicit statement of the dogmas already revealed, the Decalogue constituting a résumé of the precepts of natural law (the determination of the Sabbath excepted), the development of government into a theocratic form, and certain liturgical and ritual observances. It was intended to prepare the chosen people for the final revelation to be given by the Messiah, at whose coming the positive precepts of the Mosaic Law would no longer bind. The Christian religion secures the full and clear development both of the dogmas and precepts of natural law, the revelation of supernatural truths and precepts, and the giving of supernatural aids to help men to reach the Christian standards of virtuous living.⁶¹

Aquinas's doctrine is captured in the following citations:

Consequently the law that brings all to salvation could not be given until after the coming of Christ. But before his coming it was necessary to give to the people, of whom Christ was to be born, a law containing certain rudiments of righteousness unto salvation, in order to prepare them to receive Him.

The New Law is compared to the old as the perfect to the imperfect. Now everything perfect fulfils that which is lacking in the imperfect. And accordingly the New Law fulfils the Old by supplying that which was lacking in the Old Law. Now two things of every law is to make men righteous and virtuous.⁶²

In the light of the problematic of this study, the following must be remarked. When one surveys the textbooks used in U.S. and Belgian instruction concerning the conception of a tripartite and successive divine revelation combined with a manifest affirmation of the superiority of Christian revelation—because of its definitive character—then one can only touch upon a sort of relativity and mutability in divine revelation, since the final revelation abolished or improved some things (for instance, the ritual prescriptions of the Mosaic Law). Even where the authors do not explicitly treat this theme, they must still be scrutinized to get a complete picture of their theology of non-Christian religions, because they at least implicitly treat Aquinas's classic distinction regarding mutability in divine revelation. Aquinas distinguishes between the positive and natural aspects of divine revelation and emphasizes continuity rather than discon-

10–17; Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 64, 208–13; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:199–204; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 47, 96–97; Glenn, *Apologetic* 160ff., 175ff.; Hettinger *Revealed Religion* 149–54; Jouin, *Evidences of Religion* 94–97, 103, 154–61; Koch, *Manual of Apologetics* 89–148; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 71–72; Schmidt and Perkins, *Faith and Reason* 217; Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 78; and Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 186–87.

⁶¹ Walshe, *Principles of Christian Apologetics* 186–87.

⁶² *ST* 2–1, q. 91, a. 5; q. 107, a. 2; see also q. 99, a. 3.

tinuity in the three phases of divine revelation.⁶³ The natural aspect, which is more important, is immutable because it contains the immutable principles of natural law; the positive aspect can change because its purpose was merely to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah. For Aquinas, this distinction was evident from studying the ritual prescriptions of the Torah. These certainly proceeded from a divine inspiration and were intended to prepare for the coming of Jesus (prefiguration). Once Jesus had come to earth and proclaimed the gospel, these customs were useless and removed in the Christian religion.⁶⁴

All these universal premises of the theology-of-religions paradigm that flourished in the textbooks are defended with even more force in the “great” ambient Catholic apologetic literature (and, in condensed form, in the “smaller” ambient apologetic literature from Belgium and the United States) in the period under consideration. Space allows only a few citations of the most relevant parallels between the textbooks and the “great” apologetic works,⁶⁵ but a rigorous comparison leads to two conclusions: (1) The “great” apologetic literature often appeals, with much more emphasis than the textbooks, to comparative religion. To demonstrate that there has been a primitive revelation with, for instance, monotheism as its hallmark, Brunsmann quotes various famous anthropologists such as Wilhelm Schmidt, Max Müller, and Andrew Lang, whose research led to the conviction that the oldest religious forms about which one can draw reasonable conclusions were monotheistic.⁶⁶ Brunsmann then contrasts this conviction with the view deriving from *Religionsgeschichte* and anthropological studies—like those of Emile Durkheim, and James Frazer, who write that monotheism only belongs in a later and more evolved stage of human intellectual development.⁶⁷

⁶³ See, e.g., *ST* 2–1, q. 97, a. 1.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., *ST* 2–1, q. 103, a. 3.

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Schanz, *Christian Apology* 1:66–411.

⁶⁶ See, e.g., Wilhelm Schmidt, *Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, trans. Herbert Jennings Rose (New York: Dial, 1931); Friedrich Max Müller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as Illustrated by the Religions of India* (London: Longmans, Green, 1898); Andrew Lang, *The Making of Religion* (London: Longmans, Green, 1900²).

⁶⁷ See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain (New York: Free Press, 1966); James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore* (New York: Avenel, 1981) (orig. title: *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*). Apologetes of this period and later expatiate on the origin and evolution of the so-called pagan or “primitive” religions, among which they include Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shintoism. They argue that the original form of religion was monotheism, because humanity after the Fall received “primitive revelation” from God, which was naturally monotheistic. But original sin weakened reason, so that people were little by little led away from monotheism into a more or less polytheistic “primitive

If one further compares the textbooks with the “great” apologetic literature in the light of their underlying theology of religions, one can tease out the logical conclusions that the authors of the “great” tracts draw from their principles. These conclusions derive from the fact that the authors, despite their apologetic perspective, stressed what unites people concerning religion and humanity rather than what divides them. Based on a universalistic view of religion, Schanz, for example, preached a Christian “humanism” that radically rejects every racial, national, and status-bound distinction:

Our theme is humanity; the human race is our study. As the vast universe . . . is one in work and design, and came forth from the hand of the one all-wise Creator, so the various races of men that have lived in different ages and climes form one great family that sprang from the same ancestors, from one stock. The distinction between Greeks and Romans, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and freemen has been obliterated, for all men are brothers. Christianity was the first to beat down the hateful wall of separation [between races] that egotism and pride had set up.⁶⁸

ANTIRELATIVISM

If all humans are fundamentally equal because they have the same origin and final goal, if God lies at the basis of every religion, if all religions are aimed at the redemption of humans, and if God has provided all humans, without exception, the necessary means for salvation, does this mean that all religions are equal? The Belgian and the U.S. textbook apologists answer this question with a categorical no. Without exception, they vehemently oppose religious indifferentism and/or the equating of religions.⁶⁹

religion” that featured magic, fetishism, and animism. This model for the origin of “pagan” or “primitive” religions, which also had biblical warrant, was vigorously disputed by proponents of the so-called “evolutionary” current within anthropology and comparative religion. They argued that animism and polytheism belonged to a preliminary stage out of which monotheism developed. Apologists rejoined by appealing to other anthropological studies that seemed to show that almost every one of the “primitive” religions harbored some form of monotheism, which therefore belied the position that monotheism developed out of animistic or polytheistic religions. Apologetic textbooks appealed to these same principles. Madgett, for example, writes: “With the advent of more objective factual study of primitives, it became more and more evident that parallel to, and in many cases dominating these degraded forms of religion, there was a very distinct and high form of monotheism. Amongst others, the Pygmy tribes of Africa . . . all possess knowledge of, and all worship a Supreme Being in a genuinely monotheistic religion. The almost universal cult of superior beings along with the Supreme Being in no wise diminishes the evidence of the true monotheism, as can be discovered from the names and attributes reserved for the Supreme Being alone” (*Christian Origins* 27–28).

⁶⁸ Schanz, *Christian Apology* 1:396.

⁶⁹ These same principles are embedded in other English-language religion text-

Underlying this stance is an antirealist epistemology that sees truth as one and indivisible and espouses the principle that something cannot be both true and false at the same time.⁷⁰ A comparison of the various “pagan” religions, the apologists contend, demonstrates that the religions contradict one other on various points, and even reciprocally exclude each other. The logical consequence of this must be that only one religion is true and all the others are “false.” In the same breath, apologists conclude that Christianity is the only religion that possesses the “fullness” of the truth and that it is therefore superior to all other religions. The same concept of truth is present in other apologetic literature of that time.⁷¹ It is hard to escape the conclusion that this concept stems from Aquinas’s *Summa contra gentiles*, which affirms that truth is one and indivisible, that the fullness of truth is present only in the Catholic faith, and that whatever contradicts it is false.⁷²

These hard and dichotomizing judgments probably led many authors in the past to conclude that the Catholic Church prior to Vatican II behaved

books designed for lower and secondary education, home schooling, interested laity, etc. See, e.g., Martin Jerome Scott, *Things Catholics Are Asked About* (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1927) 46–50.

⁷⁰ For the Belgian textbooks see, e.g.: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 56–58, 91; Devivier, *Cours d’apologétique chrétienne* 386–87; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 14; Lambrecht, *Het roomsch katholiek geloof* 19–20; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 91, 122, 287; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 78; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d’apologétique chrétienne* 162; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 319–20; Van Brabant and Stock, *Christus en Zijn Kerk* 22–23, 129, 263; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 108. For the U.S. textbooks see, e.g.: Delloue, *Solution of the Great Problem* 59; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:521; Glenn, *Apologetic* 250–51; Hettinger, *Revealed Religion* 171–80; and Madgett, *Christian Origins* 39–44.

⁷¹ See, e.g. the conflation of sermons quoted by Halpin: “(a) There are religions, and their dogmas are contradictory to truth and their ethics an abomination. They propose what is untrue for belief and for practice what is wrong. One religion, therefore, is not as good as another, because there are some religions which are bad. (b) In the variety of creeds that exists, some contradict each other totally, and all contradict each other in part. Is it logical to admit both the yea and nay of doctrine? (c) God is the founder of religion. Is He equally the founder of contradiction and falsehood? Are all religions equally acceptable to Him? (c) Christ established one religion. He said to His apostles, teach all nations to ‘observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’ Did He teach His disciples all the errors, all the heresies all the schisms with which the religions of the world have been inundated? Did He establish one or many religions? If many, well might we exclaim, what was the use of his claim? What was the use of his preaching? What has He brought to mankind? Heresy, schism, error did not need a divine propagator. These things are human creations. Truth is one; God is one; Christ is one; religion is one” (Halpin, *Apologetica* 23).

⁷² See, e.g., *SCG* 1.1–2.

exclusivistically in relation to other religions. If one based this conclusion only on the passages cited above, it might seem valid. However, if one looks at the context of these passages, a more nuanced interpretation emerges; most authors tried to clarify for students what precisely such expressions mean, explaining, for example, that arrogating the term “true religion” to Christianity does not mean that no truth is to be found in other religions, nor that everything associated with them would be objectionable. On the contrary, many authors affirm that much truth is to be found in the non-Christian religions simply because they, to a greater or lesser degree, reflect the primitive revelation. But due to original sin, this revelation became at least partially corrupted by the pride of humans who fancied themselves able to fashion their understanding of God and religion according to their own insights. Thus, all sorts of deviations from the true religion—Christianity—entered into the various non-Christian religions. And precisely these deviations, despite some similarities with Christianity, ensured that the non-Christian religions could not convincingly claim the status of “true” religion. In other words, the assertion that Christianity is the only true religion simply means that it incorporates, in an inimitable way, all the good present in the other religions, while excluding all that is false.⁷³ Other religions are therefore not “totally” false.

Identical positions were defended in the “great” apologetic treatises,⁷⁴ just as in the briefer, more popular apologetic publications—Cavanaugh’s work, for example:

Any Christian, however, who believes that the Son of God became man should not say that one religion is as good as another. . . . Now if all religions were equally good, there would have been no need of another religion. . . . Often secularists say that all religions are equally good and helpful because all have the same purpose. However, the fact that they have all the same end does not make them equal for they may not attain it. . . . Now the purpose of the Christian religion is to teach the complete and unadulterated doctrine of Christ. . . . Since they [other religions] teach different doctrines, they obviously cannot be equally good and helpful. . . . Because Catholics are certain that their Church is the one true Church, they do not necessarily think that all non-Catholics are going to hell. Ordinarily, Catholics are willing to believe in the good faith of those outside the Church and consequently to hope for their salvation.⁷⁵

The doctrine of creation and salvation described above—and found in Thomas and Thomistic textbooks—suggests two more reasons for supposing the presence of truth and goodness in other religions: (1) These textbooks defend the notion that all religions have the same origin; that is, they

⁷³ See, e.g.: Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne* 244; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 1:521.

⁷⁴ See e.g., Hettinger, *Apologie du christianisme* 5:341–43, 405–6.

⁷⁵ Cavanaugh, *Evidence for our Faith* 180–81.

in some sense arise out of the natural desire to find answers for all existential questions—or, in Aquinas's language, all religions cultivate in humans the natural desire for their origin. If all humans have the same natural desires, then it is only logical that the answers that various religions have formulated down through the ages display convergence alongside of divergence. Interestingly, Aquinas implies identical principles in connection with other topics as, for example, when he posits in his *Summa contra gentiles* 1.2 that one must convince the Muslims and the pagans of their faults by appealing to universal reason (or to natural religion) because they do not believe in the Christian Scriptures. (2) Textbook authors, the "great" apologists, and Aquinas, as noted, admit that because the whole of humankind, according to God's salvific will, has from the beginning received the primitive revelation—even though in time it became corrupted—it is only reasonable to suppose that non-Christian religions bear many similarities to Christianity, along with differences.

The nearly purely theological and abstract assumption that similarities and agreements among the various religions must be assumed does not prevent the authors of the Belgian and the U.S. textbooks from stressing that the Christian—and more specifically the Catholic—religion is the only true religion willed by God, and that therefore it is superior to all other religions. Even to summarize the lengthy digressions wherein textbook authors try to demonstrate the truth of Christianity on the basis of "intra-Christian" criteria would itself require a separate study. For my limited purposes here, I refer to the extensive comparisons authors make between Christianity and other religions—Judaism, "paganism," Islam, and the "Asiatic" religions—to display the superiority of Christianity. It is particularly revealing, for the initial hypotheses of my study, to establish that the textbook authors, although wanting to emphasize the negative criteria for apologetic reasons, nevertheless keep in view the positive aspects of the other religions. The same goes for the great apologetic tracts.⁷⁶ It appears from this that they do not see Christianity and non-Christian religions as simply dichotomous. Rather, they try to compare the advantages and disadvantages of Christianity vis-à-vis other religions, even if the authors' focus is clearly on the differences from Christianity.

Three conclusions emerge from extensive comparisons between Christianity and other religions as treated in the textbooks and the "great" apologetic tracts: (1) All non-Christian religions, despite their imperfections, are to some degree bearers of truth. (2) These religions have access to the truth to the extent that they are compatible with the one, true

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Brunsmann, *Handbook of Fundamental Theology* 205–8; Hettinger, *Apologie du christianisme* 376–78; Schanz, *Christian Apology* 1:25–41.

religion, namely Christianity, and, more specifically, Catholicism. The norm and constitutive element of this truth is the person and message of Jesus Christ and Christian doctrine and morality as found in sacred Scripture and church tradition. (3) The non-Christian religions are not all of equal esteem. They can be ranked according to the proximity of their expressions to Christian monotheism.

What about the similarities between the textbooks and great apologetic tracts, on the one hand, and Aquinas, on the other hand? First of all, Aquinas did not provide systematic and extensive overviews of non-Christian religions in order to establish Christianity's superiority. Second, except for Judaism, certain forms of "paganism," and Islam, Aquinas did not allude to the many other non-Christian religions mentioned in the apologetic tracts of the 19th and early 20th centuries (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and the American Indian religions) for the simple reason that these religions were in most cases completely unknown to him and other scholars of that time. Nor, of course, was Aquinas acquainted with *Religionsgeschichte* and comparative religions, which emerged only in the 19th and early 20th centuries. My point here is that, when one abstracts from these readings of non-Christian religions in Aquinas, one finds in his works the same three conclusions enumerated above. Many passages in Aquinas's works implicitly or explicitly refer to these conclusions. Here I can cite only a few texts. Regarding conclusion no. 1: "Because the state of the New Law succeeded the state of the Old Law, as a more perfect law a less perfect one. Now no state of the present life can be more perfect than the state of the New Law: since nothing can approach nearer to the last end than that which is the immediate cause of our being brought to the last end. . . . Therefore no state of the present life can be more perfect than that of the New Law, since the nearer a thing is to the last end the more perfect it is." And regarding conclusions nos. 2 and 3: "The second thing to be considered in unbelief is the corruption of matters of faith. In this respect, since heathens err on more points than Jews, and these in more points than heretics, the unbelief of heathens is more grievous than the unbelief of the Jews, and that of the Jews than that of heretics, except in such cases as that of the Manichees, who, in matters of faith, err more than heathens do."⁷⁷

"EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS"

Ecclesiocentrism is connected with Christocentrism at the level of truth and salvation. The textbook authors affirm, on the basis of scriptural texts (especially Mk 16:15–16; Lk 10:16) and "reasonable" arguments, that the

⁷⁷ *ST* 2–1, q. 106, a. 4; 2–2, q. 10, a. 6.

profession of Jesus Christ and the church as his mystical body is necessary for salvation (“extra ecclesiam nulla salus”). If one abstracts from the different formulations of this claim, their argumentation runs as follows: The Scriptures show that Jesus condemns those who do not believe in him and who in no sense belong his Church. Since, moreover, the truth is one, indivisible, and exclusive, the consequence can only be that, to be saved, one must belong to the Catholic Church.

Aquinas defends the same principles concerning the necessity of membership in the church, as the following citations from his *Summa theologiae* indicate:

It would seem that it is not necessary for the salvation of all that they should believe explicitly in the mystery of Christ. . . . Many gentiles obtained salvation through the ministry of the angels, as Dionysius states (*Coel. Hier.* ix). Now it would seem that the gentiles had neither explicit nor implicit faith in Christ, since they received no revelation. Therefore it seems that it was not necessary for the salvation of all to believe explicitly in the mystery of Christ. On the contrary, Augustine says (*De Corr. et Gratia* VII, *Ep.* cxc): “Our faith is sound if we believe that no man, old or young, is delivered from the contagion of death and the bounds of sin, except by the one Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ.”⁷⁸

A constellation of parallel rigorous and strong statements would seem to lead to the conclusion that the theology of non-Christian religions in the textbooks and in Aquinas was unambiguously exclusivist on the question of salvation. But the literary context of these statements suggests a much more nuanced meaning to “extra ecclesiam nulla salus.” To put this adage in a correct perspective, I begin with the apologetic textbooks. The vast majority of them tone down the strictness and harshness of this aphorism through a threefold distinction. First, between the body and the soul of the Church: The body of the Church is the visible community of believers who profess the same faith and take part in the same sacraments. The soul of the Church is sanctifying grace. This distinction between the Church’s body and the soul is coupled to a second distinction, namely, between the necessity of means and the necessity of precepts. The textbook authors assert that membership in the soul of the Church pertains to the “necessity of means” and allows no exception. Membership in the body of the Church, however, pertains to the “necessity of precepts,” which allows exceptions.⁷⁹ The third distinction concerns the difference between the visible or real membership in the Church and the invisible membership or implicit desire for it. And who implicitly belongs to the Church? All people of good will

⁷⁸ *ST* 2–2, q. 2, a. 7.

⁷⁹ On “necessity of means” and “necessity of precepts,” see *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1917 ed.), s.v. “Necessity,” <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10733a.htm> (accessed May 2, 2007).

who, without ever having expressed their desire in words or without being conscious of it, desire to conform their will with God's, a desire made preeminently visible in concrete acts of charity. These three distinctions, the textbooks say, complement one other, such that one can hold that, to be saved, one must at least implicitly belong either to the body of the Church or to the "soul of the Church."⁸⁰ Membership in the soul of the Church is of "absolute necessity," whereas membership in the body of the Church belongs to the necessity of means. For those who, through inculpable ignorance, do not know the Church or do not yet belong to it (e.g., catechumens), the material belonging to the body of the Church pertains only to the necessity of precepts. For the textbook authors, such a resolution is the only way to square the goodness and justice of God, who wants all persons to be saved, with the particularity and unicity of Jesus Christ, who alone mediates salvation.⁸¹

Does one find these same ideas in Aquinas? Out of respect for objectivity, it must be said that the positions of the textbook authors, just like the terminology, clearly go back to Aquinas, but the corresponding ideas in

⁸⁰ On this concept, see *ibid.*, s.v. "The Church," part 6, "The Necessary Means of Salvation," <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm> (accessed May 2, 2007).

⁸¹ For the Belgian textbooks see: Berquin, *Geloofsrechtvaardiging* 223–25; Devivier, *Cours d'apologétique chrétienne* 411–18; Frutsaert, *Handboekje voor geloofsverdediging* 113; Legrand, *Apologétique chrétienne* 233–35; Minnaers, *Beknopte geloofsverdediging* 78–79, 90; Rutten, *Cours élémentaire d'apologétique chrétienne* 212–13, 252–53; Valvekens, *Démonstration rationnelle* 251–53; and Verhelst, *Cours de religion apologétique* 106, 177–78, 199. For the U.S. textbooks see: Coppens, *Systematic Study* 224–26; Devivier/Sasia, *Christian Apologetics* 2:236–46; Fichter, *Textbook in Apologetics* 135–37; Glenn, *Apologetic* 280–85; Madgett, *Christian Origins* 178–80; and Sheenan, *Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine* 84–85, 134–35. Only Koch (*Manual of Apologetics* 202–3) baldly declares that the Catholic faith and membership in the Catholic Church are absolutely necessary for salvation. Perhaps because Koch wanted to keep his work brief he did not elaborate this as did other authors. Two U.S. textbooks (Schmidt and Perkins, and Walshe) ignore this theme altogether. For parallel conceptions in the lesson plans and directions for teachers see, e.g., John Montgomery Cooper, *Religion Outlines for Colleges*, vol. 2, *The Motives and Means of Catholic Life* (Washington: Catholic Education, 1926) 152–53. One also finds these views in abbreviated form in catechisms and other more popular apologetic treatises that address the main tenets of the Catholic faith. Thus, Cardinal Gibbons writes: "I said that Regeneration [baptism] is necessary for all. But it is important to observe that if a man is heartily sorry for his sins, and loves God with his whole heart, and desires to comply with all the divine ordinances, including Baptism, but has no opportunity of receiving it, or is not sufficiently instructed as to its necessity, God, in this case, accepts the will for the deed. Should this man die in these dispositions, he is saved by the baptism of desire" (*Faith of Our Fathers* 268). Compare, e.g.: Aloysius Roche, *Apologetics for the Pulpit*, vol. 3, *Sacraments, Sacramentals* (London: Burns, Oates, & Washbourne, 1937) 11–12.

Aquinas are spread throughout his work.⁸² Below are a few extracts that well represent what Aquinas defends on this score:

Whether man is held to believe anything explicitly . . . I answer that the precepts of the law which man is bound to fulfil concern acts of virtue, which are the means of attaining salvation. Now an act of virtue . . . depends on the relation of the habit to its subject. Again two things may be considered in the object of any virtue, namely, that which is the proper and direct object of that virtue, and that which is accidental and consequent to the object properly so called. . . . Accordingly, just as a virtuous act is required for the fulfilment of a precept, so it is necessary that the virtuous act should terminate in its proper and direct object; but, on the other hand, the fulfilment of the precept does not require that a virtuous act should terminate in those things which have an accidental or secondary relation to the proper and direct object of that virtue, except in certain places and at certain times. We must, therefore, say that the direct object of faith is that whereby man is made one of the Blessed . . . while the indirect and secondary object comprises all things delivered by God to us in divinely revealed scripture. . . . Therefore, as regards the primary points of articles of faith, man is bound to believe them, just as he is bound to have faith; but as to other points of faith, man is not bound to believe them explicitly, but only implicitly, or to be ready to believe them, in so far as he is prepared to believe whatever is contained in the Divine Scriptures. Then alone is he bound to believe such things explicitly, when it is clear to him that they are contained in the doctrine of faith.⁸³

The object of faith includes, properly and directly, that thing through which man obtains beatitude. Now the mystery of Christ's incarnation and passion is the way by which men obtain beatitude. . . . Therefore belief of *some kind* in the mystery of Christ's Incarnation was necessary at all times and for all persons, but this belief differed according to differences of times and persons. . . . If, however, some were saved without receiving any revelation, they were not saved without faith in a Mediator for, though they did not believe in Him explicitly, they did, nevertheless, have implicit faith through believing in Divine providence, since they believed that God would deliver mankind in whatever way was pleasing to Him.⁸⁴

⁸² Although Aquinas is generally clear on the meaning of "extra ecclesiam nulla salus," he is not clear what the final lot will be for non-Christians (except for Jews who lived before the time of Jesus) who, through no fault of their own, have never professed Christianity. Does a fate await them similar to that of innocent children who die unbaptized—a happy condition that does not, however, include the beatific vision? The closest Aquinas comes to answering this question is this: "Wherefore no further punishment is due to him, besides the privation of that end to which the gift withdrawn destined him, which gift human nature is unable of itself to obtain. Now this is the divine vision; and consequently the loss of this vision is the proper and only punishment of original sin after death: because, if any other sensible punishment were inflicted after death for original sin, a man would be punished out of proportion to his guilt. . . . Those who are under sentence for original sin will suffer no loss whatever in other kinds of perfection and goodness which are consequent upon human nature by virtue of its principles") (*ST* 3, Suppl., App., q. 1, a. 1).

⁸³ *ST* 2–2, q. 2, a. 5.

⁸⁴ *ST* 2–2, q. 2, a. 7, emphasis added.

Things that are necessary for salvation come under the precepts of Divine law. Now since confession of faith is something affirmative, it can only fall under an affirmative precept. Hence its necessity for salvation depends on how it falls under an affirmative precept of Divine law. Now affirmative precepts . . . do not bind for always, although they are always binding; but they bind as to place and time according to other due circumstances, in respect of which human acts have to be regulated in order to be acts of virtue. Thus then it is not necessary for salvation to confess one's faith at all times and in all places.⁸⁵

Brunsmann's articulation of the meaning of "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" is representative of that found in "official" apologetic works. He writes:

This frequently misunderstood axiom does not mean that every member of the Catholic Church is sure to be saved. Nor does it signify that all those who have never been received into the external communion of the Church are to be regarded as lost. Its true meaning, as explained by Fathers and councils, is that no one who neglects to join the [Catholic] Church through his own fault, can save his soul. The limiting clause "through his own fault", is frequently omitted because it is regarded as a matter of course that none except the guilty will be damned. . . . If, abstracting from the historical significance of this axiom, one wishes to see therein a formulation of the Catholic doctrine of the necessity of the Church, one may without difficulty interpret it as follows: No man can be saved unless he somehow belongs to the Church of Christ, that is, unless he is at least implicitly, i.e., by desire, united with her external organism.⁸⁶

This quotation suggests not only how complex the problem of salvation is in the theology of non-Christian religions for textbook authors, the "great" apologists, and Aquinas, but also that their theology is inclusivist. The essential conclusion of their doctrine is that, to be saved, one need not explicitly know the truth; nor does knowledge of the truth guarantee salvation. In other words, to be saved, one does not always have to belong to the visible Catholic Church. The divine plan of salvation reaches all people of good will who live outside of the visible borders of the Church, non-Christians as well as Christians. To be underscored, however, are two points: (1) In the textbooks, ambient apologetic literature, and the writings of Aquinas, the inclusivist option that under certain conditions humans can be saved without explicitly belonging to the Church is only briefly mentioned and is not intended to diminish the need for Christian mission; position within the whole of theology; and (2) the inclusivist option must not enfeeble Catholics' response to the mandate to proclaim and spread Christianity, and in particular, its Catholic form. The truth behind this mandate is that whoever is saved, Christian or not, is always saved through Jesus Christ, the one and only mediator of truth and salvation.

⁸⁵ *ST* 2-2, q. 3, a. 2.

⁸⁶ Brunsmann, *Handbook of Fundamental Theology* 3:328-29. For a more detailed treatment, see: Schanz, *Christian Apology* 1:267-304. For an extended commentary, see Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. Justin McCann (New York: Macmillan, 1946) 183-202.

CONCLUSION

I can now draw some inferences concerning the two hypotheses that form this study's point of departure. Concerning the first hypothesis, I conclude that theology of religions of U.S. and Belgian apologetic textbooks used in the second half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries (which followed "great" or official apologists of that time) was not exclusivist but inclusivist. The basic pattern from which their entire argument is cut runs as follows: while truth and salvation are certainly available within Christianity and the Catholic Church, they are also, in varying degrees, available in non-Christian religions. The mediator, the norm and/or the constitutive element of this truth and salvation is, however, always Jesus Christ. In this sense, any truth and salvation in other religions is fragmentary and partial. My second hypothesis is also corroborated: all principles of the Christian theology of non-Christian religions, without exception, either explicitly or implicitly derive from Thomas Aquinas. This is not to say that the more recent apologists simply embrace Aquinas's views uncritically. To the contrary, their neo-Thomist approach consists precisely in their transference of Aquinas's principles to their arguments, adopting and reframing his principles in the light of what the theology and comparative religion of the 19th and early 20th centuries brought forth. The treatment of the "Asiatic" religions best exemplifies the neo-Thomist adaptation, because Aquinas was unacquainted with them. The field of comparative religion brought into view an enormous amount of data that threatened the notion of the absoluteness of Christianity. The Catholic apologists simply accommodated these data to Aquinas's principles and so arrived at his interreligious positions virtually unchanged. For these apologists, Aquinas's theology was a dynamic and creative resource capable of adaptation to ever new data from changing times and circumstances.

From these two confirmed theses emerges a final conclusion: the principles of the theology of non-Christian religions taught by Vatican II constitute absolutely no Copernican revolution from the earlier tradition, at least not at the level of doctrinal principles.⁸⁷ By which I do not mean to say that absolutely nothing has changed with Vatican II or that absolutely nothing new has emerged concerning the approach to non-Christian religions in Catholic education in Belgium and the United States and/or in Catholic theology generally. Indeed, one can speak of a new climate arising out of the council.⁸⁸ Instead of apologetically and defensively emphasizing the differences between Christianity and non-Christian religions, the Second Vatican Council encouraged interreligious dialogue and the exploration of the similarities between Christianity and other religions.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., *Nostra aetate*.

⁸⁸ On this point, see John W. O'Malley, S.J., "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 3–33.