

JUAN DE VALDES

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IN THE THEOLOGY

OF

JUAN DE VALDES (1500?-1541)

By

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The Doctrine of Justification in the  
Theology of Juan de Valdes (1500?-1541)

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SCOPE and CONTENTS:

A historico-doctrinal analysis of the doctrine of justification in the theology of Juan de Valdes, a Spanish Reformer of the sixteenth Century. The present study is an attempt to investigate the rich historical and cultural background out of which Valdes came and to delineate the various phases in the development and structure of his thought on justification.

In the lengthy biographical account of valdes, we shall indicate the highlights of his early life in Spain, his education at the University of Alcala and his literary activity during the last years of his life. To locate valdesian thinking within the stream of both Protestant and Catholic traditions, we shall present a comparative analysis of his doctrine in relation to that of Luther, calvin and the Council of Trent. In conclusion, personal reflections on the major points discussed will be given.

To my wife MILA and to my son DINNY  
this work  
is lovingly dedicated

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# C H A P T E R   O N E

## INTRODUCTION

### SIXTEENTH-CENTURY REFORMATION.

It has been said often enough that the sixteenth century was a period of religious ferment, a revival of religion . . . and quite justifiably so. This era was marked by a number of significant upheavals that it is frequently regarded as "an age of instability, of division and dissolution, the age when Europe saw the end of a united Christendom".<sup>1</sup>

Various individuals from diverse places have taken to the immense task of recovering, purifying and restating the principal tenets of the Christian religion, and they all sought after "a type of Christianity winnowed clean from the husks of superstition and tradition and grounded on ethical and spiritual reality".<sup>2</sup> These men developed reform programmes often in conflict with one another, and not too infrequently religious changes were made which were often accompanied by strife and even bloodshed. It is a long-standing tragedy of history that the very as-

pects of truth which they all strove after were lost in the din and confusion of party warfare.

Religious revolution, religious revival - these facts are undeniably reflected in the three main currents of reform movements that swept almost all of Continental Europe. The enigmatic figures of this period of religious thought fall into one of these three reform movements, namely, the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Reformation and the Radical Reformation. These were the three main highways of thought and action that made the sixteenth-century religious upheaval so complex yet so significant.

The main strand of the reform movement which won its way to wider favor was the Protestant reformation initiated by Martin Luther. The doctrines of Luther and of the other Protestant reformers spread rather rapidly throughout Europe, an occurrence indicative of a general clamor for immediate change, and "a strong dissatisfaction with the secularized Church for not adequately serving the religious needs of the people".<sup>3</sup> The chief reformers assiduously labored for a revival of the evangelical character of the early Church and applied it to the circumstances of their own day.



The reform of the Catholic Church followed this period of decline and division in medieval Catholicism. Far from being purely a movement directed against Protestantism, it was a positive response and a defensive reaction to the threatening challenge posed by Luther and the other reformers. It was first and foremost a spiritual and deeply religious movement which aimed at the revival of the best features of medieval Christianity.

The Catholic work of reform had for its pivotal point of reference the Council of Trent which was first convened in 1545. Without exaggeration, it can be said that foremost in the minds of the Council Fathers was the serious intent to formulate a cohesive answer to reformation doctrines in clear opposition with their own, and, at the same time, delineating the position of the Church with respect to a point of doctrine so significantly divisive in the whole history of the Church.

Parallel with the main current of the Protestant reformation, various types of religious movements appeared and continued to manifest themselves throughout the entire reformation era. One movement has been referred to in a variety of ways, and George H. Williams prefers to call it, "The Radical Reformation" as an over-all designation for the three subsidiary groups of individuals within the

same movement. These are the Anabaptists, the Spiritualists and the Evangelical Rationalists.<sup>4</sup> We subscribe to William's more recent usage as an appropriate term to designate the common attempt on the part of these writers "in cutting back to the root and in freeing Church and creed of what they regarded as the suffocating growth of ecclesiastical tradition and magisterial prerogative".<sup>5</sup>

The representatives of this third reforming force made very serious and impressive attempts to give the reformation a totally different course from the one it finally took in history. Such attempts, however, were eventually stifled and defeated by the tremendous sweep of the main reforming currents.

The men who initiated and guided this significant undertaking felt themselves commissioned to challenge the theological system of the chief reformers. They were men of "intense religious faith, of marked mystical type, characterized by interior depth of experience, but at the same time they were men of scholarship, breadth and balance".<sup>6</sup> Their sole mission was the propagation of a message, a body of spiritual truths, and the preaching of religious ideals. They were not satisfied with a programme which limited itself to a correction of abuses, an abolition of medieval superstition, and a shift of external au-

thority. They were determined to go the whole way to a religion of inward life and power, to a christianity whose only authority would be its dynamic and spiritual authority.

Theirs was an impressive and bold attempt, whether completely successful or not, to widen the sphere and scope of religion, "to carry it into the whole of life, to ground it in the very nature of the human spirit, and to demonstrate that to be a man, possessed of full life and complete health, is to be religious, to be spiritual".<sup>7</sup>

#### THE PLACE OF JUAN DE VALDES.

Among the highly influential proponents who contributed greatly to the impulse of an Evangelical Catholicism was Juan de Valdes, a Spanish reformer and a man of great learning. He represents the evangelical spirit of reform of Christian life through a return to the spirit of the gospel both in Spain and Italy. His life runs parallel to the profound religious transformation of these two countries traditionally least associated with the reformation, where movements of doubtful orthodoxy opened avenues for new ideas.

Juan de Valdes exerted a profound influence to, and inspired, many individuals with whom he had contact through his emphasis upon the importance of a strong spiritual relationship between finite man and Infinite God. He relentlessly aimed to present a religion of universal validity, brought about by the discovery of God in Christ as revealed in the Gospel.

To which category of radical reformers does he belong? Obviously his stress on the need of spiritual renewal would make him a spiritualist, but his insistence on the role that the gospels play in Christian life must not be lost sight of. Hence, he stands midway between the Spiritualists and the Evangelical Rationalists, and can therefore be denominated as an EVANGELICAL SPIRITUALIST. It can be argued that almost all of the reformers advocated a return to the Gospels, but Valdes did the same in a most singular manner. As such, he emphasized an inwardness of religion and advocated an "entire shift from the historical idea of the Church as an authoritative and supernatural instrument of salvation, to a Church where authority was entirely vital, ethical, spiritual, and dynamic".<sup>8</sup> Without ever denying the authority of the Roman Church, he nevertheless denounced her prevalent abusive practices of external worship. He was primarily interested in "reforming man, not the Church",<sup>9</sup> and his constant

pre-occupation was a sincere and personal search for God in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospels. Thus it can be affirmed that the religion he preached - his religion of the heart - was indeed the religion of the New Testament.

As a devotional writer, he not only imbued the receptive minds of many distinguished men and women with the knowledge of evangelical truth, but contributed materially to stimulate the zeal of others as he urged among them the cultivation of inward piety. In Naples, for instance, where he spent the last decade of his life, he successfully brought together an influential circle of zealous and devoted followers who were dedicating themselves to the propagation of a more vital religion. In the brief time that he stayed in this Neapolitan city, he had become the most constructive force for spiritual religion in Italy.

At the close of the sixteenth century, his contribution to thought and reform attitudes was known far and wide. Although since then he was practically forgotten for almost two centuries, he once again came to life "to occupy the place that belonged to him not only in the history of Spanish culture, but also in the history of that spiritual revolution called the Reformation".<sup>10</sup>

The English poet Daniel Rogers, writing an epigram on John Jewell, included Juan de Valdes among the great names of the reformation:

"The Italians will evermore assert the claims  
of the divine Martyr (Peter Martyr Vermig-  
lio).

France may extol her Calvin to the stars.  
Germany may boast and pride herself upon  
Melancthon,  
And Luther drag, in the same triumphal car  
with him:

Neither may Bonn, O Bucer, forget thine honors,  
She having, through thy name, gained the high-  
est illustration.  
May Zwinglius live for ever on Swiss lips,  
Whilst Bullinger's memory shall never die  
amongst the inhabitants of Zurich.

Alasco's fame let it be renowned through Poland:  
John Huss be celebrated through Bohemia.  
Hemming's intelligent labours, let the Danes  
acknowledge.  
May John Knox's teaching characterize all  
Scotland.  
Of Valdes, as an author, let all Spain be  
proud.

Hyperius, let Belgian verse worthily extol.  
Let every region honour the name of its own  
teacher,  
And show itself grateful to its own preceptors.  
But happy England, may she rejoice in thee,  
O Jewell,  
And laud, in one for all, thee, her own  
Teacher."

Originally written in latin verse, this epigram<sup>11</sup>  
is of historical interest for it reflects, in a way, the  
general feeling in some quarters of England at that time.  
It is also valuable for it sets Valdes within the reform-  
ation spirit and places him on par with all the leading  
reformers of Europe.

As a religious thinker, Valdes distinguished himself from the general religious currents of his time by his originality and by his stress of the practical rather than the speculative. His originality "does not consist in pretending to invent, or in having discovered, new truth. But the originality consists in his approach to truth . . . in that he places himself at the root of all being, and only in this sense he is original and radical".<sup>12</sup> This quality is made manifest in the numerous works that came out of his pen, writings which represent a good attempt at a systematic treatment of principal ideas which, on the whole, show a clear perception of the problems involved.

He was a great teacher and enunciated his teachings in terms of the time. His friends at Naples would later recall how he prepared each of them to enter upon a life centered in Christ, but always leaving room for them to make their own conclusions. His magisterial apostolate is best epitomized by the following remark from one of his disciples: "He was the skillful surgeon who carefully prepares for an operation by insulating from the diseased part every source of infection, who lightly but firmly probes the wound he makes, and when he has dealt with the trouble, he leaves the rest to nature to restore and rebuild".<sup>13</sup> With this we end our introductory remarks about our man, JUAN DE VALDES.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

The aim of our present study is to explore the theological thought of Juan de Valdes concerning justification by faith alone. This much controverted topic involving the experience of salvation in Christ was Valdes' principal theological concern. In fact, it was so central in his thought that it served as a springboard for his other religious insights. Many have found reason to admire his spiritual depth and remarkable precision in the exposition of SOLIFIDEISM, a doctrinal acceptance "deeper and more intimate, although less demonstrative than that which Luther himself enunciated to reform Europe".<sup>14</sup>

We shall also attempt to locate Valdesian thinking within the stream of reformation thought, without considering him to be either a Roman Catholic reformer or a revolutionary Protestant leader. How does his doctrine compare or contrast to that of Luther, Calvin and the Council of Trent? This question we shall try to answer as we dissect Valdes' theology.

In order to better understand Valdes, we shall give an idea of the development and structure of his thought, which, in our judgment, is the most profound source of his spiritual poise. We shall also investigate the rich historical and cultural background out of which he came.



R E F E R E N C E S

<sup>1</sup>A. G. Dickens, Reformation and Society in Sixteenth Century Europe (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966) p. 9

<sup>2</sup>Rufus M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1928) p. 74.

<sup>3</sup>Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era 1500-1650. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965) p. 1

<sup>4</sup>George H. Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers (The Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXV, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957) p. 22.

<sup>5</sup>ibid.

<sup>6</sup>R. Jones, op. cit., p. 336.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., p. xv.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., p. 1

<sup>9</sup>H. Grimm, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>10</sup>Angel M. Mergal (ed), Evangelical Catholicism as Represented by Juan de Valdes (The Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXV, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957) p. 307.

<sup>11</sup>Inserted at the end of Lawrence Humphrey's Life and Death of Jewell, published by John Day, A.D. 1573 and cited in John T. Bett's edition of valdes' Commentary upon St. Paul's I Epistle to the Church at Corinth (London: Trubner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1883).

<sup>12</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 318.

<sup>13</sup>Frederic C. Church, The Italian Reformers 1534-1564 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932) p. 50.

<sup>14</sup>Cited in Benjamin Wiffen's edition of Juan de Valdes' Alfabeto Cristiano (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1861) p. LII.

## C H A P T E R   T W O

### L I F E   O F   J U A N   D E   V A L D E S

#### HIS EARLY LIFE.

Juan de Valdes was born of a distinguished Castilian family around the turn of the sixteenth century at Cuenca, about ninety miles east of Madrid.<sup>1</sup> We are unfortunately left in the dark as to this period of Juan's life due largely to the lack of documents to establish accurately important details of his early life. All reference to his date of birth would remain pure guesswork until more conclusive evidence is found.<sup>2</sup>

Of the mother of Juan de Valdes we know nothing. His father, Hernando, himself a descendant of public servants, was regidor perpetuo and deputy for Cuenca in the Spanish Cortes.<sup>3</sup>

The little information that can be found about Hernando de Valdes indicates that he most likely exerted a profound influence in the determination of the spirit, character and ideas of Juan. Like other public officials of his time, he too was connected with "the political

movements of the comunidades . . . and with the clerical reform movement which had as its goal the deepening of Christian faith".<sup>4</sup>

Juan would later on write about and fondly recall the daily instructions he and the rest of the Valdes household received from their father:

"You must know that my father had this habit. Each morning, as soon as he got up, he used to hold a reunion of his sons and daughters and members of the household, and there he instructed them about almost all these points that I have considered . . . Because he said that in the same way that a bishop must instruct the members of his diocese in Christian doctrine, and the curate the members of his church, in much the same way was it his duty to instruct the members of his household, especially so, since he was a man of letters, and since he did not become learned in order to earn a living, but for the edification of his soul and of the members of his household".<sup>5</sup>

This is just about the only autobiographical reference to his youthful days in Spain. It is as impossible for us to assess the precise impact of his father's instructions as to determine what else transpired at this time until he reached maturity. Nevertheless, we can presume that his father's efforts must have led to prepare him, both mentally and religiously, "for the great work of his life which was to be a spiritual mover of other souls".<sup>6</sup>

Sufficient evidence has been found to preclude the possibility of confusing Juan with his elder brother Alfonso. Letters from Erasmus to Juan on March 21, 1529,<sup>7</sup> and from Sepulveda to Alfonso on August 26, 1531,<sup>8</sup> both contain reference as to their fraternal relationship, although the same letters have given occasion to a considerable dispute as to whether they were twins or not. The lack of documents would again leave this last point undecided since, according to Menendez y Pelayo, "there is not enough evidence to prove the matter one way or the other".<sup>9</sup>

By the same token, John E. Longhurst safely discarded this question as academic "since it is incidental to the careers of either of the brothers, especially in view of the considerable differences in their careers and temperament".<sup>10</sup> In his time, Alfonso was not only better known, but also "more important because of the political influence which his position permitted him to exert".<sup>11</sup> His enviable designation as Secretary of Latin correspondence in the royal court of Charles V, enabled him to win for himself the intimate friendship of the illustrious monarch and many other acquaintances all throughout Continental Europe.

VALDES AT ESCALONA.

There are three dates that mark significant milestones in the mental and religious life of Juan de Valdes: 1523, the year when he turned up in Escalona as a member of the household staff of the Marquez de Villena; 1529, the date of publication of his first book: Dialogo de Doctrina Cristiana at Alcala; and 1535, the year when he moved to Naples, where he spent the remainder of his life in meditation and spiritual conversation.

At Escalona, Valdes had his first contact with the Alumbrados, avid followers of an indigenous Protestant movement in Spain called Alumbrismo. Its adherents were so called because they considered themselves to be 'illuminated' or 'enlightened' by the Holy Spirit<sup>12</sup> and supposedly in close communion with God. The emergence of this spiritual movement among devout clergy and laymen was one of the most important events in Spain of this period as far as intellectual and religious life is concerned. The Erasmian controversy, the Cisneros reform, the rise and progress of the Inquisition, are the other significant events which tumultuously rocked sixteenth-century Spain.

Alumbrismo, or Illuminism as it is more frequently called, was a "peculiarly Castilian form of mysticism".<sup>13</sup>

Although its beginnings remain as dark as its tenets, its doctrine seem to have infected various classes of people, more particularly the grass-roots of Spanish society. What did this movement have to offer? Its advocates sincerely believed that it was aimed to elevate personal relationship with God above the formalism of a highly secularized Church".<sup>14</sup> A characteristic feature of the various types of this movement is the exaggerated importance it attached to meditation or contemplation, understandably accompanied by an utter disregard for external acts of any kind that may impede it. Contemplation was believed to lead the devotee to an ecstatic vision of God, a state of perfection by which one is constituted in the highest degree of spirituality. Thus is a man said to be moved and illumined by the Holy Spirit.

Such heterodox doctrines created adverse reactions from the Holy Office or the Spanish Inquisition, a politico-ecclesiastical machinery originally established to "protect Spanish Catholicism from an apparently grave internal menace".<sup>15</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the Inquisition's assessment of this indigenous type of mysticism was extremely unfavorable. Suffice it to say now, that almost immediately the Inquisition set itself about the task of abruptly eliminating this supposedly grave internal threat.

It is within the periphery of this movement that mention is made of Valdes in a historical document for the very first time. Sometime in 1523, Juan de Valdes joined the household of one Diego Lopez Pacheco, the Second Marquez de Villena, with residence at Escalona. This piece of information is unquestionably implied in an inquisitorial proceso or lawsuit in which is contained a petition for valdes to testify in defense of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, also then a member of Pacheco's household.<sup>16</sup> This document is important since it gives notice of Valdes' whereabouts prior to his matriculation at the University of Alcala de Henares in 1527.

Diego Lopez Pacheco was a good friend and admirer of the Emperor Charles V. Upon the recommendation of his brother Alfonso, who must have learned of Pacheco's urgent need for a personal secretary<sup>17</sup> through the Emperor himself, Juan was chosen for the job. Valdes' brief stay at Escalona, according to J. E. Longhurst, marks "a new and important phase of his spiritual development at the palace of the Marquez",<sup>18</sup> and, most probably, his "introduction to heterodoxy".<sup>19</sup>

At about the same time that the Marquez brought Juan to Escalona, Pacheco enlisted the services of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, a major figure among the Alumbrados. Alcaraz' pre-

sence in the palace directly brought about Juan's exposure to the doctrines of the illuminists "since virtually the entire staff of the Marquez gathered about Alcaraz to listen to his teachings".<sup>20</sup> In such an atmosphere, so alive with Illuminism and so open to the spiritual currents of the time, Juan de Valdes stumbled upon a form of piety and mode of life that was to exercise a considerable influence in his life and writings.

It was at Escalona that Valdés "developed the central core of his religious beliefs . . . and might have sympathized with a considerable independence of spirit and scorn for emphasis on outward forms which is common to all religions of the spirit".<sup>21</sup> These sentiments are said to be explicitly contained in Alcaraz' theological system which he formulated and developed independently of, and prior to the publication of Luther's NINETY FIVE THESES in 1517.<sup>22</sup>

As a religious thinker, Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz was well acquainted with the mystical writings in current use, such as those of "Gerson, Saint Bernard, Saint Bonaventure and the Imitation of Christ. In addition, he knew by heart a large part of the Bible and apparently has ability to comment on some of the more obscure Biblical passages occasioned considerable amount of amazement among trained theologians".<sup>23</sup>



The same inquisitorial lawsuit earlier mentioned provides information as to the kind of religion Alcaraz advocated. It seems that the core of his teachings centered around a voluntaristic doctrine of dejamiento which involved a complete surrender of the human will to the divine, resulting in an "immediate animation by God to the detriment of human responsibility".<sup>24</sup> Accusations were consequently made during Alcaraz' trial on this count and also for his rejection of "all the external furnitures of Catholicism".<sup>25</sup> The celebrated illuminist was condemned to life imprisonment, which sentence was later commuted "with the provision that Alcaraz remain in Toledo and perform penitential prayers at regular intervals".<sup>26</sup>

For fear of being implicated in the Alcaraz affair, Juan de Valdes left Escalona during the latter part of 1524, some months after the arrest of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz.<sup>27</sup> He probably joined his brother for the next year or two at the imperial court which offered him safety and sanctuary from the threatening clutches of the Inquisition. During this brief intervening period, Valdes must have initiated his private readings of Sacred Scriptures, in which intellectual pursuit he would devote himself assiduously for the next fruitful years of his academic life.

VALDES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALCALA.

Two years after his eventful stay at Escalona, Valdes found himself in an entirely different atmosphere at the University of Alcala de Henares. His studies at the University, the greater part of which is not known, "probably began in late 1527 . . . and continued at least through July, 1529".<sup>28</sup>

As an institution of higher learning, the University of Alcala was dedicated in large part "to the education of an effective episcopate and religious scholarship".<sup>29</sup> In pursuance of its original objectives, only clerical studies were offered during its early years of existence. As part of the academic curriculum (which included theology, philosophy and liberal arts), the study of classical and biblical languages was required for the study of Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.<sup>30</sup> Other faculties were later on added to provide instructions in medicine and canon law, areas of study duly commissioned by papal approval.<sup>31</sup>

The University would, in later years, enrich the Roman Church with the publication of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, so denominated after the ancient name of the city of Alcala. In the annals of humanism, this masterful

and splendid work of scholarship has unquestionably placed Alcala in historical limelight, a tribute to the remarkable collective effort of scholars initiated and supervised by Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros,<sup>32</sup> the illustrious founder of the University.

In founding the University, Cardinal Cisneros has envisioned it to be "the center and focus of religious training and of stimulation to ecclesiastic reform in customs, morals and in the reorientation of the intellectual life of the Church".<sup>33</sup> With his able guidance, the University has become a great center for Erasmian reform, the most concrete expression of his intense desire to up-date the Church. Not only did he guide the University to its future prominence, but he too, more than anything else, "brought it within the proper place of theology of the time".<sup>34</sup>

As a student of liberal arts at the University, Valdes "specialized in the humanities, excelling in Latin and Greek and Hebrew".<sup>35</sup> This information is explicitly corroborated by Erasmus in a letter addressed to Valdes, dated March 1st, 1528:<sup>36</sup>

" . . . I hear that you are given to liberal studies, in order that you may embellish your naturally virtuous disposition with every sort of adornment. Why, then, should anyone exhort you to study, when of your own accord you follow

this excellent pursuit? It is more to the purpose to congratulate and praise you. Rest assured that I am no one's more than your brother's, and not less yours than his".

Although Valdes did not follow a regular course of theology, he probably spent a great deal of his time in the study of the Bible and theological reflection, profiting well "from the course on biblical languages and latin offered at the University".<sup>37</sup> Valdes would later on manifest a remarkable proficiency in scriptural studies and languages in his translation of St. Paul's letters and of the Psalms. The Commentaries that accompanied some of his translations reveal his rich scriptural knowledge, demonstrative of the polished scholar in him.

It was at the University that Juan de Valdes had a real taste of Erasmian spirituality. At about this time, Desiderius Erasmus was generally accepted among the Spanish humanists at Alcala, and his name was held in great admiration particularly at the humanistically-oriented and progressive University. Due largely to the patronage of Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, the Humanist from Rotterdam gained a circle of supporters and sympathizers who, in their own way, lent an added impetus to the "local Erasmian movement".<sup>38</sup>

The immediate fruit of Valdes' association with these men and with his like-minded friends at the court of Charles V., was a deepening admiration and sympathy for Erasmus. His increasing familiarity with Erasmian writings began to reorientate his mind towards Erasmus' humanism and spirituality, a completely different type from what he encountered at Escalona.<sup>39</sup> Among other things, Juan de Valdes was singularly impressed and most probably influenced by Erasmus' "tendency to go back to the sources of Christianity, his Evangelism and Paulinism; the spiritual interpretation of the Credo, Commandments and Sacraments, as well as his belief in justification by faith".<sup>40</sup>

The impact of Erasmus' writings and revolutionary ideas is particularly noticeable in the first and only book published in Valdes' life-time: the DIALOGO DE DOCTRINA CRISTIANA. Actually a short meditation on the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the DIALOGO anticipates much of Valdes' later writings. This provocative little book has been characterized as "deeply and confessedly Erasmian in tone and character, deriving its particular flavor from that "excelente doctor verdaderamente teologo que ahora vive: el cual se llama Erasmo Roterodamo".<sup>41</sup>

In this book, Juan introduced the fundamental contents of what will later be called his 'religion of the heart'. Following Erasmus' catechetical work: the Enchiridion Militis Christiani, and specifically the Colloquies, Valdes laid down the foundation of his inward spirituality, emphasizing the faith and charity which are the "pith and stomach of the Christian religion".<sup>42</sup> In this respect, Marcel Bataillon claims that the DIALOGO is a "moderate Erasmian Catechism which Valdes wrote while under the influence of the tremendous success of the Spanish translation of the Enchiridion".<sup>43</sup>

In historical importance, Valdes' first literary attempt "stands ahead of all the catechetical literature which the Europe of the sixteenth century under the impact of the reformation was soon to produce". It is rather ironic that this very same book that consequently brought fame and public renown to its author, would, at the same time, bring upon him and his work the hostility of the Inquisition. His attacks on the external formalism of the Church and on certain monastic abuses were strongly resented by the highly conservative guardians of Spanish Catholicism. Almost immediately after the publication of the DIALOGO, the Inquisition began the first of a series of examinations designed principally

to look into its orthodoxy. Although the book was acquitted of heresy on this first encounter with the Holy Office, other examinations subsequently followed which were to result in "the flight of valdes to Italy and his subsequent conviction of heresy, along with the prohibition of his works in Spain".<sup>45</sup> The tide of Erasmianism has turned, and he no longer had influential friends to defend his cause.

#### JUAN DE VALDES IN ITALY.

At about the same time that an inquisitorial lawsuit was being prepared against him, Juan de Valdes left for Italy, never to return to Spain. Gravely compromised by his first book with the Inquisition, he deemed it wise to flee his native land while he could. The underlying reason for his flight is inescapably clear; it was in Italy that he sought refuge and safety from the threatening advances of the Holy Office. Thus ended the Spanish phase of Juan's career.<sup>46</sup>

The prevailing conditions in Italy at this time were much to the liking of the Spanish refugee. Geographically speaking, the division of the Italian peninsula into multiple states and principalities "prevented any-

thing like a concerted attempt to suppress heterodoxy".<sup>47</sup> From the religious point of view, even the best and most devout elements of the local clergy and laity were earnestly concerned with ecclesiastical reform and a change of direction in the various aspects of ecclesial life. And, in addition, the humanist influence in Italy was so strong that Valdes found himself most welcome in this strange land. Once again, Valdes could express himself and move about freely without fear of chastisement. He would later confide that he spent the best years of his life in this new home which adopted him as one of her devoted sons.

Upon the recommendation of his brother Alfonso, Valdes was appointed Camarero (Papal Chamberlain) to Pope Clement VII.<sup>48</sup> He stayed in Rome until Clement's death in 1534,<sup>49</sup> and assumed another job which was to bring him to Naples where he retired and stayed for the remainder of his life.

In Naples, Valdes devoted himself to study and spiritual improvement. No longer in the heat of controversy, but in the exercise of a quiet and serene life, he turned his attention to the study of Holy Scripture and theological reflection, discovering germs of truth which would la-



ter find expression in his subsequent writings. It was probably at this time that Valdes experienced a basic re-orientation in his life, "a change of direction almost amounting to cerverversion".<sup>50</sup> Philip McNair describes it as "a reorientation of mind from humanism to divinity".<sup>51</sup> Like the transforming experience of Martin Luther, this supposed 'conversion' of Valdes effected a most profound mutation in his thinking and behaviour. It is never easy to give a simple description of such a change, but the testimony of a friend and admirer of Valdes: Pietro Carnessechi, provides strong evidence for such a fascinating reversal of thought. The following testimony of Carnessechi is found in his own inquisitorial lawsuit:<sup>52</sup>

"Although I had known Juan Valdes at Rome in the time of Pope Clement . . . I cannot say that I knew him as a theologian before the year 1540 in Naples. For when in Rome, I did not know that he applied himself to the study of sacred literature, but I knew him only as a modest and well-bred courtier, and as such I liked him very much, so that the intercourse and familiarity I afterwards had with him at Naples was a continuation of our friendship made at Rome; at Naples, however, the friendship grew to be a spiritual one, for I found him entirely given up to the spirit, and wholly intent on the study of Holy Scripture".

Not only was this period a time of the deepening of his Christian piety, but it also was a time "of feverish literary production, his most creative religious activity".<sup>53</sup> Following his spiritual breakthrough, valdes com-

posed a number of books, his greatest contribution to the cause of the reformation. That Valdes was a dedicated and zealous writer is attested to by one of the speakers in his DIALOGO DE LA LENGUA:<sup>54</sup>

"I have never in my life seen a man more given to writing, always in his home, who became a veritable Saint John the Evangelist, pen in hand, so much so that I think he writes at night as well as by day, and by day he writes what he dreams at night".

Valdes' most celebrated book entitled: CIENTO Y DIEZ CONSIDERACIONES<sup>55</sup> was written during this period of intense literary activity. This is Valdes' chief work, the "resume of his thought on the most important points of Christian doctrine".<sup>56</sup> Written in the form of meditations, this work practically touched upon the most fundamental themes of Reformation thought and practice<sup>57</sup> concerning God, Christ and man. In these considerations are revealed "not only the great admiration of the pupils for their master, but also the profound influence of Valdes on the most outstanding Reform thought of Italy".<sup>58</sup>

Other works of importance pertaining to this period are: The ALFABETO CRISTIANO,<sup>59</sup> a dialogue which reveals the nature of the religious movement then going on around Valdes; The DIALOGO DE LA LENGUA, a work acknowledged to be highly authoritative in relation to the Spanish idiom

which is comparable to Dante's De Volgare Eloquentia;<sup>60</sup> La LECHE ESPIRITUAL, a manual containing catechetical instructions for children; and, finally, his translations and Commentaries on some books of the Bible. Of these works, only his Commentaries on Matthew's Gospel, Paul's Epistle to the Romans and First Corinthians are presently available. He has the singular honor of having undertaken the task of translating the new Testament from Greek into Spanish.<sup>61</sup>

#### HIS LAST YEARS IN NAPLES.

Juan's writings as well as his gentle disposition and fervent piety have drawn to him a circle of influential men and women who developed, each according to his genius, the precious insights born of intimate association with him. They were men of importance and women of refinement who, like their teacher, became distinguished protagonists of the Reformation as they scattered to the farthest corners of Italy.<sup>62</sup>

Of the numerous people of distinction on whom Valdes exerted a lasting influence, the names of Peter Martyr Vermigli, Bernardino Ochino and Guilia Gonzaga Colonna come foremost in the list. With Peter Martyr and Ochino, he

formed part of a formidable triumvirate, and the three of them together were referred to as: "illi satanicae reipublicae triumviri" (the three men of Satan's republic).<sup>63</sup> Both Ochino and Peter Martyr are highly important figures in the reformation largely by reason of their contribution to the reform movement in Italy and England. They owed to each other the inspiration of a dedicated purpose and the practice of the Gospels.<sup>64</sup>

It was to his closest friend Guilia Gonzaga that Valdes dedicated most of his writings. She inspired "not only the Christian Alphabet, but also most of Valdes' Commentaries on the Holy Scripture; and it was probably she who preserved the manuscripts of the works of Valdes".<sup>65</sup> Her relationship to Juan has oftentimes been compared to the Platonic friendship between St. Francis and St. Claire, or Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo.<sup>66</sup> After the death of Valdes, she became the head of the Protestant movement in Naples, remaining ever faithful to the teachings of her master.

Amidst this circle of intimate friends, Juan spent the last few years of his life. He was to them a spiritual father who guided and stimulated their craving for spiritual nourishment. His beautiful villa at Chiaja<sup>67</sup>

was their favorite meeting place. There he gathered his friends on Sundays, joining them in prayer, meditation and pious conversations. They were in later years to recall the Sunday promenades along the gardens of the villa when Valdes taught them "to question a religion of form and emphasize one of faith".<sup>68</sup>

These meetings continued until death overtook him in the summer of 1541.<sup>69</sup> His death was deeply lamented by his spiritual sons and daughters, whose sentiments are represented in a letter of Jacomo Bonfadio to Carnessechi, written shortly after the event:<sup>70</sup>

"I wish we were again in Naples . . . but when I consider the matter in another point of view, to what purpose should we go there, now when Valdes is dead? His death truly is a great loss to us and to the world; for Valdes was one of the rarest men in Europe . . . He was, without doubt, in his actions, his speech, and in all his conduct a perfect man. With a particle of his soul he governed his frail and spare body; with the larger part, and with his pure understanding, as though almost out of the body, he was always raised in the contemplation of truth and of divine things".

Even in death, Valdes was loved and revered by those who followed him in life. Although he did not live long enough to savor the fruit of his toils, his memory lingered in the minds of many who, after his example, continued the task he has began, for which he shall be remembered for a long, long time.

R E F E R E N C E S

<sup>1</sup>Philip McNair, Peter Martyr in Italy: An Anatomy of Apostasy (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967) p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Valdesian scholars of recent years place the date of Valdes' birth approximately at the following dates: J. Alborg (1501), Domingo de Santa Teresa (1498), P. McNair (1498), J. Longhurst (1500), J. C. Nieto (1509).

<sup>3</sup>John E. Longhurst, Erasmus and the Spanish Inquisition: The Case of Juan de Valdes (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1950) p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 302.

<sup>5</sup>J. de Valdes, Dialogo de Doctrina Cristiana, Madrid, Libreria Nacional, 1929, p. 121 (cf. A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 302).

<sup>6</sup>R. Jones, op. cit., p. 236.

<sup>7</sup>Cited by J. E. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 12

<sup>8</sup>ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo, Historia de los Heterodoxos Espanoles, Tomo IV (Madrid: Libreria General de Victoriano Suarez, 1928) p. 189.

<sup>10</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 12

<sup>11</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p. 300.

<sup>13</sup>Paul J. Hauben, The Spanish Inquisition (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969) p. 7

<sup>14</sup>G. R. Elton, Reformation Europe 1517 - 1559. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963) p. 106.

<sup>15</sup>P. Hauben, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>16</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p 15

<sup>17</sup>ibid., p. 13

<sup>18</sup>ibid.

<sup>19</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 17

<sup>20</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 18

<sup>21</sup>ibid., p. 21

<sup>22</sup>Jose C. Nieto-Sanjuan, Juan de Valdes: Background, Origins and Development of His Theological Thought with Special Reference to knowledge and Experience. A Doctoral Dissertation in microfilm (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1967) p. 255.

<sup>23</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 18

<sup>24</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 17

<sup>25</sup>ibid.

<sup>26</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>27</sup>ibid., p. 23

<sup>28</sup>ibid., p. 28

<sup>29</sup>P. Hauben, op. cit., p. 7

<sup>30</sup>cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. V (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967) p. 266.

<sup>31</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 29

<sup>32</sup>Marcel Bataillon, Erasmo y Espana: Estudios sobre la Historia del Siglo XVI (Mexico-Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1966) p. 22.

<sup>33</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 152

<sup>34</sup>ibid., p. 77

<sup>35</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 31

<sup>36</sup>Benjamin B. Wiffen, Life and Writings of Juan de Valdes, otherwise Valdesso, Spanish Reformer in the Sixteenth Century (London: Bernard Quaritch, 15 Picadilly, 1865) p. 5

<sup>37</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 153

<sup>38</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 29

<sup>39</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 161

<sup>40</sup>cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. V, p. 514

<sup>41</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 19

<sup>42</sup>ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Cited by J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 155

<sup>44</sup>ibid., p. 168

<sup>45</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 35

<sup>46</sup>ibid., p. 57

<sup>47</sup>G. Elton, op. cit., p. 109

<sup>48</sup>J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 11

<sup>49</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 303

<sup>50</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 27

<sup>51</sup>ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Edward Boehmer, Lives of the Twin Brothers Juan and Alfonso de Valdes (London: Trubner & Co., Ludgate Hill, 1882) p. 25

<sup>53</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 305



<sup>54</sup>J. de Valdes, Dialogo de la Lengua (Cited by A. Mergal, loc. cit.)

<sup>55</sup>Original title of Valdes' work. All references in the text to this book are taken from John T. Bett's translation from the Italian entitled: Hundred and Ten Considerations (London: Bernard Quaritch, 15 Picadilly, 1885).

<sup>56</sup>George K. Brown, Italy and the Reformation to 1550 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933) p. 232

<sup>57</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 330

<sup>58</sup>ibid., p. 331

<sup>59</sup>Original title of Valdes' work. All references in the text to this book are taken from Angel M. Mergal's edition: The Christian Alphabet, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXV (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957).

<sup>60</sup>F. Church, op. cit., p. 51

<sup>61</sup>E. Boehmer, op. cit., p. 22

<sup>62</sup>F. Church, op. cit., p. 50

<sup>63</sup>G. Brown, op. cit., p. 167

<sup>64</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 36

<sup>65</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 305

<sup>66</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 31

<sup>67</sup>A. Mergal, op. cit., p. 305

<sup>68</sup>F. Church, op. cit., p. 52

<sup>69</sup>P. McNair, op. cit., p. 25

<sup>70</sup>B. Wiffen, op. cit., p. 178

### C H A P T E R   T H R E E

#### VALDESIAN DOCTRINE ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

For historical reasons peculiar to the particular religious climate of the sixteenth century, the doctrine of justification became a burning issue among the notable reformers, both Protestant and Radical. For some of them it was a major object of controversy at that time of religious upheaval, constituting a real challenge to the conscience of Christendom.

Theologies and religious systems have risen or fallen after the rise or fall of so central a doctrinal issue. Following the lead of Luther, other reformers formulated and developed an explicit theology of justification, oftentimes independently of each other. While some of them stressed quite vigorously the dogmatic and soteriological content of the doctrine, others have emphasized its polemic implications in their effort to understand and grasp the doctrine at its original biblico-historical setting.

The fact that Juan de Valdes formulated and developed a doctrinal opinion on the very absorbing topic of the day, situates him in a special place among the foremost proponents of SOLIFIDEISM. Not only was this doctrine singularly present in his writings, particularly in the ALFABETO CRISTIANO and in the CIENTO Y DIEZ CONSIDERACIONES, it also was uniquely central in his theology, serving as a source of guidance and inspiration for many of his followers. Pietro Carnesesechi, for example, has confessed that "he held this doctrine affirmatively according to the opinion of Valdes",<sup>1</sup> and, in another place, he stated that "Valdes' doctrine concerning the article of justification had served me as a rule to measure and judge the doctrine and religions of the others".<sup>2</sup>

In his elaboration of the problem, Valdes concentrated more attention on the soteriological, rather than the dogmatic, content of the doctrine. As the dominant theme of his later writings, Valdes used this doctrine as the "working principle to interpret, explain and unify the various tenets of Christian doctrine particularly related to soteriology and the believer's assurance of grace and salvation".<sup>3</sup> In concrete language, he related man's existential situation to what awaited him in the life hereafter.

CONCEPT OF JUSTIFICATION.

By the term 'justification', Valdes meant the singular state whereby man is delivered out of the estrangement from God.<sup>4</sup> It is the new state of human existence brought about by Christ's death and work of redemption. Like the rest of the reformers, Valdes in no way conceived justification outside of Christ the Redeemer, or as he puts it, without reference "to God's opinion about man that makes him confident that God has justified him".<sup>5</sup>

In this and in his other related doctrine of atonement, the Christocentric orientation of his religious thought processes is clearly enunciated. It was Valdes' most firm belief that "the proper office of Christ in this world was not to convert men but rather to die for men . . . taking that form of life in which, dying ignominiously, He ennobled ignominy and a public death; and he assures to us all, who know it and believe it, our justification, of which we need to be most assured".<sup>6</sup> His understanding of justification centered in, and revolved around, the office of Christ, the Redeemer, as the only cause of man's salvation. In Christ, he stoutly maintained, what God has resolved in eternity, happened in time.

The atoning work of Christ in God's eternal plan of salvation is, for Valdes, the ground for man's righteousness:

St. Paul says, that it (the spirit of Christ) is known by the two effects it produces upon the man in whom it dwells; of which one is the death of the body through indwelling sin; and the other is the life of the mind through righteousness (justification) by faith. So that where there are these two effects, there is the spirit of Christ; and where they are not, there the spirit of Christ is not. 7

Commenting on a passage in John's First Epistle, Valdes elaborates on the immediate effects of Christ's work of atonement. Having been made righteous in God's sight, he says, man finds in Christ a true "advocate before His eternal Father, who satisfied for our sins and for the sins of the whole world . . . and a high priest who can have compassion on our infirmities, having been himself clothed with the garment of humanity".<sup>8</sup>

Like Luther, Valdes discovered the soteriological meaning of God's justification in the light of his knowledge of God in Christ. In the ALFABETO CRISTIANO, he refers to God's love as the means through which God justifies those who believe and trust in Him through His Son:

God has shown the love he bears toward us as well in this as in all the rest he has done for us, for so arrogant is the human mind that unless it were acknowledged debtor to fulfil the whole law, it would not consider

itself a sinner, it would not fear the judgment of God; and unless it were humbled, it would not gain the grace of God and without his grace it could not become justified before him, and if not justified, then not saved. 9

When Valdes, therefore, says that the love of God through the atoning work of Christ is for man's justification and eternal salvation, he must be understood to mean that in no other way can man be justified. Man's justification is found in God's judgment upon the sinner; this judgment is achieved in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the verdict of this judgment is revealed in the resurrection of Christ. Valdes expressed this idea when he spoke of the benefits derived from Christ's glorious resurrection in the following manner:

Just as God by slaying Christ's flesh upon the cross slew ours in such a manner that with reference to Him we are held and adjudged as if we really and effectively were dead; so God by raising Christ again, raised us in such a manner that with reference to Him we are held and adjudged as if we were really raised again. 10

Now if God's verdict is man's cause of justification, what gives man the assurance that he shall not fail in this respect? If the justification accomplished in man is the exclusive work of God, how does man behave and react in this work? The answer of Valdes to the question of man's behaviour in divine justification is the answer of Luther

and the rest of the reformers: BY FAITH ALONE. Man Attains God's favor through that faith "which gives credit to all the words of God, as well to his threatenings as to his promises, so that when it hears said what Christ said, that he who will believe and is baptized shall be saved, and that he who will not believe shall be condemned, giving such credit to these words as holding them for a certainty, it has not the least doubt of salvation".<sup>11</sup>

We must, at this point, note carefully the radical change of Valdes' thinking in regard to faith. It is not enough that we simply state the fact that he no longer thought of salvation in terms of good meritorious works, but we must likewise make clear that in his mind the very faith which replaced works was of an entirely different nature from the current conception of faith as belief which accompanies works.

#### FAITH AND ITS ROLE.

With a warm evangelical fervor, Valdes explicates the nature and function of faith, the pivotal point of his doctrine on justification. In his CONSIDERACIONES, he set forth his mature understanding of the term 'faith' with these words:

I understand that FAITH consists in this: that a man believes and holds for certain all that is contained in Holy Scriptures, placing his trust in the divine promises contained in them, as if they had been peculiarly and principally made to himself. 12

For Valdes, therefore, faith is not "a mere historical belief in the history of Christ", not an assent to abstract truths, but a trustful belief "which is alive in the soul, acquired not by industry, nor human contrivance, but by means of the grace of God communicated with supernatural light".<sup>13</sup> This is, according to him, the kind of faith demanded of man in justification.

In the above quotation, valdes distinguished two aspects in his understanding of faith, namely: belief in all that is contained in Sacred Scripture, and a confi<sup>de</sup> trust (fiducia) in God's promises. Man, he explains, is in some measure capable of the former, that is to say: "that man is self-sufficient to bring himself to believe, or to persuade himself that he believes"; but man, left alone to himself, is incapable of the latter, i.e., "he is not self-sufficient to bring himself to confide, nor to persuade himself that he does confide".<sup>14</sup> For this reason:

He who believes and does not confide, shows that his belief is due to mental industry and human ability, and not to divine inspi-



ration; and he that in believing confides, shows that his belief is due to inspiration and revelation. Whence I understand that confidence is a good sign in a man whereby to get assured that his belief is due to inspiration and revelation. 15

Common as it may seem, this is precisely the language Valdes used to illustrate the nature of faith as a gift from God and, at the same time, to indicate man's utter incapacity in the attainment of justification. In another place, Valdes further elucidates this point, differentiating faith from hope and indicating the manner it is exercised with an analogy:<sup>16</sup>

Know then that faith is exercised in the things of the present life, hope in those of the life eternal. This you should understand in this way. You wish to go from the pier to the Isle of Capri, but you do not know how. I come to you and say, "trust yourself to me, signora, for I will lead you on foot by the hand without your being drowned in the passage, and, when crossed over, I will place you in that spot of the island where you desire to be". You, although it appears to you a thing beyond all reason, give credence to my words, and, trusting in them, you take my hand and walk through the water.

Now, how did Valdes regard the relationship between faith and justification? In a postscript to Consideration XLII, Valdes explained that these two terms are not to be taken as if both were one and the same thing, or synonymous. When he said "that they who believe enjoy justifi-

cation through the justice of God already executed upon Christ",<sup>17</sup> it seems as if Valdes were trying to distinguish between "the individual personal faith as a subjective reality in the believer's life, and the work of justification as something which is applied by God to the believer by means of the objective reality of the work of Christ".<sup>18</sup>

Valdes' distinction and non-identification of faith with justification obviously led him to regard man as totally dependent upon God both for faith and for justification. Just as the virtue of faith is gratuitously given to man as a free gift from God, so does justification follow as an infallible consequence of Christ's redemptive work.

In line with Christian doctrine, Valdes affirmed the salutary efficacy of Christ's vicarious death and suffering and, in addition, man's incapacity to redeem himself. In no way can man bridge the gap between him and God wrought by sin, and be restored in God's friendship, except through grace and, on man's part, faith in Christ. Man has become so depraved that it is only through Christ that his depravity may be corrected.<sup>19</sup> Thus is man justified through faith, and being justified, enters into life eternal.

THE CAUSE OF MAN'S JUSTIFICATION.

If man is justified through faith, what are the grounds on account of which God forgives man's sins and admits him to the enjoyment of His favor? We have seen that the nature of Valdesian justifying faith is a personal response of trust and belief in God, a complete act of confidence upon the grace of God manifested in and through Christ. If faith is man's personal response to God's grace, on what underlying principle is such faith grounded, or, to put it in another way, what is the proper cause of this trustful faith that infallibly justifies?

Like the rest of the reformers, Valdes asserted that the proper cause or ground of the act of forgiveness and acceptance in God's favor is not an inherent personal kind of righteousness infused into man, as adhered to by most Romanists, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ gratuitously applied to him. Principally and exclusively through "the execution of God's justice upon Jesus Christ our Lord", he remarked, "God is pleased to admit into His kingdom those who come to Him, and to accept them as children, and to treat them as sons".<sup>20</sup>

Solely by virtue of Christ's righteousness, man is esteemed as just and acceptable in God's sight.<sup>21</sup> This righteousness, Valdes observes, is not inherent in man, but comes to him "in and through the name of the Lord Jesus, meaning that man had given credit to the indulgence and general pardon granted by God which is preached in Christ's name".<sup>22</sup> Through his intimate union with Christ, man is admitted into God's favor and made to share in the merits of Christ's sacrifice as if they were truly and properly his own.

It is interesting to note, at this point, that Valdes did not specifically make use of the term 'imputation' when he elaborated on the proper cause of justification. One may even suspect that he consistently avoided it and, most assuredly, for a very good reason. He did not want himself to become so directly and deeply involved in polemical confrontations with the issues and warring parties of his time. Historically, this question as to whether Christ's righteousness was directly infused into man, as stoutly claimed by the Romanists, or simply imputed to him and, therefore, external to man, was one of the most debated topics in theological circles.

Although Valdes did not use the term as frequently

and forcefully as Luther did, he nevertheless referred to the extrinsic manner whereby Christ's righteousness is given to man. "In accepting Christ's justice", Valdes remarked in his Commentary to the Romans, "no one is just neither in himself nor by himself, but in Christ and exclusively through Jesus Christ". By the appropriation of Christ's righteousness, we become partakers of his holiness and justice, while remaining always inclined to sin and incapable of restoring oneself into God's image.

It is manifest that Valdes acknowledged the famous formula of Luther, viz., simul justus et peccator. Because of his depraved nature, man remains a sinner and, therefore, worthy of condemnation. Although still a sinner, he nevertheless is righteous in Christ by virtue of his incorporation with Him. It is this paradox of the Christian life that makes Valdes look at Christ as the source of that righteousness in which the Christian lives, and yet, which does not belong to man but to Christ.

#### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

We have thus far seen how Valdes conceived the nature of faith that justifies and the proper cause or source of justification as consisting in the gratuitous appropria-

tion of Christ's righteousness to sinful man. We need not dwell longer on this point, but proceed to consider and examine the all-important question, viz., whether faith alone justifies, or whether there be anything that is required of man to bring about and supplement his God-given justification.

In common with the unanimous doctrine of the reformers, Juan de Valdes asserted that "by faith man attains justification, and by justification glory and life eternal".<sup>23</sup> With the gift of faith, he says, man finds favor with God, although that favor is due to God's own act through Christ. Speaking about the immense gift of faith, he said:

They who, by the gift of God, believe God to be supremely just, that Christ is perfectly innocent, that Christ's sufferings were the work of God, and that He suffered for original sin, are brought at length to believe that they, through Christ's sufferings, attain remission of sin, and are just, and stand in grace with God, having been already reconciled to Him. 24

For Valdes, there is only one kind of justification and this is the justification that is in Christ which man appropriates through faith. He would ask every man "to divest himself of all Christless modes of justification . . . and embrace only the justification that is in Christ, which consists in believing".<sup>25</sup>

This act of believing Valdes analogously compared to the faith of Noah who "gave credit to God's word . . . and believed that he and his would be saved in the ark, not by virtue of the ark . . . but by the will of God, who employed that ark as an instrument of safety for him and his".<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Valdes continues, "shall all men be saved by faith at the day of judgment".<sup>27</sup> In fact:

The power and efficacy of faith is most mighty. I speak of that which, giving credit to the promises of God, feels assured of their fulfillment, showing its assurance by carrying out the external rite which God, on His part, has commanded. 28

Effects of justification. In CIIth Consideration, Juandde Valdes represents the faith by which men are justified as producing a state of mind which involves an experiential knowledge of what man believes and accepts. In a most original way, Valdes affirms that "man is never staunch, firm and constant in the Christian faith, until he has some experience of what he believes".<sup>29</sup> When asked in what way this experience of faith is acquired, he replied:

Man has experience of what he believes when he has peace of conscience, when it seems to him that he could appear before God in judgment, with the same safety that he would have appeared, had he lived with the innocence in which Christ lived, and had he suffered, by the will of God, what Christ suffered. 30

In Valdes' estimation, this aspect of faith that engenders peace of conscience, is at the same time a guarantee that, "gaining experience of what is preached in the Gospel, we (shall) stand firm and constant in what we believe, all the men in the world being unable to divert or alienate us from our faith, by any means whatever, since it would be established by our own experience".<sup>31</sup>

But what does it mean for man to be justified? Valdes tells us at once that God's verdict of justification entails a "proclamation of general pardon and acceptance" among God's elect. Man is both pardoned and accepted. God, who is perfect wisdom, sees man exactly as he is; and yet, despite what man is, He pardons him for the sake of Jesus Christ. Because he is pardoned, he is accepted into the fellowship which is rightfully his according to God's dispensation. Man's acceptance is but the carrying into effect of what God has actually pronounced in justification, and this man humbly acknowledges through faith.

#### REGENERATION OF MAN.

What else does God do for man in justification? In answer to this question, Valdes reiterates a point of doctrine so distinctly essential in Protestantism. "As soon



as a man", he says, "accepts the covenant of justification through Jesus Christ our Lord, he begins to die to the world, and to live to God . . . to withdraw from the kingdom of the world, and to enter into the kingdom of God".<sup>32</sup>

In the foregoing passage, reference is made of the accompanying fruit that takes place after man is declared righteous, and this is: the regeneration and sanctification of man. In Valdesian language, regeneration is synonymous to the birth of a new life, a life with God: "man begins to die to the world, and to live to God". In this manner, the image of God lost by Adam is restored in man as he becomes the object of a spiritual renovation brought about by the workings of the Holy Spirit.

According to Valdes, the restoration of God's image is nothing else than the recovery of that righteousness and other gifts lost in Adam:

We recover through Christ that which we lost in Adam. Through Adam we lost piety, righteousness and holiness . . . and through Christ we recover, in this life, piety, righteousness and holiness of mind; and because I perceive that they who are members of Christ, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, have piety, righteousness and holiness, I have said that I see the image of God which the first man lost incipiently restored in them. 33

The final section of the above quotation is significant in that it suggests the kind of change that Valdes preached which takes place in man. When he said that the image of God is "incipiently restored", what he probably meant was, that the change of man's nature is simply the beginning of the restoration of the image of God in man. He does not become inherently righteous at once; he "gradually assumes and recovers the image of God, which is peculiar to us, by christian regeneration".<sup>34</sup>

On this point, therefore, he seems to assert that the continuous work of renovation or sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit has to operate progressively towards the final recovery of the image of God after the resurrection of every man.

#### THE PROBLEM OF GOOD WORKS.

Now the problem arises as to what particular role, in the thinking of Valdes, good works play in Christian life. The question at hand can be formulated in this manner: what can be said about the deeds that man performs before and after justification and regeneration in and through Jesus Christ?, or, what prompts a man in the performance of good works?

On this question, Valdes came up with an answer not far removed from reformation doctrine. He observed that good works are prompted by love and, to this assertion, he added that "charity is the fruit of faith".<sup>35</sup> Explaining this point further, he says:

It is true, as you say, that I have told you that charity is the fruit of faith . . . where there is a living faith, there is charity. And know, signora, that, as fire cannot fail to warm, so a living faith cannot fail to work deeds of charity. 36

It is apparent that Valdes did not exclude works as the proper and genuine fruit of faith. They proceed from a faith that is true and lively in all its scope. The good works that men do "please and are grateful before God, because he is moved by the impulse of love, because as God is love, so no work is grateful to him that is not done by love".<sup>37</sup>

How did Valdes regard good works in relation to justification? If good works are the consequent fruit of faith, and faith is that whereby man is justified, it follows that only those deeds are pleasing to God that are performed by a man who is already justified. Valdes maintained that:

Good works follow them who are already justified, and do not go before in him who has to be justified. I mean to say that works are

good when done by a person already justified, and none can be justified unless he stand in love and charity with God and his neighbour. 38

In Valdesian language, only a righteous person can justifiably stand in love and charity with God. He does not do good works in order to be justified or merit salvation, but rather because he is justified in Christ that good deeds follow as a manifestation that his faith is alive and true. Faith must be alive in order to bear fruit. Just as "the tree when it is dried up yields no fruit, so faith wanting in the heart of a person, there is no charity",<sup>39</sup> and if there is no charity, his works are worthless and of no avail. Nowhere in Valdes' writings did he assign to them any soteriological significance. They are only a sign of justification.

In view of the possibility that he may be misconstrued, Valdes distinguished between the good works of those who are justified by Christ through faith, and the deeds of those who hold themselves justified, not by Jesus Christ, but by their own self-righteousness. The works of the former are pleasing and acceptable to God, while the deeds of the latter are not good works at all. Neither of them, however, are intrinsically necessary for salvation. The following passage best illustrates his thinking:

. . . they alone are capable of performing good works, because, holding themselves to be justified by Christ, they do not pretend to justify themselves by their good works; . . . they who, not holding themselves to be justified by Christ, pretend to justify themselves by their good works; and, working thus from self-love, from self-interest, and not from love to God, they do not perform good works, inasmuch as their works do not please God, and cannot therefore be called good works. 40

The deeds that proceed out of man's boastful pretensions to self-righteousness do not avail him in any way whatsoever as far as salvation is concerned; on the contrary, Valdes said, they deserve the condemnation of God, for "if God be about to judge me according to my works, there is not the least doubt but that He will condemn me, for in them there is no goodness whatsoever".<sup>41</sup> By his own works, man stands condemned.

These deeds valdes referred to as "fruits of the flesh",<sup>42</sup> which fruits are not good since they do not have Christ at their root. Only those persons, he says, "who attain to be incorporated into Christ, rejoice in those tastes and sentiments, in those desires and impulses, and in those views and tears, forasmuch as they assure him that he is incorporated into Christ".<sup>43</sup> But the fruits of the flesh which do not meet God's approval, man ought:

to lop them off and throw them away, not feeding himself in any way upon them, because that would happen to him which happens to many others, who, feeding upon such food, persuade themselves that they live after the Spirit whilst they live after the flesh. 44

On the other hand, the real fruits of the Spirit, the good works that spring from Christ as its root, all these "redound to the glory of God and to the glory of this same Jesus Christ our Lord".<sup>45</sup> A justified man is impelled and inspired by the Spirit of Christ to bear bountiful fruits of "humility, meekness, patience, self-abasement, abnegation of self-will, obedience to God, charity", for these are "resplendent in those who are perfectly incorporated into Christ".<sup>46</sup>

In putting charity at the end of the list of bountiful fruits, Valdes underlined the place and function of charity or love of God as the crown and excellent motivating force of all good deeds. A greater portion of his CHRISTIAN ALPHABET contains the precise expression of his thought in relation to the excellence of charity.

The fact that Valdes repeatedly insisted on the nature of justification as always justification through and in Christ, makes clear his contention that whatever good works a justified person performs, these are the fruits of

God's work in man who lives incorporated into Christ. He maintained in close agreement with catholic tradition that, in the process of justification and regeneration, God does everything and man finds himself at the receiving end of His goodness and benevolence. All of salvation, he says, is the work of God, and Jesus Christ is the grace of God, the favor, the personified benevolence of God toward man.

The correlation between faith and works is once more brought to the fore in the XCVIIth Consideration where Valdes analyses the relationship between faith and justification. As has been noted, faith, for Valdes, is never an empty faith. If it is a genuine faith, it cannot do otherwise but manifest itself externally in action. So with the act of justification; it is manifested externally in genuine acts of piety.

By piety Valdes understood "true divine worship, which consists in worshipping God 'in spirit and in truth', mentally approving all that God does, holding it to be just, holy and good".<sup>47</sup> Thus defined, the 'pious' act of worship and man's approval of God's activity can be said to fall under the category of works. Is man pious before he is just, or is he just before he is pious? This is the ques-

tion Valdes posed to his circle of intimate friends. He offered an explanation of the problem itself in the following manner:

They who understand justification to be the fruit of piety, follow Plato and Aristotle: whilst they who understand piety to be a fruit of justification, justification being a fruit of faith, follow St. Paul and St. Peter. 48

The men who adjudge justification to be the fruit of piety, witness by so doing concerning themselves that they judge by the light of nature, by prudence and by human reason, as Plato and Aristotle would have judged, who never heard of Christ . . . The men who adjudge piety to be the fruit of justification, witness by so doing concerning themselves that they judge by the Holy Spirit . . . as did St. Peter and St. Paul, who knew Christ profoundly, and who possessed the Spirit of Christ. 49

Although he does not explicitly state what position he holds in this matter, he nevertheless seems inclined to believe that piety follows justification insofar as man "becomes just by believing, he begins to be pious, worshipping God in spirit and in truth".<sup>50</sup> Valdes holds as his point of reference man's appropriation of the righteousness of Christ.

Valdes' Paulinism is most noticeable in the kind of answer he gave. Thus he held on firmly to his interpretation of a distinctly Pauline doctrine that we become just



and are righteous, not by our pious deeds, but solely in virtue of our incorporation and dynamic faith in Jesus Christ.

Valdes' approach to the problem is certainly not in tune with the catholic line of thought with which he tried to contend. As a matter of fact, his position seems to openly repudiate Roman Catholic piety, particularly in its Aristotelian-scholastic tradition, as a "human work, a product of natural light, prudence and human reason". Bold statements of this sort could not remain unnoticed by the extremely conservative and orthodox defenders of Spanish Catholicism.

#### THE REWARD OF FAITH AND GOOD WORKS.

There is in Valdes' doctrine of justification something more which has to be taken into consideration if we want to understand him more fully. A study of his theology will not be complete if the question of reward for faith and good works is left out. No system of theology is without an elaboration and systematic treatment of what awaits man after a life-long existence. Like the rest of the reformers, Valdes too expressed his personal feelings and convictions on so delicate and highly controversial a topic.

It is apparent in Valdes' writings that he was sufficiently aware of the Roman Catholic doctrine of reward of the meritoriousness of good works. He also must have been fully aware of the significant place the doctrine occupied in the Roman theology of grace. The magisterial church, of which he was part until death, strongly insisted that good works accrue a varying degree of merit, and all her teachings on justification and salvation revolved around this concept of meritorious reward.

The leaders of the Reformed Churches have, in their own way and in their own time, rejected the Roman theology of merit and held on firmly to their teaching that "the whole of life, its activities and its consequences, flow out of God's commiseration. Nor would they let go their hold on the truth that this divine mercy was not set in motion by our achievements".<sup>51</sup> Their objection was grounded on the fact that man could then stake a claim to salvation which, to his knowledge, he has rightfully merited. In this way, they contended, God would become indebted to man, and this would constitute a radical reversal of the Gospel message.<sup>52</sup>

Valdes spoke of the reward for faith and good works done in faith in terms of the covenant established between God and man. Thus he observes in Cons. VIII:<sup>53</sup>

This is the covenant between God and man: that they believe and hold that that justice which was executed upon Christ, the Son of God, frees and exempts them from the punishment which they deserved, in having failed in the obligation under which they were born; and that God justifies them, and accepts them as His adopted children, and as such rules and governs them during this life, and afterwards raises them up, and will give them eternal life.

With the usual Valdesian touch, he makes clear right from the start that "faith gives us eternal life, and that by this faith God works in us what He wrought and still works in Christ".<sup>54</sup> Upon this fundamental covenant, he says, depend two other covenants, namely: the covenant of Christ's resurrection and the covenant of eternal life. Appropriation of the first, facilitates acceptance into the second and the third. Valdes remarked:

We, being assured that Christ is the Son of God, accept the covenant of justification by faith, which gives us fellowship in Christ's death; we accept the covenant of Christ's resurrection, which gives us fellowship in the resurrection; and we accept the covenant of eternal life, which gives us fellowship in the eternal life wherein Christ lives. 55

In this and in another place, Valdes ponders upon the benefits of Christ's glorious resurrection on which man's individual resurrection is grounded by virtue of his incorporation in Christ: "Only they who are incorporated

into Christ are certain of their resurrection, having it upon the resurrection of Christ".<sup>56</sup> What is significant in this statement is Valdes' stress and concern with the resurrection of the just as members of Christ.

Finally, what is the reward for man's good works? From the foregoing consideration, it can be concluded that the same reward awaits those who believe and who make their faith bear fruit in good works. Eternal life is the promised reward. As the gratuitous gift of God and as the inheritance of the children of God, eternal life might be called reward of good works, "not indeed because the dignity of our works can merit such a gift and make us creditors of the life eternal, but because God in His infinite mercy and liberality recompenses with this incomparable gift all the hardships . . . which they His children have endured in this world".<sup>57</sup>

Valdes, therefore, did not say that man's good works could 'merit' eternal bliss, but simply restated what the other reformers have enunciated, viz., reward of grace, i.e., that out of God's grace we are made to share in the divine promise of reward. In so doing, he denied every merit that could accrue to good works. It is by grace alone through faith that man is justified and received into life everlasting.

R E F E R E N C E S

- <sup>1</sup>cf. P. McNair, op. cit., p. 49
- <sup>2</sup>cf. J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 240.
- <sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 647.
- <sup>4</sup>Cons. XLII, p. 304 (see note #55 in Chapter II above, p. 35).
- <sup>5</sup>Cons. XCIV, p. 509
- <sup>6</sup>Cons. LXXXIX, p. 486.
- <sup>7</sup>J. de Valdes, Commentary on Paul's Epistles (cf. B. Wiffen, op. cit., p. 144).
- <sup>8</sup>Alfabeto, p. 382. (see note #59 in Chapter II above, p. 35).
- <sup>9</sup>ibid., p. 383.
- <sup>10</sup>Cons. LXXXIII, p. 463.
- <sup>11</sup>Alfabeto, p. 385.
- <sup>12</sup>Cons. LXX, p. 412.
- <sup>13</sup>Alfabeto, p. 385.
- <sup>14</sup>Cons. LXX, p. 413.
- <sup>15</sup>ibid.
- <sup>16</sup>Alfabeto, p. 387.
- <sup>17</sup>Cons. XLII, p. 324.
- <sup>18</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 659.
- <sup>19</sup>Cons. VI, p. 222.
- <sup>20</sup>Cons. XXXIV, p. 297.

<sup>21</sup>J. de Valdes, Commentary upon St. Paul's Epistle to the Church at Corinth, ed. by John T. Betts (London: Trubner & Co., 1883) p. 108.

<sup>22</sup>ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Cons. LXIX, p. 411.

<sup>24</sup>Cons. XLIX, p. 528.

<sup>25</sup>Cons. CII, p. 538.

<sup>26</sup>Cons. CIV, p. 544.

<sup>27</sup>Cons. CV, p. 547.

<sup>28</sup>ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Cons. CII, p. 537.

<sup>30</sup>ibid.

<sup>31</sup>ibid., p. 538.

<sup>32</sup>Cons. XXXIX, p. 315.

<sup>33</sup>Cons. LXXII, p. 420.

<sup>34</sup>Cons. LXXXV, p. 470.

<sup>35</sup>Alfabeto, p. 385.

<sup>36</sup>ibid.

<sup>37</sup>ibid., p. 375.

<sup>38</sup>ibid.

<sup>39</sup>ibid., p. 385.

<sup>40</sup>Cons. XCVIII, p. 523.

<sup>41</sup>ibid., p. 522.

<sup>42</sup>Cons. C, p. 531.

<sup>43</sup>ibid.

<sup>44</sup>ibid.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., p. 532.

<sup>46</sup>ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Cons. XCVII, p. 517.

<sup>48</sup>ibid., p. 520.

<sup>49</sup>ibid., p. 519.

<sup>50</sup>ibid., p. 518.

<sup>51</sup>G. C. Berkouwer, Faith and Justification (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company., 1954) p. 125.

<sup>52</sup>ibid., p. 126.

<sup>53</sup>Cons. VII, pp. 226-227.

<sup>54</sup>ibid., pp. 227-228.

<sup>55</sup>ibid., p. 228.

<sup>56</sup>Cons. LXXXIII, p. 464.

<sup>57</sup>cf. J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 503.

## C H A P T E R   F O U R

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VALDES' DOCTRINE

In the course of our study, we have briefly indicated certain points of doctrinal convergence with specific theological insights of the two great names in the Protestant firmament: Luther and Calvin. We also pointed out a semblance of affinity and, in a few cases, explicit disconformity of Valdes' doctrine with the Roman Catholic conception of the topic in question. For a fuller understanding of these points of controversy, we propose to consider, in a more detailed manner, these controversial issues in our effort to ascertain where Valdes stands between these two opposite doctrinal poles.

The whole weight of Valdes' teaching on justification can be reduced to four main headings, namely: 1) the nature of justifying faith as a personal response of belief and trust (fiducia) in God, 2) the appropriation and acceptance of Christ's righteousness as the sole cause of justification, 3) the relationship between justification and regeneration simultaneously bestowed, and 4) the na-



ture of the promised reward of good works done in faith.  
How do these four points in Valdes' theology compare and contrast with their Lutheran, Calvinistic and Tridentine counterparts?

#### VALDES AND LUTHER.

Contemporary Protestant literature has made more apparent the crucial religious significance of Martin Luther. Not too infrequently explicit mention is made of the tremendous influence the German Reformer exerted on the deepest religious insights of other men in Europe who, like their model and exemplar, clamoured for change and ecclesial renewal.

Many of Luther's contemporaries, who later joined ranks with him, greeted his doctrinal innovations as the solution for which they too had been searching. Among many other significant things, Luther's definitive discovery of the scriptural meaning of justification found its way into their theological writings. "Man is justified by faith alone", they all cried in chorus with Luther. Luther's subsequent realignment in terms of justification by faith has also become their own cherished possession

But not all of the renowned thinkers of the first half of the sixteenth century saw things exactly as Luther did. Although they substantially agreed with him in many respects, there were always points wherein they differed. Consequently, they remained independent and autonomous in this regard, without directly identifying themselves with the Lutheran movement. They chose (in greater or lesser degree) to go their own way.

Quite apart from these two groups, there were others who distinctly formulated opinions and doctrinal systems more or less similar to that of Luther with whom they did not even have direct contact. They may have been familiar with Luther's writings, but that is about all. These are the men of such originality who, consciously or unconsciously, also became involved in the current movements for reform.

Juan de Valdes, as we shall indicate, properly belongs to the last group mentioned. More recent studies on Valdes manifestly show that it seems improbable that Valdes was never in direct contact with Reformation sources, much less with Luther. Jose C. Nieto for instance, in a doctoral dissertation, boldly concluded that: "at no moment of his life was Valdes in direct contact

with Reformation sources . . . and Valdes' temper and character as well as his political ideas favoring the Emperor . . . probably did not incline him toward Luther".<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Nieto makes clear his point that "reformation sources had to be used to explain Valdes' thought when historians did not know of his stay at Escalona and his contact with Alcaraz, or when they did not have a first-hand acquaintance with Alcaraz' thought".<sup>2</sup>

We find Nieto's testimony very enlightening and maintain with him that Valdes formulated his doctrine on SOLIFIDEISM independently of Luther. He may have been indirectly exposed to some of Luther's works through his brother Alfonso, but they did not probably have any direct bearing in shaping Valdes' theological thought. His own private studies of Sacred Scripture and, to a certain extent, his familiarity with Alcaraz system, would account for the strictly scriptural tone and orientation of his doctrine, distinctly similar with that of the German Reformer.

In our investigation of Lutheran doctrine, which we shall briefly summarize in the following pages, attention will be focused on Luther's mature understanding of the problem, i.e., after what he called his 'encounter with God' at the tower of the monastery at Wittenberg.

Luther's Concept of Faith and Justification. In his Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, Luther defines faith simply as "a living and unshakeable confidence, a belief in the grace of God".<sup>3</sup> Quite apart from the erroneous acceptance of some during his time, he described faith "not as something dreamed, a human illusion . . . (but) something that God effects in us".<sup>4</sup> For Luther, as for Valdes, a man of true faith confides (or trusts) and believes wholeheartedly in God and in divine grace.

Man is justified or pronounced righteous only and exclusively through faith, i.e., by believing and confidently trusting in Christ. Such faith "apprehends Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and arose again for our justification".<sup>5</sup> God is intimately involved in justification in the sense that the righteousness of Christ becomes our own, as a gift, and everything that He has. To be justified, man needs only to grasp and accept this righteousness gratuitously given through faith.

Luther regards justification as an action of God by which He views man who is sinful and unrighteous as righteous. By God's gracious declaration and good will, man's sins are forgiven as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him: "We are redeemed", he says, "from sin,

death and the devil and are made partakers of life eternal, not by ourselves . . . but by help from without, by the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ".<sup>6</sup>

In no way can man earn justification by his own merits: "certum igitur est hominem suis meritis non posse coram Deo justificari".<sup>7</sup> In the justificatory process, God does everything to reinstate sinful man. Justification is something divinely granted, supernaturally initiated, a work of God. Man is justified insofar as he recognizes and realizes the justification which comes about in Christ as God's immutable verdict, and insofar as he expects everything from Christ and nothing from himself. It is Christ alone in whom man is rendered justified and acceptable in God's sight: "To be justified includes that idea, namely that we are rendered righteous on account of Christ".<sup>8</sup>

By the doctrine of the imputation of divine righteousness, a point of doctrine less emphasized in Valdes' system, Luther articulated his more mature understanding of justification "not as a gradual process of renewal or becoming righteous . . . but rather the bestowal of the righteousness of Christ".<sup>9</sup> Since it is in and through Christ that man is acquitted of sin and declared right-

eous, man is entirely passive as he receives and acknowledges through faith this ineffable donum promised and offered to him. Faith therefore, according to Luther, is passive in relation to the work of God. It is passive in the sense that it cannot justify by itself, but can only receive the justifying righteousness and be forgiven of sin.

Justification and Sanctification. Indissolubly connected with justification is the reality of man's regeneration and sanctification. God not only forgives sin and reckons the sinner righteous, but He also renews him and makes him righteous in his heart and life. Luther called this renewal the "second justification", the first being the justification by faith, by the imputation of divine righteousness. On the basis of this distinction, he enunciated his doctrine of the two-fold righteousness, first by faith, then by the Holy Spirit. In a lengthy disputation in 1536, he remarked:

God . . . first purifies by imputation, then he gives the Holy Spirit, through whom he purifies even in substance. Faith cleanses through the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit cleanses through the effect. This is divine cleansing and purification which is let down from heaven, by faith and the Holy Spirit. 10

In affirming the above doctrine, Luther maintained that there is a difference between justification and the reality of sanctification: the former, he said, is an instantaneous pronouncement, the other is a process that extends through life. He elaborates this point further in a Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew:

Christ has purchased two things for us: first gratiam, grace; secondly, donum, the gift (of sanctification) . . . what then are we to do with the sins that remain after we have come to faith? The Holy Spirit says through St. Paul: we want to sweep them out. But this sweeping continues till the grave. The forgiveness of sin takes place in a moment, when we receive and accept the word of God in faith. 11

In Luther's estimation, therefore, a justified man needs to be continually cleansed of all defilement in life for he remains a sinner although all his sin has been acquitted. This message is implicitly contained in his famous formula which describes the Christian as at one and the same time a righteous man and a sinner: simul justus et peccator. "Whoever is justified", he explains, "is still a sinner, and yet he is considered fully and perfectly righteous by God who pardons and is merciful".<sup>12</sup> This seemingly paradoxical situation of man, as Luther clearly indicated, remains through all of life and continues until death. It is for this reason that Christ promised the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier.

Even as he preached the reality of man's sanctification, Luther did not lose sight of his original postulate, viz., that man is justified by faith alone. In the process of sanctification, man, already justified in and through Christ, cooperates and shows, by his thoughts and deeds, that Christ is in him. Sanctification, therefore, is the fruit, not the cause, of justification. For Luther, it was always faith, not good works, however plentiful they may be, that justifies.

The Place of Good Works. In the following quotations is revealed the thinking of Luther on the function of faith and the place of good works simply as fruits of faith:

We confess that good works must follow faith, yes, not only must, but follow voluntarily, just as a good tree not only must produce good fruits, but does so freely. Just as good fruits do not make the tree good, so good works do not justify the person.

But good works come from a person who has already been justified beforehand by faith, just as good fruits come from a tree which is already good beforehand by nature. 13

Good works are, for Luther, the basis for knowing that faith is alive and true, for: "true faith is not idle; we can, therefore, ascertain and recognize those who have true faith from the effect or from what follows".<sup>14</sup>



Just as sanctification is the proof of justification, so are good works the unmistakeable sign of a genuine faith. He says:

Works are a certain sign, like a seal on a letter, which make me certain that my faith is genuine. As a result, if I examine my heart and find that my works are done in love, then I am certain that my faith is genuine and assures me and demonstrates my faith to me. 15

It is apparent from the foregoing considerations, that Luther acknowledged the validity of man's ethical activity only insofar as they reflect the vitality of faith which alone is the root and cause of justification. God's mercy can only be received in an act of true and genuine faith . . . no amount of activity toward self-righteousness or righteousness apart from God could avail man in the attainment of justification.

Luther has expressed what needs to be said about the place and acceptability of good works. He did not, however, assign to them any soteriological significance, that is to say, works are not necessary for justification or for salvation: "Our renewal is thus necessary but neither for justification nor for our salvation. The only thing which is necessary for salvation or justification is the mercy of God which is received by faith".<sup>16</sup> Jus-

tifying faith produces good works, and good works are the fruits of a faith that is alive and true. Good works do not justify a man but only serve as an external witness to faith.

Only through faith can man enter into eternal life, Luther said, and it is not possible to merit heaven by good works. In fact, "when we begin to believe in Christ, after we have been baptized, then, according to faith and the word, we are liberated from death, from sin and from the devil. Therefore we have the beginning of life eternal and its first fruits in this life, a sort of mild foretaste . . . but soon, divested of this flesh, we shall fully appreciate it".<sup>17</sup> The justified Christian must indeed struggle in life, but faith active in love will sustain him and lead him on to the lasting enjoyment of eternal blessedness.

#### VALDES AND CALVIN.

It is quite often said that without John Calvin the very survival of continental Protestantism would have been greatly imperiled. So profound was the influence he exerted and so extensive was the ecclesial transformation which he championed that he must have imparted to the re-

form movement "a driving force which made itself felt in the social and political as well as the religious history of Western lands".<sup>18</sup>

The impact of his religious innovations far outweigh his other remarkable achievements. On the question of justification, for instance, he parallels Luther in having created as much impression on subsequent ages. While it may be argued that this matter did not occupy a central place in his theological corpus, the obvious fact remains that his formulation of this doctrine and of the other related doctrine on election stands out remarkably within the total structure of his revelational theology.

How does his doctrine compare to that of Valdes? On which points do they substantially agree and wherein do they differ? These and other questions we shall attempt to answer in the succeeding pages.

Nature and Function of Faith. Calvin defines faith as "a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit".<sup>19</sup> In characterizing faith as 'knowledge', he meant it to be understood in the context

of "assurance rather than comprehension".<sup>20</sup> In Calvin's definition, therefore, faith is not directed to any given doctrinal truth, but simply to a knowledge of God's goodness toward us by which we are certainly assured of God's favor.

Although, according to F. Wendel, Calvin obtained his notion of faith from Luther, at least in the form in which it is presented in the INSTITUTES of 1536, he "never ascribed to faith the autonomous value that it had acquired in the thought of Luther".<sup>21</sup> Faith of itself, Calvin explains, "is of no worth or price",<sup>22</sup> no meaning for salvation. It is nothing more than an empty vessel; it acquires a saving significance only in relation to its content: Jesus Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Since faith "of itself does not possess the power of justifying, but only insofar as it receives Christ",<sup>24</sup> it serves only as an instrument for receiving the righteousness of Christ. God alone justifies through Christ. Thus is man accepted in God's favor.<sup>25</sup>

According to Calvin, acceptance into God's favor implies two things: "the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness".<sup>26</sup> This is the double grace man receives in justification, for:

We are justified through faith, not in the sense, however, that we receive within us any righteousness, but because the righteousness of Christ is credited to us, entirely as if it were really ours, while our iniquity is not charged to us, so that one can truly call this righteousness simply the remission of sins. 27

Regeneration of Man. For Calvin, as for Luther, one of the consequences of faith is that it shows the Christian that, although he is justified by Christ, he remains a sinner all his life. With this in mind, Calvin developed a doctrine which we may not leave unnoticed. In justification, man is at the same time initially regenerated and sanctified. Not only is man made righteous, but he too is born into a new life and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ.

Following John and Paul, Calvin emphatically attributes this birth into a new life to the ministry of the Holy Spirit whom he regards as the bond that unites man to Christ. Faith, Calvin observes, is the principal work of the Holy Spirit, because "by faith alone he leads us into the light of the gospel".<sup>28</sup> By the power of this light, the spirit brings to our mind what Christ taught by mouth and, consequently, may rightly be called "the key that unlocks for us the treasures of the kingdom of

Heaven; and his illumination, the keenness of our insight".<sup>29</sup>

Thus, according to Calvin, by faith we are bound and incorporated into the fellowship of Christ, and the gift of faith effects this spiritually, i.e., in the power of the Holy Spirit who inspires and guides the attitude of faith. In this work of sanctification, man is thrown back upon the grace of God in Christ not merely once but again and again. In his Instruction in Faith of 1537, Calvin writes:

We cannot receive through faith his righteousness without embracing at the same time that sanctification, because the Lord in one same alliance, which He has made with us in Jesus Christ, promises that He will be propitious toward our iniquities and will write His law in our hearts. 30

It is clear from the foregoing quotation that Calvin gave equal if not more emphasis on the doctrine of regeneration and this expresses something peculiar to Calvinistic theology. He was aware of the message of the Reformation which was righteousness in the sight of God by faith. He too was aware of the possible consequences that this attitude could cause, i.e., that such a doctrine could make people "careless and wanton". To avoid such a calamity, Calvin accentuated the value of a life led in

mortification and participation in the new life with Jesus Christ. Thus Calvin explains this point in terms that Luther would not have disavowed:

This restoration is not accomplished either in a minute of time nor in a day, nor in a year; but God abolishes the corruptions of the flesh in his elect in a continuous succession of time, and indeed little by little; and he does not cease to cleanse them of their filth, to dedicate them to Himself as temples, to reform their senses to true piety, so that they may exercise themselves all their lives in penitence, and know that this war never comes to an end until death. 31

He agrees with Luther that regeneration does not cease in a moment, but continues throughout our earthly life in the conflict with sin, since the fact of sin remains, although its guilt has been removed. The new life, in Calvinistic terms, is a "reality that is not purely eschatological, but expresses itself here and now in definite deeds".<sup>32</sup>

Faith and Good Works. Now the all-important question arises as to whether works have any sort of significance for one's personal assurance of an eternal reward. It is apparent from the foregoing consideration that Calvin acknowledged a necessary connection between faith and good works. True and living faith is the foundation and only cause of salvation, and good works are "fruits of re-

generation as external proof of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit".<sup>33</sup> This is the central thought of Calvin's theology of works in relation to faith.

Never did Calvin dream of a true and dynamic faith that is destitute of good works nor of a justification that stands without them. "These benefits", he says, "are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies".<sup>34</sup> In admitting the intimate relationship between faith and good works, he did not, however, assign to works the salutary efficacy that pertains to faith alone. Man is justified solely by faith, he insisted, because by faith "we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God".<sup>35</sup> Works are of no value apart from faith.

Calvin, therefore, admits that our works may have a certain significance for the conviction that we are saved, but only when we have first of all fully and sufficiently recognized that it is through the sole mercy of God apprehended by faith that we are truly saved. He sees in this the workings of God's election which for him is the key to all the mystery. He says:



If we seek salvation, life and the immortality of the Heavenly Kingdom, then there is no other to whom we may flee, seeing that he alone is the fountain of life, the anchor of salvation, and the heir of the kingdom of Heaven. Now what is the purpose of election but that we, adopted as sons by our Heavenly Father, may obtain salvation and immortality by His favor 36

Justification, for Calvin, is simply the manifestation of God's election. The reality of the newness of life of the justified rests upon the reality of God's definite election or, as Calvin puts it, upon the grace of adoption. None but the elect, the adopted sons of God, are called to the enjoyment of eternal life, for: "All whom he receives, the Father is said to have entrusted and committed to him to keep unto eternal life".<sup>37</sup>

#### VALDES AND THE COUNCIL OF TRENT.

Even now it is difficult to realize the staggering significance and impact of the Council of Trent which was convoked barely four years after the death of Valdes. How much reform and renewal actually resulted from Trent is a serious question, but over a period of eighteen years the leaders of Roman Catholicism attempted to provide the basis of renewed life in the church.

Such attempts at renewal have been articulated in the many conciliar documents that were officially promulgated, and among these was the Decree on Justification. It is quite justifiably said that the Decree constituted the normative answer of the highest teaching authority in the Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant doctrine of SOLIFIDEISM. It drew doctrinal boundaries in a positive fashion between Catholic and Protestant tradition, setting up a definite line of demarcation between them.

Had Valdes lived up to the very day when the Decree was promulgated, the determination of his position and the verdict passed on him by the Spanish Inquisition must have surely taken a different turn. A summary and analysis of the Decree will show the validity of this statement and the merits of Valdes' doctrine.

The Part of God in Justification. The basic assertion of the whole Decree and the theme that keeps recurring in the course of its development is that Christ alone is the salvation of the world through the outpouring of the merits of His death and sufferings, and that men are infallibly saved through Him.<sup>38</sup> By His passion, death and resurrection, Christ restored the life of grace and brought to fallen man forgiveness of sins.

In Tridentine language, the justification of the sinner is described as "the translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace and of adoption of the sons of God through Jesus Christ, our Saviour".<sup>39</sup> In view of God's sovereign disposition, man's justification is "not only a remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts of God whereby an unjust man becomes just".<sup>40</sup>

One would expect that the conciliar document which has now re-asserted the Catholic concept of justification would next proceed to elaborate on this theme. Man, the Decree states, can reach a state of grace and become a child of God by virtue of a pre-disposing or prevenient grace made available for him through the merits of the death and sufferings of Christ. In this is God's mercy and love made manifest that "they who by sin had been cut off from God, may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace".<sup>41</sup>

Man's justification, therefore, or more appropriately man's salvation, depends upon his positive response to God's quickening and helping grace, for he remains free to

cooperate or reject that grace laid down at his disposal. The Decree seems to imply that God does everything, and man does nothing; and it is God's grace that works the whole of a sinner's justification, including his free cooperation with grace.

Although God alone justifies, man still has a part to play, indeed very little as it may seem, in the whole scheme of salvation. This may seem paradoxical, the Decree states, but "while God touches the heart of every man through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, man himself neither does absolutely nothing while receiving that inspiration, since he can also reject it, nor yet is he able by his own free will and without the grace of God to move himself to justice in His sight".<sup>42</sup>

The Part of Man in Justification. In his justification, man's part is FAITH active in love. By justifying faith the Tridentine Fathers did not mean "confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies sinful man",<sup>43</sup> but the grace of faith infused by God at the moment of baptism. Through faith, man is put into an intimate relationship with God. There is simply no way, other than the grace of divine faith, for man to earn status be-

fore God. Man is not only at the receiving end of God's benign goodness and mercy, but he voluntarily reciprocates God's love by his acceptance of divine favor in an act of faith "that worketh by charity".

The Decree strongly censures the attitude of vain confidence that arises out of false faith and presumptuous hope in God's promises:

It must not be maintained, that they who are truly justified must needs, without any doubt whatever, convince themselves that they are justified, and that no one is absolved from sins and justified except he that believes with certainty that he is absolved and justified, and that absolution and justification are effected by this faith alone, as if he who does not believe this, doubts the promises of God and the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. 44

Faith, therefore, is not alone sufficient for justification: "for faith, unless hope and charity be added to it, neither unites man perfectly with Christ nor makes him a living member of His body. For which reason it is most truly said that faith without works is dead and of no profit".<sup>45</sup> Under this light, opposite doctrines were anathematized in the following canons:

Canon 9. If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his will, let him be anathema.

Canon 32. If anyone says that the good works of the one justified are in such manner the gifts of God that they are not also the good merits of his justified . . . let him be anathema.

Good works that spring from faith and love are the fruits of justification. By his good works, man can merit eternal reward "whether he has preserved uninterruptedly the grace received or recovered it when lost",<sup>46</sup> for as the Apostle said: "Abound in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. For God is not unjust, that He should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in His name; and, do not lose your confidence, which hath a great reward".<sup>47</sup>

It is hardly too much to say that some of the reformers have acknowledged too the validity of good works that flow from faith. But they certainly denied the meritorious value of such works which the council of Trent, in the foregoing considerations, has boldly affirmed. As a matter of fact, it has always been catholic teaching that man, with the help of divine grace, is able to do good, and that the meritorious value of his good works are rooted in, and derive their efficacy from, divine grace. Grace is of the nature of God's own action, who reveals the fulness of His righteousness by being merciful.

State after Justification. In justification, not only are man's sins forgiven, but there takes place a total transformation of sinful man. Man is inwardly recreated and sanctified. This renewal "is not merely imputed, as something adhering to the man from without, but is a deep inward process fundamentally transforming the soul".<sup>48</sup> With the death of the old man, a new creature is born in God's sight. Thus is condemned and refuted the Protestant idea of forensic justification, whereby God considers man as just without changing him objectively.

Though justified, man still remains capable of sin. The Tridentine Fathers maintained that the grace of justification once received can be lost "not only by infidelity, whereby also faith itself is lost, but also by every other mortal sin, though in this case faith is not lost".<sup>49</sup> Even in this state, man can still recover the grace he has lost and can again be justified when, "moved by God, he exerts himself to obtain through the sacrament of Penance the recovery, by the merits of Christ, for this manner of justification is restoration for those fallen, which the Holy Fathers have aptly called a second plank after the shipwreck of grace lost".<sup>50</sup> Restoration into grace is made possible through repentance, and repentance is a manifestation of a true and lively faith.

R E F E R E N C E S

<sup>1</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 265.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther, in Bertram Lee Woolf's edition of the Reformation Writings of Martin Luther, vol. II (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956) p. 289.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 288.

<sup>5</sup>LW., 34, p. 110. This and following quotations similarly abbreviated are taken from the American edition: LUTHER'S WORKS (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960).

<sup>6</sup>WA., 40 (I), p. 33: "Non per nos ipsos . . . sed per alienum auxilium, per Filium unigenitum Dei, Jhesum Christum, simus a peccato, morte, diabolo redempti et vita aeterna donati". English translation in the text is taken from Ewald E. Plass' What Luther Says: An Anthology (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1959).

<sup>7</sup>WA., 39, p. 84.

<sup>8</sup>LW., 34, p. 153., WA., 39, p. 83: "Quod justificari ista includit, fide scilicet propter Christum reputari nos justos".

<sup>9</sup>cf. Uuras Saarnivaara, Luther Discovers the Gospel (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1951) p. 123.

<sup>10</sup>LW., 34, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup>WA., 49, p. 94.

<sup>12</sup>LW., 34, p. 152.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., p. 111.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., p. 183.

<sup>15</sup>cf. Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) p. 247.



<sup>16</sup>ibid., p. 249.

<sup>17</sup>WA., 40 (II), p. 517: "Nam cum incipimus credere in Christum, postquam baptizati sumus, tunc secundum fidem et verbum sumus liberi a morte, a peccato et a diabolo, ergo principium vitae aeternae et primicias habemus in hac vita et tenuem quendam gustum . . . mox exuti hac carne, omnia plenissime percepturi".

<sup>18</sup>James Mackinnon, Calvin and the Reformation (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962) p. viii.

<sup>19</sup>John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, III,2,7. J. T. McNeill's edition in the Library of Christian Classics, vol. XXI. (London: S. C. M. Press, Ltd., 1961). All reference to Calvin's Institutes are from this edition.

<sup>20</sup>Inst., III,2,14 p. 560.

<sup>21</sup>Francois Wendel, Calvin-The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) p. 241.

<sup>22</sup>Inst., III,11,7 p. 733.

<sup>23</sup>ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Inst., III,11,7 p. 733.

<sup>25</sup>Inst., III,11,2 p. 727.

<sup>26</sup>ibid.

<sup>27</sup>John Calvin, Instruction in Faith. English translation by Paul J. Fuhrmann (London: Lutterworth Press) p. 40.

<sup>28</sup>Inst., III, 1,4 p. 541.

<sup>29</sup>ibid., p. 542.

<sup>30</sup>Instruction in Faith, p. 42

<sup>31</sup>John Calvin, Commentary on I Corinthians (cf. F. Wendel, op. cit., p. 42).

<sup>32</sup>ibid., p. 244.

<sup>33</sup>Inst., III,14,19 p. 786.

<sup>34</sup>Inst., III,16, 1 p. 798.

<sup>35</sup>ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Inst., III,24, 5 p. 970.

<sup>37</sup>Inst., III,24, 6 p. 971.

<sup>38</sup>Denz. 1522, p. 369. This and following quotations similarly abbreviated are taken from Henricus Denzinger's Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum, ed. XXXII: "Decretum De Justificatione" (Herder: Barcinone, trigurgi Brisgoviae, romae, Neo-Eboraci, 1958). English text is from H. J. Schroeder's translation of the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent (London: B. Herder Book Co., 1960).

<sup>39</sup>Denz., 1524, p. 370.

<sup>40</sup>Denz., 1528, p. 371.

<sup>41</sup>Denz., 1525, p. 370.

<sup>42</sup>ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Denz., 1562, p. 379.

<sup>44</sup>Denz., 1534, p. 373.

<sup>45</sup>Denz., 1531, p. 372.

<sup>46</sup>Denz., 1545, p. 376.

<sup>47</sup>ibid.

<sup>48</sup>cf. B. J. Kidd, The Counter Reformation (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1937) p. 65.

<sup>49</sup>Denz. 1544, p. 376.

<sup>50</sup>Denz. 1542, p. 375.

## C O N C L U S I O N

It has been our principal object of concern in this study to locate Juan de Valdes within the current streams of either Catholic or Protestant tradition as we explored and analyzed his doctrine on justification by faith. The immediate result of our inquiry, as far as we were able to show, leads us to the conclusion that Valdes' doctrine is neither wholly Catholic nor exclusively Protestant in orientation, but a veritable melting pot of the best elements of Protestantism, as enunciated in the doctrines of Luther and Calvin, and Roman Catholicism, as represented by the historic Council of Trent.

In his doctrinal formulation, Juan de Valdes was not exclusively a Protestant, for he "never showed any interest in deciding or declaring himself to be one".<sup>1</sup> Without openly adhering to Protestantism, he succeeded in developing a doctrine distinctly similar to Protestant reformation thought. His concept of the nature of justifying faith as trust (fiducia), his understanding of the content of justification, its relationship to regeneration and sanctification, and, finally, his acknow-

ledgement of Christ as the only source from which these benefits flow, all these are substantially identical with Luther's and Calvin's interpretation of scriptural evidence regarding faith and justification. It must be admitted that, although they are substantially in agreement, there are, however, few areas in which they differ from each other at least in emphasis.

They differ, for instance, in the manner they have presented the necessary role that God plays in justification. Luther and Calvin have stressed emphatically the sovereignty of God as the decisive factor in the process of justification. Although Valdes, in not so many words, acknowledged the decisive impact of God's intervention in the divine economy of salvation, he accentuated with some amount of forcefulness the equally significant role of man who, through faith, accepts God's benevolent gesture of love and concern. Valdes was more down-to-earth in this respect, more personal in his approach. For Valdes, it is not enough that man simply believes and accepts. To be staunch and firm in Christian faith, we have quoted him to say, man has to experience what he believes.<sup>2</sup>

Not being a trained theologian like Calvin, Valdes did not speculate too elaborately on the question of divine election, although he also emphasized on the actual bene-

fits of our incorporation into Christ as a manifestation of God's predilection. In not emphasizing the doctrine of election, he probably thought that such sophisticated speculations would not be of much avail than it would in underlining the experiential aspects of man's response to grace. He thereby avoided one delicate area of theological disputation which has proven to be a constant occasion for many a polemical dispute in this<sup>at</sup> age of controversy.

It is true that Valdes protested quite vigorously against the well-defined abusive practices of the Church in which he was born, but he never bolted away from the bosom of the Roman Church, neither did he have the least intention of ever separating himself from it. As a matter of fact, Valdes himself had written pointedly of "those who have departed, or are about to depart, from the unity of the church, by giving ear to false prophets".<sup>3</sup>

The eventful re-orientation of mind and change of direction he supposedly experienced later in life, led him ever closer to his idea of a truly Christian Church founded on the authority of the Gospel. Unlike Luther, he reacted positively to his deeply religious 'encounter with Christ' with such dedication of spirit that he ulti-

mately devoted himself more zealously to spiritual self-improvement and the propagation of Christ's message of salvation. So admirably thorough must have been this reversal of thought from 'humanism to divinity' that "after Christ was revealed to him, Valdes did not follow the Imperial Court much, but stayed in Italy and lived the greater part of his life in Naples, where he won many disciples for Christ . . . by the sweetness of his teachings and the holiness of his life".<sup>4</sup>

Neither was Valdes' doctrine wholly Catholic, nor was he a Roman Catholic reformer as others in the past represented him to be. It is true, though, that his doctrinal formulation of justification obviously constituted a radical break with the Pre-Tridentine position. It is also true that he did not preach the popular Roman acceptance of so deep and central question, for he criticized the great emphasis it laid on the validity of works as a cause of justification. We have seen how he insisted on the nature and function of good works simply as fruits, not the source, of righteousness.

What Valdes preached was a return to the Gospel message of salvation, and, to bring this about, he tried to found a "Christian Church on apostolic and eschatological norms, with the doctrine of justification (ex fide

sola) as foundation".<sup>5</sup> In expressing his personal insights on justification, he did not introduce a new article of belief, but rather sought to recover what he thought had always been pivotal for the Christian believer, i.e., the appropriation through faith of Christ's grace and merits as the sole and sufficient grounds of man's justification.

It seems most unfortunate that he was, we dare say, harshly reprimanded by the Pre-Tridentine inquisitional jurors, who failed to search deeply into the merits of his case. Had he probably lived longer to witness the promulgation of the Tridentine decree, he would have been spared of some of the damaging charges leveled on him and his work at his very first literary attempt.

The foregoing considerations bring us to our main point of observation, i.e., that Valdes, in his doctrine, seems to have attempted a reconciliation or mediation of the two apparently opposite views. He must have noticed, not too clearly perhaps as we do now, that, although the two doctrines moved on different levels, they differed from each other in appearance than in reality.<sup>6</sup> We have seen how cautiously he approached the question in his intent to reconcile both.

In answer, for instance, to the Protestant battle-cry: SOLA FIDE, the Council of Trent countered with an equally forceful message: SOLA GRATIA, as she emphasized the role of God's sovereign grace. The Tridentine constituents described divine grace as the prime factor of the way of justification, and this is no less than any reformer has done. It is apparent that the conflict between Catholic and Protestant camps opened around the doctrine of infused grace held by the former and the matter of imputation taught by the latter.

As we have indicated,<sup>7</sup> Valdes did not harp so much on the imputatory manner grace is related to the sinner, but stressed a point common to both, namely: that man is simply admitted into God's favor and made to share in the merits of Christ.

We cannot deny that there existed a real wall of disagreement as regards the meritorious value of good works. Both systems agree that good works are the consequent fruit of a true and lively faith. But as to whether they merit reward in this life and in the life hereafter, this is where they parted ways. Good works are the effect, not the cause of justification, the reformers insisted. Man's activity cannot complete what has already been completed by Christ.



We do understand now why Valdes, Luther and many others pounded vigorously on this point in utter opposition to the Romanist view. Was it not the formidable sacramental structure of Roman external worship that they so much reacted against and opposed? This no doubt was at the bottom of the hotly contested issue of indulgences, the highly irregular practices of which greatly scandalized Luther and the rest of the band. But setting aside all polemical and speculative trimmings, do they not point to the same reality commonly accepted that genuine faith engenders true works of love?

In showing his disciples the life of faith in Jesus Christ, Valdes taught them to look beyond the elaborate ceremonies and pompous rituals of the Church. He was for each of them an exemplar who took the "New Testament for his standard, fixing his view upon the things signified, not upon the symbols exhibited".<sup>8</sup> Although the religion that Valdes preached was understandably non-sacramental, he taught and practiced it within the context of genuine Christianity. The life of faith and inner virtue of every individual soul was for him the real meaning of a Christ-like life. "A true Christian", he observed, "will base his life on the inner virtues of faith and charity, and will live purely and sincerely as Christ did. Anyone who

does not live according to these principles cannot be a Christian, no matter how strictly he observes Church ceremonies".<sup>9</sup>

Valdes has always been credited as having outlined in his doctrine the Christian way he envisioned toward the reform of man, not the Church. This is the type of Evangelism he proclaimed in his interpretation of the message of Christ. He found the root of the problem in sinful man and in the human element of the visible Church. The restoration of order in the Church would eventually follow after each man has realized the urgent need of re-living the Christ-like life in all its heights and depths.

Deeply convinced of the message he preached, he incessantly proclaimed the essential unity of all believers in Christ. Man has only to put his life at God's disposal in the manner Christ has gloriously indicated. With Jesus Christ we shall never fail.

We have one final exhortation from Valdes, his final word: we all "should be taught to believe in Christ, to follow His doctrines and to imitate His life because such is the end to which every Christian should devote himself".<sup>10</sup> With this encouraging message we conclude our study of the life and doctrine of a great man, of whom All genuine Christians can be truly proud.

R E F E R E N C E S

<sup>1</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 513.

<sup>2</sup>cf. Chapter Three above, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Juan de Valdes, XVII Opuscles, translated from the Spanish and Italian, and edited by J. T. Betts (London: 1882) as cited by P. McNair, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 28

<sup>5</sup>J. C. Nieto, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>6</sup>cf. section on "Justification" in the New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. VIII (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967) p. 91.

<sup>7</sup>cf. Chapter Three above, pp. 45-47.

<sup>8</sup>B. Wiffen, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>9</sup>cf. J. Longhurst, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>10</sup>ibid.

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