

FIDES JUSTIFICANS ACCORDING TO

SAINT ROBERT BELLARMINO

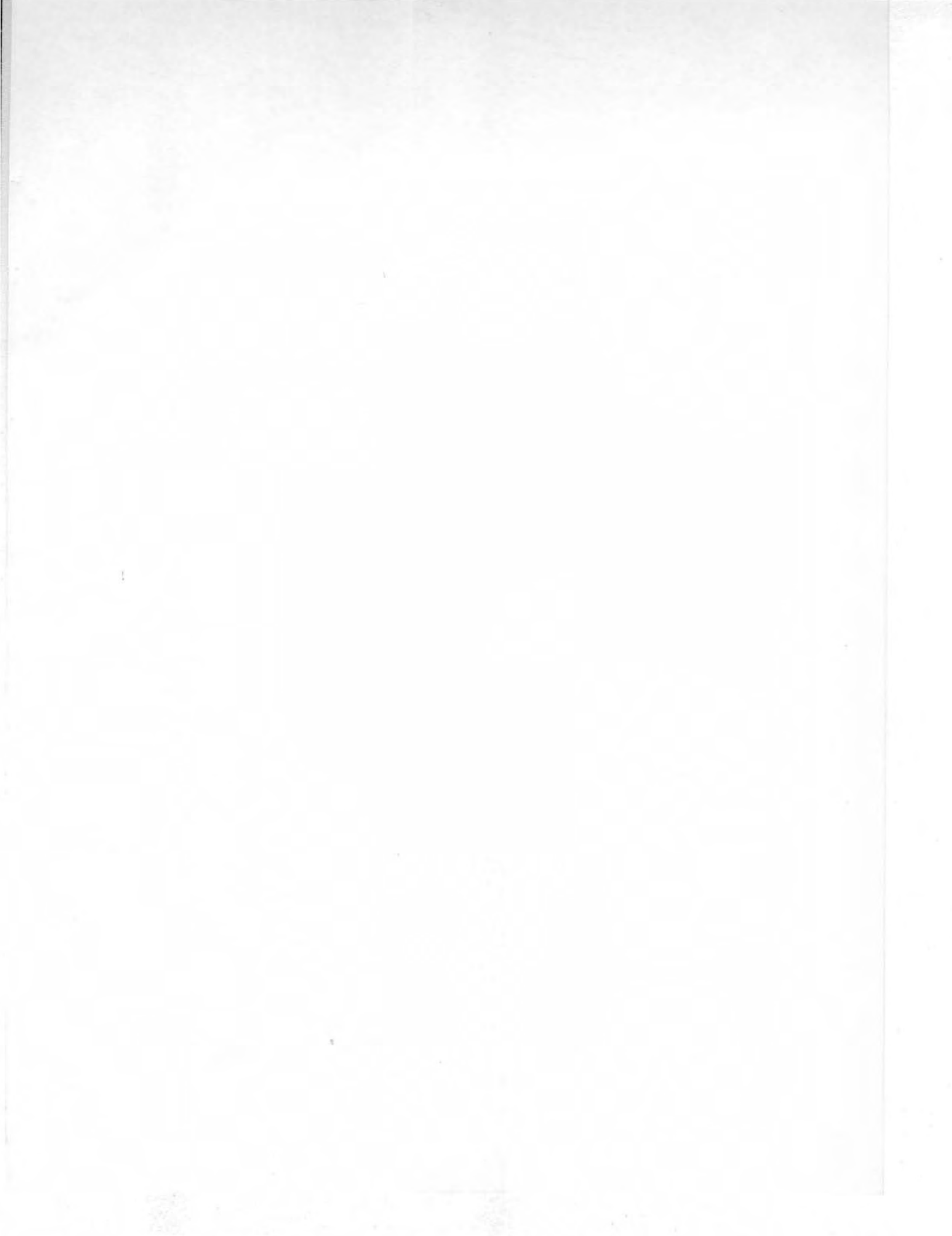
by

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PREFACE

Men of every era must come to terms with the problem of man's sinful alienation from himself, others and God. During the Reformation, there was a new and forceful awareness of the need for personal justification. St. Robert Bellarmine represented, in his writings, the relevance of the traditional Catholic faith to the newly felt problem. With certain notable exceptions,¹ the object of primary interest in Bellarmine studies of the past seventy years focuses on the theory of government contained in his writings on the nature of the Church.² No thorough investigation, however, has been carried out on Bellarmine's views on the key theological problem of his time,

¹E.g., the works of X. M. LeBachelet, S.J., Auctarium Bellarminianum (Paris, 1913) and Bellarmin et la Bible Sixto-Clementine: études et documents inédits (Paris, 1911); Sebastian Tromp, S.J., for his nine volume edition of Bellarmine's sermons (Rome, 1942-50); Edward A. Ryan, S.J., The Historical Scholarship of Saint Bellarmine (Louvain, 1936); the biographies by James Brodrick, S.J.; a summary of the theology of the Controversies by Joseph de la Serviere, La Théologie de Bellarmin (Paris, 1909) and an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation by John Harden, S.J., "A Comparative Study of Bellarmine's Doctrine of the Relation of Sincere Non-Catholics to the Catholic Church," (Rome, 1951).

²Several of Bellarmine's semi-political works have been translated by George Albert Moore and Kathleen E. Murphy; John Clement Rager, The Political Philosophy of Blessed Cardinal Bellarmine (München, 1934); John Courtney Murray, S.J., "St. Robert Bellarmine on the Indirect Power," Theological Studies LX (December, 1948), pp. 491-535; David S. Schaff, "The Bellarmine-Jefferson Legend and the Declaration of Independence," Papers of the American Society for Church History, Second Series VIII (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), pp. 239-276.

justification by faith. This thesis is an attempt to perform that task.

None of Bellarmine's treatise on justification is available in translation. All translations from the Latin are mine. I quote extensively from Bellarmine's text, following a method of Bellarmine himself. I would like to thank Mr. Harvey Arnold and Dr. Calvin Schmitt, head librarians respectively of the libraries of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and McCormick Theological Seminary for permission to use their libraries. Thanks are due also to the director of my thesis, Rev. John R. Sheets, S. J., for his patience with my efforts at writing this paper and to Mrs. Minerva Bell who typed the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

The present study and all academic work has limits which we need not regret once we are aware of them. Setting limits for our understanding simply serves to designate our selection from the material available and the point of view chosen. This essay is an enquiry into St. Robert Bellarmine's understanding of the faith of justification as discussed in the first of five books on justification in his Disputationum de controversiis Christianae fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos (1586-1593). The object of our interest is the section De justificatione, qui est de fide justificante (1593) and Bellarmine's meaning of the term "fides justificans" as it is used there.

In Chapters I-II of this book, Bellarmine describes the problem in outline: how best to understand the nature and acquisition of Christian justice. Becoming just or justification involves "a question about the interior righteousness by which man is rightly ordained in relation to God and divine things. This alone is justice simply and absolutely and is called the justice of faith because it begins from

faith and the justice of God since it is given by him."¹ Such justice is both 1) an inherent and interior quality² of man and 2) actually operative and productive of good deeds.³

As something actively occurring, Bellarmine understands the process of justification within the philosophical framework of the Scholastic doctrine of being and causality and specifically St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of virtue. In Chapter II, he briefly considers the several causes of justification as defined by the Council of Trent,⁴ and concludes that of all the causal aspects of justification, the focal point of the debate with the Protestant reformers pertains to: 1) the material causality of the dispositions of the soul of the believer and his freedom which "prepare the material to receive the

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Robert Francis Bellarmine, Opera Omnia, ed. Joseph Giuliano (7 vols.; Naples, 1856-61), Vol. IV, Pt. 1; Liber primus, Chapter I, p. 462, col. A, lines 15-19. All quotations are from "Liber primus de justificatione, qui est de fide justificatione", pages 461-503 in the Naples edition; cited hereafter as L.P., with the chapter given by a Roman numeral. For further reference, the page column (A or B) and the lines in the Latin text are given from the Naples edition. This reference system does not apply for the pagination of other modern editions consulted (Venice, 1721-8, Paris, 1870-4 and a facsimile edition produced in Frankfurt in 1965 which used the text of the Paris edition). All quotes in English are my translations including Bellarmine's Scriptural quotes.

2

L.P. I, 462, A, 31-7. "Interior justice has its seat in the heart; . . . the justice of faith, or of God, is in the soul, that is, in the will which is called the 'heart' in Scripture." See also: "For the heart in Sacred Scripture means the soul as a complete entity and evidently it signifies the entire interiority of man. . . ." L.P. VI, 468, A, 46-8.

3

See L.P. I, 462, A, 45-57.

4

Denzinger, number 799.

form [of justification]," and 2) the intrinsic formal causality, "not in habitu but in actu which are the effects of justice [i.e., grace] and which can be called justification."¹

In this, the first of Bellarmine's five books on justification, the dominant concern is to articulate an understanding of faith as the substance of Christian living -- the potentiality of the believer to assimilate the form of a life of grace. To simplify, implicit in Bellarmine's thought is the conviction that man is not just by faith alone (material principle) nor by good works alone (formal principle) but only in the concrete coincidence of both together. This first book concentrates on the nature of faith, the disposition of faith toward justification, and the form of a fruitful and active faith. Bellarmine repeatedly attempts to demonstrate the insufficiency of the Protestant principle that faith taken by itself justifies the believer. A mere confidence in (i.e., hope of) being saved is not the same as actual redemption. Thus Bellarmine treats of the intrinsic character of Christian faith relating man to God in opposition to the extrinsic and "relational" sense given to faith by the adversaries.

To understand Bellarmine's explanation of faith properly, one must be aware of the tradition of Scholastic and Aristotelian thought which underlies the development of his points. Although the influences of Aquinas' treatise on faith and his treatments of justification and merit are quite evident in Bellarmine's work,² he himself refers to

¹L.P. II, 463, A, 37-64.

²See Summa theologica, 2a 2ae., questions 1-4 on faith. Also 1a 2ae., questions 113 and 114 on justification and merit.

Aquinas only once¹ in passing and only twice explicitly to passages in Aristotle.²

In Book III, Bellarmine acknowledges several theologians of his time whom he has consulted on the problem of faith and justification.³ Among them are many of those responsible for the revival of Scholasticism during the renaissance including Cajatan, Gregory of Valentia and Dominic Soto. Soto's eminent student, Francis Toletus, exercised strong influence on Bellarmine during his stay at the Roman College.⁴ Well versed in Aristotle, Bellarmine became equally familiar with the Summa theologica of St. Thomas during years of further study at Padua.⁵

In view of Bellarmine's devotion to St. Thomas⁶ we may wonder why he refrains from more explicit reference in this book to Aquinas and to the Scholastic tradition in which he was trained. Perhaps Bellarmine was acting in deference to his Protestant readers whose distaste for Scholasticism might exacerbate an already serious breakdown of communications. But a more probable reason is Bellarmine's attempt to ground his theology in the positive sources of Scripture and the Fathers as distinct from the more speculative traditions of his recent

¹L.P. IV, 465, A, 29-30.

²L.P. I, 462, A, 11-12; L.P. VII, 468, B, 32-6.

³L.P. III, 463, B, 56 - 464, A, 25.

⁴James Brodrick, Robert Bellarmine: Saint and Scholar (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961), p. 14.

⁵E. A. Ryan, The Historical Scholarship of Saint Bellarmine (Louvain: Bureaux du Recueil Bibliothèque de l'Université, 1936), pp. 24-31.

⁶Brodrick, pp. 28-9.

predecessors.¹ In this regard Brodrick's statement about Bellarmine is instructive:

Theology in his day was in a state of decline, due to many causes, and he did as much as any man to speed and stabilize the reform initiated by the great Dominican Francisco de Vitoria at Salamanca. In other words, he stressed the positive elements in theology, the assiduous study and use of Scripture, of the Fathers of the Church, the Councils, and Church history in general.²

In contrast to his use of Scholastic sources, Bellarmine refers to Augustine about 90 times. The list of Fathers quoted or acknowledged is very extensive with key dependence on St. John Chrysostom, St. Prosper, St. Fulgentius and St. Bernard. The Scriptural texts of Romans 4 and Hebrews 11 are extensively analyzed as well as scores of additional testimonies from both the Old and New Testaments and the Council of Trent's decree on Justification.

A final word must be said about Bellarmine's method and writing style in the Controversies. Ryan traces an early work of Bellarmine called Loci communes which he began as a summary of disputed questions and their proofs for his own use.³ He later developed these loci when he was engaged in commenting on the Summa theologica of St. Thomas and

¹Ryan, pp. 133-7.

²Brodrick, p. 42. Garrigou-Lagrange lists Bellarmine among the non-Thomistic commentators on the problem of grace. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109-14 (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book Co., 1952), p. vii.

³Ryan, pp. 127-8.

it became the direct preparation for the Controversies. The widespread use of loci communes as a literary form of theological exposition (first used by Aristotle in his Topica) in the sixteenth century is well documented.¹ In Bellarmine's time "the title locus is used in the sense of rubric, a convenient heading under which arguments relating to a certain subject matter are grouped."² The treatise on justifying faith retains this basic form.

Bellarmino wrote during the period of counter-reformation polemic debates. His style is controversial and the opponents are appropriately termed adversarii, sectarii or haeretici. Arguments and various scriptural and patristic testimonies are inductively grouped around certain focal points of disagreement with the adversaries. Because Bellarmine is replying to a variety of thoughts of different reformers and because of a certain amount of overlap among different chapters, the text tends to be repetitive and occasionally disconnected. Thus, in an attempt to organize and select Bellarmine's main ideas, a condensation of arguments, the omission of much of the testimonial material refuting the adversaries' positions and a simplification of the structure permit more of his logical outline to appear. It must be kept in mind that Bellarmine has an apologetic purpose in writing the Controversies and that it is not primarily a work of systematic theology.

¹See Ryan 127-33. Also Quirinus Breen, Christianity and Humanism, ed. Nelson Peter Ross (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; 1968), pp. 93-105.

²Ryan, p. 131.

CHAPTER I

Framing the Problem

Bellarmino provides an outline of his plan of enquiry into the key points of disagreement between Catholics and adversaries which is best seen from several summations in his own words. There are four disputes to be considered in the following chapters.

First, we disagree in this respect. They [adversaries] explain the faith which is necessary for obtaining justification in a different way from the way we Catholics do. Then the first question which should be disputed is what kind of faith or what is this faith which is required for justification. Secondly, we disagree since they contend that faith alone justifies. We join related aspects to it [faith] in its function of justifying or disposing to justice. Thus there may be another question -- whether faith alone justifies through the mode of a disposition or of an instrument. Thirdly, we disagree since they teach that faith, which they say justifies by itself, can never occur alone. We say the opposite; that [faith] does not justify by itself but that it can, however, occur alone. Lastly, we disagree on the manner in which faith justifies, for they contend that faith has no value or merit and justifies only relationally [relative].¹ We assert that faith, even when disjoined from charity, is valuable and has the power to justify in the manner of a disposition and petition.² (Emphasis mine.)

¹One of Bellarmine's central criticisms of the reformers' position is that it expresses an understanding of justification as merely relational (relative). "A justification by imputation, according to Roman theology, was merely relational and not ontological. And a relation without an ontological foundation was a fiction and a fantasy. There must be a basis for justification in us, or there can be no righteous imputation." Robert D. Preus, "The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Classical Lutheran Orthodoxy," The Springfielder, XXIX (Spring, 1965), p. 30.

²L.P. III, 463, B, 23-42.

In this paper we will attempt to comment on the development of points as Bellarmine distinguishes them in his fourfold schema. Accordingly, we will begin, in the following chapter, to consider the first disputed question on the nature of justifying faith by considering its object. First, however, we can gain an overview of the several disputes between Bellarmine and the adversaries by noting what he considers to be their fundamental disagreement: the way in which each understands God's promise of salvation to man. Bellarmine notes that the adversaries "are accustomed to distinguish three kinds of faith: historical faith, faith in miracles and faith in the promises."¹ Furthermore, they teach that faith in the promises may be either general or specific, i.e., specialis. Specific faith is that "by which each man believes, applying the divine promise to himself, or preferably, trusting that all his sins are forgiven through Christ."² The adversaries teach that this specific faith or personal trust in the forgiveness of one's sins through Christ³ is the faith of justification.⁴ Bellarmine considers the Protestant acceptance of this view of Luther as "the seed of all the heresies of our times"⁵ and the fountainhead of all the sectarian

¹L.P. IV, 464, A, 34-6.

²L.P. IV, 464, A, 51-3.

³See L.P. IV, 464, B, 16-31.

⁴See the several references from various reformers by which Bellarmine documents his observation: L.P. IV, 464, A, 53-B, 54.

⁵L.P. IV, 464, A, 60-1.

views of faith against which he is defending.

In contrast, however, to the Protestant position, Catholics "teach that historical faith and faith in miracles and faith in the promises are one and the same thing and that this one [faith] is not properly a notion or confidence but a certain and most firm assent on the authority of the first truth and that this one [faith] is justifying faith. [However,] . . . Catholics do not use the term historical faith . . . but simply call it Catholic faith or dogmatic faith. . . ." ¹

According to Bellarmine, Luther's mistaken understanding of faith stems from a fundamental misreading of scripture on the nature of the promise of salvation which God has made to man. Bellarmine summarizes the position with which he disagrees:

[The point] in which the heretics seem to trust most completely is taken from these words in Romans 4. "Therefore the promise was the outcome of faith, that it might be a favor." These words seem to drive [us to the conclusion that] by faith we [adversaries] comprehend the trust or assent by which we embrace the promise and apply it to ourselves. For just as in human associations a gift or a promise is not ratified until [the parties] have accepted what has been accomplished, likewise the promise of the remission of sins is not affirmed; that is, it has not reached its effect unless the man, who through that faith is embraced by the God who says your sins are remitted-- that man says I believe that my sins are remitted Therefore, in order that the promise may be affirmed, God justifies from faith; that is, he justifies those who believe and trust that they are justified. ²

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L.P. IV, 465, A, 3-15. Bellarmine's use of the term prima veritas echoes St. Thomas Aquinas' consideration of the object of faith; Summa theologiae, 2a 2ae., q. 1, a. 1 & 3.

2

L.P. XI, 476, B, 28-45.

Bellarmino thus describes the Protestant notion of faith as confidence about the remission of one's sins which, according to the adversaries, is able to be grounded in an exegesis of the fourth chapter of Romans. However, according to Bellarmine, in that chapter St. Paul writes about Abraham's faith not as referring to a promise of the forgiveness of sins but as being an understanding of the promise of a historical continuation of Abraham's posterity which will manifest God's power. Bellarmine makes this response on the grounds that:

In this passage [i.e., Romans 4:13-25] the adversaries mistakenly understand the meaning of the word promise just as they do the word faith. For certainly, the remission of sins is not to be understood by the word promise but the vocation [as the father of many] nations. . . .¹

It is historical revelation and not one's conviction which forms faith. The adversaries consistently misconstrue Scripture to the extent of "fabricating new Scriptures"² and devising interpretations "repugnant to the word of God,"³ the outstanding example being Luther's insertion of the word sola (modifying fides) into his translation of Romans 3.⁴

¹L.P. XI, 477, A., 13-17. Bellarmine continues: ". . . as is clear from these words, 'in order that it might be secure for all the offspring, not only for him who is of the Law, but also for him who is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all; as it is written, 'I have appointed thee the father of many nations.''" (lines 17-21). See also L.P. VIII, 470, B, 37-44. "Apostolus Paulus in epist. ad Roman. cap. 4. explicans fidem Abrahæ, quæ reputata est illi ad justitiam, non dicit, eum credidisse sibi per misericordiam specialem, remissa fuisse peccata, sed patrem se futurum multarum gentium ex filio quem sibi centenario uxor nonagenaria, et sterilis præter solitum ordinem cursumque naturæ paritura esset."

²L.P. XIII, 471, A, 22-4.

³L.P. X, 473, A, 50-1.

⁴L.P. XX, 495, A, 49-53; L.P. XVI, 487, A, 55-8.

They continually read the meaning of a "specific mercy" into the passages where the term is never used.¹ The conception of faith as confidence in the remission of one's sins follows from Luther's erroneous exegesis of the promise "which is never found in the true Bible, that is, in the book of God."² Therefore, "by the word faith, neither a faith nor a trust is to be understood by which someone believes or trusts that his sins are remitted but rather dogmatic faith which they [adversaries] call historical."³

Utilizing Bellarmine's fourfold schema, we can develop his thoughts in three main steps considered successively in chapters II, III and IV. An analysis of Bellarmine's discussion of the nature of justifying faith (the first point of his fourfold schema) makes up the bulk of our efforts in this paper. Bellarmine's "controversial" task, correlative to his positive development of the nature of justifying faith, is to refute the Protestant interpretation of faith as misericordiā specialis. The remaining three points of Bellarmine's schema (i.e., his rejection of justification sola fide and the possibility of faith occurring apart from love, and faith's intrinsic merit) are covered only briefly in chapters III and IV since these are theses to which Bellarmine returns in later books of his treatise on justification. Bellarmine covers the first point on the nature of justifying faith most thoroughly since it is the starting point of his total consideration of justification and involves a contrast with the fundamentally different starting point of the Protestants.

¹ L.P. V, 466, B, 26-8.

² L.P. XXIII, 500, B, 59-60. (See entire chapter XXIII.)

³ L.P. XI, 477, A, 22-5.

Proceeding then to the first dispute, the different ways Catholics and Protestants explain the faith of justification, we can begin by subdividing this topic into three aspects:

Catholics differ from heretics in three things. First in the object of justifying faith, which the heretics restrict to the promise of special mercy alone. Catholics wish to range as widely as the word of God ranges, so that they contend that the certain promise of specific mercy pertains not so much to faith as to presumption. Then secondly, in the faculty and potency of the soul which is the seat of faith. Indeed they, seat faith in the will when they define it to be trust and in this way confuse it with hope. For trust is nothing at all unless hope strengthens it as St. Thomas teaches in 2.2 quæst. 129. art. 6. Catholics teach that faith has its seat in the intellect. Finally [thirdly], in the act of the intellect itself. For they define faith as a notion, we as an assent. For we assent to God, in as much as believing proposes to us that which we do not understand.¹ (Emphasis mine.)

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L.P. IV, 465, A, 18-34.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF FAITH

The Object of Faith

Bellarmino sees Catholics and Protestants maintaining polarized views of the object of faith deriving from different motives for belief. A Catholic understanding of faith leads to the conclusion that ". . . justifying faith is not confidence in mercy [of God] but rather a firm and certain assent to everything which God proposes for belief."¹ Whereas the adversaries hold that "faith does not justify in respect to the historical events of the Word of God, or to the threat of damnation, or to the precepts and laws of works but only in respect to the promise of salvation Therefore, justifying faith is correctly defined as fiducia specialis misericordiae propter Christum."²

Actual Catholic faith, on the other hand, is a complex matter not restricted to an individual present awareness but is tied intrinsically to history. It "encompasses the past, present and future since we believe all the articles revealed by God of which there are some concerning past

¹L.P. V, 465, A, 42-5.

²L.P. XI, 477, A, 42-8.

things, some concerning present things and some future things."¹

The limits of Catholic faith are not only extensive in time but include everything Protestants distinguish by their tripartite division of faith. "Justifying faith is not only the faith of promises but a historical faith which is one and the same thing . . . with the faith of miracles and promises. . . ." ² Furthermore, although "materially there are many objects of faith, there are not therefore many faiths. For there is one faith propter unam, et eandem rationem formalem, qua creduntur omnia." ³ Because this is true, the one faith expressed in the Nicene Creed enumerates twelve articles. ⁴ Therefore ". . . the word faith means true catholic faith by which we believe everything which God reveals not on account of trust or confidence," ⁵ but "ob

¹L.P. IX, 473, A, 1-4. See also L.P. V, 465, B, 30-5. "Sed non ita est, nam idem Apostolus explicans paulo post objectum fidei, non restringit illud ad res futuras, quae sperantur, sed extendit ad omnia, quae Deus revelare dignatus est, sive sint futura, sive praeterita, sive speranda, sive timenda."

²L.P. V, 466, B, 29-35. See also; L.P. V, 467, A, 3-26; L.P. XI, 475, B, 59-60.

³L.P. V, 466, B, 53-6. (See Summa theologiae, 2a 2ae. q.1 a.6.)

⁴L.P. V, 466, B, 56-9. (See Summa theologiae, 2a 2ae. q.1 a.9.) In chapter IX, Bellarmine discusses the formation of the "symbolum antiquissimum, quod apostolicum dicitur, propterea quod apostoli ipsum considerint." This, by way of developing his position that "justifying faith is not confidence in mercy but assent to everything contained in the word of God." (L.P. IX, 471, A, 28-42.)

"Now whatever the ancient Church perceived and handed down concerning what is necessary for justification and salvation cannot be more clearly known than from the symbol of faith. It was given at the beginning of the catechumenate in order that, with a right and holy faith, they [catechumens] might proceed to the bath of regeneration, that is, be justified from faith, and being justified, obtain eternal salvation."

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L.P. XI, 475, B, 50-3.

Dei ipsius, qui ea revelavit, auctoritatem."¹

The adversaries deny salvific power to the dogmatic expressions of faith of the Catholic church² and thus cut themselves off from "prayers, the sacraments, good works, and other things instituted by God for our salvation."³ Bellarmine sees the very apprehension and fear, so much the concern of a man seeking inner peace, arising from the Protestant "confusion of faith with confidence." Rather, "faith is the root and origin of confidence"⁴ and with the restoration of a proper faith will come the fortitude which dispels fear.⁵

¹L.P. V, 466, B, 32-3. (See the similar position of St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 2a 2ae. q.1. a.1.)

²See L.P. XXV, 503, B, 1-2.

³L.P. X, 474, A, 43-6.

⁴"Thus trust certainly arises from faith but is not able to be identified with faith unless we wish to confound what the Apostle himself distinguished so clearly." L.P. VI, 467, B, 17-20.

⁵L.P. XI, 476, A, 64-B, 16. The full text of Bellarmine's statement is, "Faith is attributed as the cause of fortitude since faith is the root and origin of confidence and also of the charity quibus contraria omnia superantur." This interesting comment has a relation to the functional meaning implied in Lévi-Strauss' definition of myth. "It is the nature of myth to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction." Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in Myth: A Symposium, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington, Indiana: American folklore Society, 1958), p. 64, quoted in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "Asceticism and Sexuality in the Mythology of Siva," History of Religions, VIII (May, 1969), p. 301. Participation in a myth overcomes interior contradiction, personal estrangement and alienation. Thus an essential aspect of the justification process which overcomes the estrangement of sin is the articulation, in the form of an objectivized faith, of the kerygma of Christ's death and resurrection. See the relevant study of Tillich's theology of the redemption; George Tavard, "Christ as the Answer to Existential Anguish," Paul Tillich in Catholic Thought, ed. Thomas A. O'Meara and Celestin D. Weisser (Dubuque, Iowa: The Priory Press, 1964), pp. 224-36.

The adversaries are guilty of calling an effect of justification its cause.¹ "Justifying faith ought to precede justification. However, fides specialis misericordiae follows justification. Therefore the faith of specific mercy is not justifying faith."² The trust which the adversaries confuse with faith is really strengthened faith which arises from faith as a consequence of it. Moreover, the range of concerns of trust itself is too narrow to gain a perspective on all the things God has revealed as is the case with true faith.³

It is clear to Bellarmine that the fundamental Protestant error is choosing as the object of its faith the proposition, "My sins are remitted through Christ," understood in a subjective sense. Justification means that the remission of sins causes faith.⁴ It cannot mean that this objective of Protestant faith "might be accomplished through the act itself of which it is the object because the object provides the essence of an action not the action the object."⁵

¹L.P. X, 474, A, 15.

²L.P. X, 474, A, 6-9.

³L.P. VI, 467, B, 10-45.

⁴L.P. X, 474, A, 32-4. "Certainly remission ought to occur first, then faith since every act hangs from its object not contrariwise, the object from the act."

⁵L.P. X, 474, A, 38-41. Here we have a clear correspondence with the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas on faith as a virtue. Summa theologica 2a 2ae. q. 2 a.2. Bellarmine expands this point; see L.P. X, 474, B, 9-40.

The act of faith for the adversaries is stunted because it focuses on an aspect of its own functioning and is diverted from its real objective. Fides is understanding the first truth whereas fiducia:

. . . is not apprehending [the truth] but firmly adhering to the thing apprehended. For he who trusts that he has been taught or will be taught does not apprehend doctrine by this trust nor does he begin to be taught simply because he trusts that he is taught. Rather he firmly adheres to an opinion conceived about his own doctrine.¹

Catholic faith evinces a very different character. It is dogmatic faith by which we believe that "Jesus is the Christ and that he rose from the dead and other dogmas of this kind."²

We are thus brought back to Bellarmine's previous point that dogmatic faith is constituted by historical events grounded in the historical existence of Christ. The adversaries, however, do not adequately concern themselves with the record of God's acts with man in Scripture on the grounds that "it [Scriptural record] does not teach how we might be freed from the wrath of God but rather increases fear and desperation."³ Bellarmine agrees with the adversaries in the

¹L.P. XVI, 488, A, 42-7.

²L.P. IX, 472, A, 22-4. See also: L.P. XI, 477, A, 31-4. "Here we see that justifying faith in Abraham was the faith of the all powerful God and similarly the faith in us by which we believe that God raised Christ from the dead."

³L.P. XI, 477, A, 52-4.

sense that the history of the death of Christ discloses the terrible anger of God against sinners but "at the same time it reveals that death was the price of our redemption and a propitiation for the sins of the whole world" and this knowledge should strengthen faith.¹

Thus the proper object of Christian faith is the person of Christ; his life, redemptive death and resurrection.² In support of this view, Bellarmine examines several Gospel passages relating the divine acceptance of those who have faith in the person of Christ. Likewise, the growth of faith in Christ issues in a confession of his divinity.³

¹L.P. XI, 477, B, 35-9.

²"No one is justified without faith in Christ and in the gratuitous mercy of God The faith of Christ is necessary for justification and salvation." (L.P. XIX, 493, B, 21-31.) " . . . Scripture often speaks of this (to believe in Christ) since through this all know true faith." (L.P. XV, 483, B, 7-9.) "He wholly satisfied for our sins by his passion." (L.P. II, 463, A, 10-11.) "I believe by the Catholic faith that Christ died for all." (L.P. XI, 477, B, 61-2.) "'This (says the same Apostle [in Romans 10:8-9]) is the word of faith which we preach, because if you have confessed the Lord Jesus with your mouth and have believed in your heart that God saved him from death, you will be saved.' This also we see most clearly, that the object of the faith of justification and salvation is the resurrection of the son of God." (L.P. VIII, 470, B, 54-60.)

³Bellarmino's exegesis of New Testament texts demonstrating the growing recognition of his divine personhood considers many appropriate Gospel passages. (L.P. VIII, 469-71.) In chapter eight he takes up John 3:16, Matthew 9:28-9, Matthew 16:16-17, Luke 7:7-9, John 1:48-9; 6:69-70; 11:25-7; 14:11-12; 20:29,31. He quotes Acts and St. Paul often and gives special consideration to Mark 1:40-1 and Luke 18:11-14 which exemplify the humility of the leper and the publican who have faith in divine power and mercy without that faith becoming a certitude about the inevitability of finding favor with God.

Then the faith which "was first a disposition to justice"¹ and a "caussa formalis inchoata justificationis"² is itself judged to be justice; and thus faith does not apprehend the justice of Christ but this very faith in Christ is justice. And, if indeed, faith is vivified and perfected through charity it will be perfect justice"³ (Emphasis mine.) Thus only the faith which acknowledges the divinity of Christ bestows the fulness of justice and eternal life.⁴ This means then, as Bellarmine emphasizes, that the subjectivist faith of the adversaries does not recognize the real Christ.

Nowhere does Scripture say that whoever believes his sins are remitted has eternal life or is justified--but that whoever believes in the son has eternal life or is justified.⁵

1
L.P. XVII, 490, A, 54-5.

2
L.P. XVII, 490, A, 21.

3
L.P. XVII, 490, A, 24-8. "Ubi ipsa fides censetur esse justitia; ac per hoc non apprehendit fides justitiam Christi, sed ipsa fides in Christum est justitia. Et si quidem sit fides viva et perfecta per charitatem, erit perfecta justitia"

4
L.P. VIII, 470, A, 32-7.

5
L.P. X, 473, A, 41-4. See also L.P. VIII, 470, B, 23-6; "In these [Scriptural texts], however, there is no word about specific mercy but everything is summed up in the resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ revealing and convincing. Furthermore, it is only in actual participation in the life of the Church that one grounds his belief in Christ. "Thus the sense of this article [i.e., Confiteor unum Baptisma in remissionem peccatorum] is not that I believe or trust that my sins are forgiven but that I believe and have confidence that the gift of the remission of sins is in the catholic Church and is received through Baptism and the other sacraments." (L.P. IX, 471, B, 63 - 472, A, 4.)

Bellarmino reaches three conclusions resulting from his discussion of the object of faith. The text of the epistle of St. James 1:6, "Postulet in fide nihil haesitans, excludes doubt as contrary to faith." Thus, the first conclusion is that "God wants his omnipotence to be believed without any doubt." (Emphasis mine.)¹ Furthermore, as for the trust which occurs as a consequence of belief, which the adversaries take to be faith, Bellarmine can say that "it would not be against the sense of our thought if someone were to say that . . . [faith] produces confidence and that therefore, not only is unbelief excluded but doubt also."² No one better manifests such faith than Abraham himself who, in Romans 4:20, "in repromissione Dei non haesitavit." "Thus the faith of Abraham is praised in a commendation of sorts by the Apostle and is set up as an example for all the faithful."³

Bellarmino's second and third conclusions stem from his understanding of Christ's redemption as intended for all men universally: the Christian's faith is a condition for justification but not an absolute indication of justification, and also, this is so because Catholic faith is assent to promissiones generales not a decision about their applicability to me. The basis of truly Catholic belief

¹L.P. XI, 476, A, 20-7.

²L.P. XI, 476, A, 34-7.

³L.P. VIII, 470, B, 46-8.

is that "the faith of Christ is life unto salvation open to the whole world . . . to all kinds of men . . . not such a kind open to one people as was the law of Moses."¹ Thus, St. Paul admonished the Jews that "the grace of Christ is not peculiarly theirs but common to all peoples."²

This potential availability of Christ to all men accounts for Bellarmine's interpretation of the general objective character of the promise of salvation likewise present for the benefit of all. A general Catholic and dogmatic faith⁴ perceiving an unpredetermined promise contrasts with the ego involvement of the belief of the adversaries who view faith as an action justifying pro me.⁵

¹L. P. XXII, 499, B, 62-500, A, 1. ²L.P. XXII, 500, A, 7-9.

³This availability of God to man in Christ is, however, unrealized for men whose faith is without the appropriate means of grace. Only if men accept the Christ of history will they be saved and it is the Church who represents him. "The faith of Christ is necessary for all and without it neither Jews through the law of Moses nor gentiles through the light of reason are able to be justified before God. . . . The Son of God has been sent from the Father into the world since without his advent and faith no one could be saved." (L.P. XXII, 499, B, 54-61).

⁴See L.P. IX, 472, B, 18-20. "This faith is catholic, that is, a dogmatic faith, common to the whole Church, not a specific [faith]."

⁵Luther's tendency to interpret Scripture and tradition from a position of ego relevance is noted by several theologians, most recently Paul Hacker. E.g.: "A significant stylistic feature of this text [Luther's exposition of The Apostles' Creed] is the predominance of pronouns of the first person singular and the corresponding possessive adjectives." Paul Hacker, "Martin Luther's Notion of Faith," Catholic Scholars Dialogue With Luther, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, (due in) 1970). Through the kindness of the editor, Fr. Wicks, I was able to read the manuscript of this, as yet, unpublished work. Paul Hacker's essay illustrates the point made above by Bellarmine in the case of Luther.

[The adversaries] speak about the application of general promises, on the basis of the [Scriptural use of] pronouns nostris, nobis, me and similar ones. They argue correctly in that one can apply general promises to himself through faith. For just as I believe by the Catholic faith that Christ died for everyone, also I believe by the same faith that he died for me who am one of them. And these promises which are absolutely found in Scripture testify to the sufficiency of our worth, that is, of the merits of Christ. For it was the passion of Christ which was sufficient as a propitiation for our sins, not ours alone but even of the whole world.

However, there is no general promise which attests that the death of Christ reaches its effect in everyone without some condition on their parts. Sed omnes conditionales sunt, quod attinet ad efficaciam, cum fidem et sacramenta requirant.¹ Were the adversaries able to proclaim to us from the book of God such a kind of general promise, then by right they would be able to apply the pronoun for that reason to themselves.²

On the other hand, the adversaries hold a view of faith which Bellarmine finds unfounded in Scripture and opinionated. Objecting to their position he says that the Creed "does not teach the specific and absolute benevolence which the adversaries make the object of justifying faith, but a general benevolence which is not without its conditions, cum ex Baptismi perceptione dependeat."³

¹It remains for us to consider more closely the co-operative character of this conditioning in Chapter IV.

²L.P. XI, 477, B, 57 - 478, A, 12.

³
L.P. IX, 471, B, 51-6.

The adversaries err in this matter because they draw an absolute conclusion from an antecedent condition from propositions such as these: Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life [From] conditional propositions, a conditional conclusion can be drawn correctly. Therefore, I, if I believe, have justification and eternal life. Truly, the absolute conclusion which the adversaries desire requires the absolute assumption that I, indeed, believe in the Son. This absolute assumption is not in the Word of God but in my opinion.¹

Therefore, because the adversaries "do not admit that through the death of Christ the promise of forgiveness is for all men, even if they do not wish to believe in Christ,"² they inevitably distort the meaning of belief into the confidence of personal redemption.³ They misconstrue faith as an event always announced "to me" although we find this happening in Scripture "only in a few exceptional cases."⁴

Faith as the Substance of Hope

Faith as the beginning of justification.-- Following Bellarmine's schema for examining the nature of faith, the second aspect to be considered is "the faculty and potency of the soul which is the seat of faith."⁵ That is, faith is the ground out of which grows all the Christian's hopes of union

¹L.P. X, 473, B, 8-24.

²L.P. XI, 478, A, 14-17.

³See L.P. V, 466, A, 48-52. "Whence, without a doubt, the phrase 'to believe' is explained as an act of justifying faith not, for any reason, can 'to believe' be distorted to 'trust.' For we do not trust that God exists but judge it to be certain and assent to it."

⁴L.P. X, 473, A, 13-20.

⁵See p. 12.

with God. The remaining points of this chapter consist of Bellarmine's depth analysis of the text of Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that are not seen."

(Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium.)

"Faith is the beginning of justice and as such is the inchoate formal cause of justification."¹ Faith, as the beginning of justification,

¹L.P. XVII, 490, A, 40-6. It is difficult to keep separate the different senses in which Bellarmine speaks of the act of faith as the formal cause and the material cause of justification. This difficulty is clarified by understanding the complementarity of intellect and will in the Scholastic analysis of the structure of the human act. The act of faith is a judgment -- ultimately a choice. Gilson's comments on deliberation are relevant here.

"Deliberation leads us to observe that several means can bring about the end we have in view; each of these means pleases us, and in so far as it does so, we give it our adherence; but we select out of these several means, and this selection belongs by right to the act of choice (electio). It may, however, happen that only a single means is offered by reason and that, in consequence, only one means pleases us. In such a case, choice may be said to coincide with consent.

"What is this choice? It is an act, part of which pertains to the reason or intellect, while another part pertains to the will. Hence it has been called by Aristotle: appetitivus intellectus, vel appetitus intellectivus. In its fullest sense, it is, in fact, simply the complete act by which the will determines itself, comprising at the same time the deliberation of reason and the decision of the will. Reason and understanding are required for the purpose of deliberation, in the manner explained, and for a judgement on the means which seem preferable, the will is required to bring about the consent given to these means, and the option in favor of one of them. But it is still to be determined whether, taken in its proper essence, the act finally concluding the deliberation pertains to the understanding or to the will. To reach a decision on this point, it must be remarked that the substance of an act depends both on its matter and on its form. Now, among the acts of the soul, an act which, in its matter, pertains to a certain power, may yet have its form and, consequently its specific quality from a power of a superior order; for the inferior is always ordered with reference to the superior. If, for example, a man performs a feat of physical

is the Christian's hope for salvation and eternal life.¹ The identification of faith with substantia rerum sperandarum means that it is a fundamentum; "a basis of firmness and solidity" for "hoped for things -- good, divine and heavenly things to which [merely] human faith cannot come."² According to St. Fulgentius, "faith is fundamental to all good things; faith is the beginning of human salvation."³ This foundation on which the Christian builds has been laid in Christ,⁴ and Bellarmine often praises Augustine for his development of the meaning of faith as the foundation for growth in hope and acts of love and service.⁵

(Continued from footnote 1, page 24.)

strength, but in its form an act of love, and therefore substantially an act of love. Applying this argument to the act of choice: the understanding furnishes in some sort the matter of the act by offering its judgements to the acceptance of the will; but, to give the very form of choice to the act, a movement of the soul is needed towards the good which it elects. Choice constitutes therefore, in its very substance, an act of will." (Étienne Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, tr. from 3rd edition by Edward Bullough, ed. G. A. Elrington (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1929), pp. 309-10.

¹According to St. Thomas, "We are wont to call by the name of substance, the first beginning of a thing, especially when the whole subsequent thing is virtually contained in the first beginning. . . . In this way then faith is said to be the 'substance of things to be hoped for,' for the reason that in us the first beginning of things to be hoped for is brought about by the assent of faith, which contains virtually all things to be hoped for." Summa theologica 1a 2ae. q.42.1.

²L.P. V, 465, B, 55-8.

³L.P. IX, 472, B, 46-8.

⁴L.P. XVII, 490, A, 30-6.

⁵See L.P. XVII, 490, B, 9-18; L.P. XX, 495, B, 58-496, A, 2.

In any building, the foundation stands as a base [partem] and an origin for the building, since it is through the addition of walls and a roof that the peak and completion [perfectionem] are reached.¹

The imagery of permanence and stability attached to fundamentum is balanced by the use of the metaphors "seed" and "root" by which Bellarmine suggests the growth and development of faith.² The source of belief is the "seed of faith which remains even among the most seriously fallen It is a particle of true and living faith."³ Faith is an implanted "seed of salvation" which not only should be "accepted but also warmed [calefieri] and cultivated so that it will bear fruit."⁴ The seeds of the actualization of future events are contained in the present hope which is grounded in faith. Bellarmine reminds us that it is St. Paul who describes faith as the root of justification⁵ and St. Augustine who says, "I praise the fruit, but I know the root in faith."⁶

¹L.P. XVII, 490, A, 50-3. See also L.P. XIII, 480, A, 32-7. "Anyone can believe while not hoping or loving but he can not hope or love if he does not believe. Therefore, the foundation of hope and love is faith, not contrarywise, the foundation of faith being hope or love."

²Bellarmino here follows the teaching of The Council of Trent. See Denzinger, number 801.

³L.P. XIV, 483, A, 1-3. See the doctrine of Trent, Denzinger, number 808.

⁴L.P. XXIII, 500, B, 2-4.

⁵L.P. XX, 495, B, 48-9.

⁶L.P. XX, 495, B, 60-1.

From a beginning in faith, God "begins the building in the spiritual soul of man, from there he begins to cure the death of sin, begins to cultivate the field of a man's heart and begins to open the door of salvation."¹

"Faith bears true things, love and other virtues like a good tree bears good fruit."²

Such metaphors used in combination make faith out as the principle of both stability and change with continuity. Faith is both the ground and the seed which is planted in the ground.³ What emerges is a life of realized faith continuous with its source but fruitful in matured works which are disclosures of that source. Bellarmine understands Calvin to be holding the different belief that faith is both the beginning and the goal -- the all of justification.⁴ Bellarmine's response outlines the evolving and progressive character of living faith:

¹L.P. XX, 495, B, 20-3.

²L.P. XIV, 483, A, 26-8.

³"That is, faith has for its material content the ideas which mediate the movement of the will which is expressed in it." Albrecht Ritschl, The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of The Doctrine, tr. and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), p. 105. Ritschl recognizes the Scholastic understanding of the role of ideas in mediating truth to the mind. Bellarmine, however, goes a step farther. Previous acts as well as present ideas mediate between reality and the soul. Abraham, says Bellarmine, being just was made more just by new acts of justice. (See p. 28). Bellarmine holds to the doctrine of the Scholastic notion of "habit." See Gilson, pp. 311-16.

⁴L.P. XX, 495, B, 24-44.

Initially, God loves us and by loving us makes us just, but a little at a time and by means of certain mediations [media].¹ For those he loves, he first calls to faith; then he inspires inchoate hope, fear and love. Lastly, he justifies and fills us with perfect charity.²

Abraham is again the exemplar who, "having been made just was made more just by a certain new act of justice."³ Bellarmine rejects the Protestant view that justification is a distinct happening, once and for all, and thus likewise rejects the position that faith alone justifies.⁴ Rather, faith, as the beginning of justice, "grows and is perfected, and man is continually raised to greater things."⁵

Bellarmino agrees with the adversaries that faith is a beginning, a prima motio in Deum;⁶ an absolute beginning in each man, "the foundation of justice which no good works precede and from which all [good works] proceed."⁷ Yet the end of faith is not faith, but Christ.⁸

We are participants with Christ as members of the head, if only we retain the beginning of this new nature [substantiae] through which he himself is formed in us, since that beginning is faith which works through love.⁹

1

See also L.P. XIII, 482, A, 10-16.

²L.P. XIII, 481, B, 27-32.

³L.P. XX, 496, B, 15-16.

⁴"This we deny, that through [faith] alone man is able integrally and perfectly to acquire the form of justice." L.P. XX, 496, B, 22-4.

⁵L.P. XX, 496, 21-2.

⁶L.P. XIII, 479, B, 25-6; see Trent's teaching, Denzinger, number 797.

⁷L.P. XIII, 480, A, 24-6.

⁸See L.P. XVII, 490, A, 29-39.

⁹L.P. XI, 475, B, 13-17.

Faith then justifies precisely by being the beginning of a process of transformation which, by its full development, "composes the whole man."¹

Bellarmino summarizes his position as being continuous with that of St. Augustine who understands faith as:

. . . the beginning, foundation and root of justice and thus he [Augustine] writes that man is justified by faith in order that through faith other things may be accomplished. Therefore, faith is truly a beginning and origin of justice; but not such a beginning as he [Calvin] introduced in his ministry, by which the advent of justice comes and goes in the same way as fear being given off by [i.e., alternating with] charity. Rather, it is a beginning which endures and is perfected in the same way as the roots of trees are not dried up but grow and flourish with the growing of the tree. The foundation of the building is not removed by becoming involved with the structure of a house, but it is completed and stabilized and sustains the walls and roof. Thus, without a doubt, faith first begins justification; then brings about the appropriation of hope and charity. Thus, when [faith] begins, it is alone; when it is complete, it is not alone. Whatever it begins, it does not finish by itself.²

Substantia rei futurae and the form of justice -- Returning to his analysis of Hebrews 11:1, Bellarmine examines the phrase substantia rerum sperandarum. Faith is the power of the believer to grasp within himself, in symbolized terms, the concrete aims of his spirit which have been moved by grace.

Faith is the substance of things hoped because those things which are hoped, since they are about to be, do not yet have any substance or foundation unless [it is] in the intellect through faith. Thus, faith is like the life and spirit of things which are hoped for, since by apprehending and by making present before the mind [representare] the things of merit, it makes them to be present and to live in a certain way. For they are real things in themselves except [for the fact that they are] of the future.³

¹L.P. XIII, 480, A, 55-6.

²L.P. XX, 496, A, 5-22.

³L.P. V, 465, B, 8-16.

Such faith is the source of an active hope sustaining the just man with a vitality and spirit of concern for eternity. "It seems that the literal sense of 'the just man lives by faith' means, as the Apostle frequently cited, that the just man sustains himself and nourishes the desire for heaven by faith. For faith in a certain way makes present the happiness which we hope for at some future time" ¹ Bellarmine is aware that whatever it is which prompts our belief, the urge to believe is surely innate and interiorly transforming.

The formal cause of justification is not the justice which is in Christ or the remission of sins alone, but the justice really inherent in us. This justice, the Scriptures and the Fathers teach, pertains especially to charity. Faith by itself does not justify [simply] by disposing. For such justice is real and inherent and should not be apprehended by faith but be infused through grace. ²

Bellarmino rejects the notion that the believer's grasp of the things of hope is a simple and unfounded anticipation or expectation of future happiness. St. John Chrysostom is quoted as an authority on the understanding of the Greek usage of the term ὑπόστασις as equivalent to substantia.

1

L.P. XIII, 487, A, 12-17. See also L.P. XI, 475, B, 22-4. "For those things (the things hoped for) properly refer to life eternal and the resurrection of the body about which the Apostle himself speaks."

2

L.P. XVIII, 491, B, 29-38.

Since these things which are in hope are thought to be without subsistence, faith attributes substance to them, [ἡ πίστις ὑπόστασιν αὐτοῖς χορίζεται], or rather has not attributed it to them, but is itself the essence of them. As for example, the Resurrection has not yet been accomplished nor does it yet exist substantially, but faith¹ makes it to subsist in our souls. This is what is called substance.²

Bellarmino admits an ambiguity in the meaning of ὑπόστασις which, he says, can mean simply "an expectation."³ But the mere "expectation of life eternal is not justifying faith, even according to the doctrine of the adversaries who define justifying faith [as remission of sins] . . . through which we are reckoned just by God, not through what we expect we may be reckoned just."⁴

The hopes of Christians are not unfounded hypostatizations since, according to Hebrews 1:3, "The Greek term χαρακτήρ ὑποστάσεως [i.e., of the Son of God, in which Christians share] does not mean an expectation but a substance. For the son is the perfect image of the substance of the Father; that is, of the personal paternal subsistence."⁵ It is the very nature of God which Bellarmine says comes to be ours by the subsistence of hope.

¹ Bellarmine seems to have substituted the word "faith" where "hope" appears in the original text of St. John Chrysostom. See J. P. Migne, Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca, (Paris, 1860), Vol. LXIII, col. 151, 19 (14).

² L.P. XI, 475, A, 39-45.

³ L.P. XI, 475, A, 50-3.

⁴ L.P. XI, 475, B, 29-35.

⁵ L.P. XI, 475, B, 1-5.

Again in rejecting the Protestant view, he says that:

The beginning of the nature [substantiae] of Christ does not mean the beginning of trust [fiduciae] but the beginning of the new creation, the beginning which is faith [fides]. For (as it is said in Galatians 4) when we are justified Christ is formed in us and thus we are called, in Galatians 6, a new creation. And in Ephesians 2 we are said to be created in Christ Jesus in good works.¹

Here we find ourselves at the nub of the controversy about justification -- the Catholic belief in the inherent nature of justice, by which the very imago dei subsists in man by virtue of grace. "The adversaries would have denied nothing nor made any controversy about justifying faith, except that they first had contrived a new doctrine concerning formal justification."² To Bellarmine, the adversaries seem intent on reforming (and thus fragmenting) the content of the Christian heritage on a basis of the subjective conditions of individual assurance. Bellarmine, in his thinking, begins from the Thomistic notion of seeking the object of faith (existing prior to one's faith) to which the subjective conditions of the believer inherently conform.³

1
L.P. XI, 475, B, 7-13.

2
L.P. XVII, 491, B, 62 - 492, A, 2.

3
See Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 2a 2ae. q. 4 a.3. "As appears from what has been said above, voluntary acts take their species from their end which is the will's object. Now that which gives a thing its species, is after the manner of a form in natural things. Wherefore the form of any voluntary act is, in a manner, the end to which that act is directed, both because it takes its species therefrom, and because the mode of an action shall correspond proportionately to the end."

Thus, to say that faith is the substance of hopeful men is the same as saying that it is the substance of the thing hoped for. For faith can be called the substantia sperantium since it is the substantia rei speratae. That is, whoever hopes sustains himself by faith since subsistentia rei speratae non est nisi fides.¹

Argumentum non apparentium.-- As the next stage in his investigation, Bellarmine elaborates the sense of argumetum non apparentium of Hebrews 11:1 which, he explains, means a demonstration of or a witnessing to a conviction about matters unseen.² Some, Bellarmine says, take these words as referring to a repetitio sententiae superioris.³ Hoped for things, the objects of faith visible in Scripture and the traditions of the Church, are validated for the believer as his experience of inner conviction about unseen matters conjoins with traditional declarations of their meaning. As the believer shapes (i.e., substantiates) his understanding of God's salvific acts, his soul is purified of a formless (i.e., insubstantial) faith and is formed in love. Bellarmine depicts this process as occurring like light in the darkness:

Faith is said to purify the heart since it frees man from the defilements [sordibus] of errors and false opinions about God and divine matters. Faith, not so much efficiently as formally, acts like a penetrating

¹
L.P. V, 465, B, 16-21.

²
L.P. V, 465, B, 22-5.

³
L.P. V, 465, B, 27.

light dispelling the darkness since light and darkness cannot remain together. Then what is purity of heart unless it is justice whether inchoate or perfect?¹

¹L.P. XVII, 490, A, 45-52. It does not lie within the scope of this paper to examine in detail Bellarmine's typically Scholastic metaphor of faith as a "light" illuminating what we cannot know with vision. Such a consideration would, however, be relevant to a more extensive examination of the conflict between the Lutheran understanding of evangelical faith and the Tridentine and Scholastic understanding of faith as "assent to revealed truth." Suffice it to say that Erikson's observation about Luther's disdain for what Aristotelianism (i.e., Scholasticism) had done to Christian faith with its light -- this disdain was for Luther a significant basis for his break with the Catholic Church and its view of faith. The conviction of faith for Luther comes from hearing and being confronted, not from seeing and understanding:

"But the organ through which the word enters to replenish the heart is the ear (natura enim verbi est audiri) for it is in the nature of the word that it should be heard. On the other hand, faith comes from listening, not from looking (quia est auditu fides, non ex visu)."

(Erik H. Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1958), 207.)

Bellarmino's description of the function of "intrinsic formal causality, not in habitu sed in actu," resembles St. Thomas Aquinas' description of the active intellect, each of "which by lighting up the phantasms, as it were, makes them actually intelligible." (Summa theologica 1 a. q. 79, a.4. Otto H. Pesch, O.P. in his essay, "Existential and Sapiential Theology -- The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas," characterizes Aquinas' view of faith in a fashion relevant to understanding Bellarmine:

"The theology of Thomas Aquinas is far removed from the I-Thou situation. He speaks descriptively of God in the Third person and views creation and man objectively. As we hinted above, his theology strives to recapture God's own thoughts about the world, man and history. The power to do this is given 'by the light of faith' -- and what a sublime spirituality lies behind Thomas' frequent references to 'light'! This is not theology done from a neutral position, as the common criticism contends, but from a position at which the act of faith does not itself play an immediate thematic role. Faith is rather the quite obvious supposition for the awe-filled pondering of God's glorious works. This is the medieval meaning of 'wisdom,' the understanding of reality in terms of its ultimate causes, as we learn in faith the very thoughts of God himself. This then is sapiential theology."

(Otto H. Pesch, "Existential and Sapiential Theology -- The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas," Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, due in 1970.)

Bellarmino is careful to differentiate conviction from the Protestant notion of trust. True faith has a supernatural origin. Fiducia is based on the natural contentment taken in a task already completed.¹ Luther's belief, Bellarmine points out, is not so much a reaching out in faith prompted by supernatural grace as an adherence to an opinion already held.² He who "believes by divine promise" has "no natural means of hope" and must seek the vision of faith.³ Abraham believed in a supernatural promise and this^{is} evidence of his justice.⁴ Faith is not merely an intellectual act nor an act of will. It is a supernaturalized act of the whole man characterized by an impulse to assent to Christian truth. Therefore:

. . . these words argumentum non apparentium do not refer [merely to a property of] the hoped for things but explain another virtue of faith. It is to demonstrate understanding and to adduce it in order that one may assent to the things he does not grasp or know.⁵

Again:

ἔλεγχος; that is demonstratio and conviction, pertain to the intellect, as does the Latin word argumentum. For [it means] to be convinced of something by arguments; to assent to and decide in favor of someone.⁶

¹
L.P. V, 466, B, 18-23.

²
L.P. XVI, 488, A, 42-4.

³See L.P. XI, 476, A, 8-10.

⁴See p. 37 below.

⁵L.P. V, 465, B, 40-4.

⁶L.P. V, 466, A, 32-6.

Faith does the same thing that rational arguments do, and thus it shares in the intellectual character of the mind. The mind convinces through empirical evidence (per evidentiam rei), but faith derives its convincing character from the authority of the speaker (creditur propter auctoritatem dicentis).¹ Thus, the discussion of justifying faith involves an understanding of how assent properly relates the roles of authority and obedience.

Assent, authority and obedience.-- Put comprehensively, the point at issue between Bellarmine and the adversaries is how best to understand the operations leading to a right relationship between God and man. They both agree that a man's justification begins with faith in God's promise. But Bellarmine teaches that justification includes assent to all that God has revealed. Since the Fathers and the Councils of the Church have refined the content of that revelation, the role of the institution which mediates the promise is central to the individual's justification. Harmony between Christian and Church is of the essence of justification.

Often the assent given is not attended by much understanding. It may be simple and uncomplex. For example, ". . . the uncultivated Catholic does not comprehend the persons of the Trinity except in a confused way, but he truly believes."² Those who believe may be ". . . simple men . . . qui simpliciter credentes in intelligentia majorum acquiescunt."³

¹
L.P. V, 466, A, 59-B,4.

²
L.P. VII, 469, A, 55-8.

³
L.P. VII, 469, A, 41-3.

The faith of individuals must be supported by and formed by the Church as the custodian of divine truth to whose authority assent is due. For "We hold to the handing down of tradition [rerum praeteritarum] not on the authority of men, but on the authority of God himself who has revealed it."¹

Such assent ultimately follows authority rather than evidence since as Augustine says, "When we understand something we attribute it to reason; but when we believe--to authority."² Following the example of Christ, we are led to obedience to Christ, as he to the Father. "Whence Blessed Paul says that the intellect is led captive in obedience to Christ by faith, since it is driven to believe what it does not know."³ The knowledge of revealed truths is far superior to the natural ability to grasp them.⁴

Abraham too is praised for his virtue of obedience.

. . . Through faith he obeyed and left the place where he was born. Since, believing that God was omnipotent and most powerful, he was moved by this faith and, as a result, promptly obeyed, not even knowing by whom he was being called. Whereby faith was the cause of obedience; and to obey by faith is nothing unless faith is the cause of obedience.⁵

1
L. P. V, 466, B, 31-3.

2
L.P. VII, 469, A, 63 - B, 1.

3
L.P. VI, 467, B, 22-4.

4
L.P. VII, 468, B, 50-2.

5
L.P. XVII, 490, A, 10-16.

The example of Abraham, again, provides us with the appropriate model of the believer's response. His patient attention to God's intention is a faith by which he "was moved" to belief and the form of justice.¹

Faith and Intellectual Understanding

Apprehension and assent.--Continuing his analysis of the workings of faith, Bellarmine makes a prominent differentiation between the Catholic position and that of the reformers. The Catholic act of faith has an intellectual character whereas the Protestant faith of assurance is willful, a point Bellarmine reiterates many times.

We contend that the two prior points [knowledge of the promises of God and individual assent to them] which are a matter of the intellect, are the act of faith; the adversaries, on the contrary, two latter points [the desire for justification and trust apprehending justification], which are a matter of the will. They want the last point [trust apprehending justification], to be the act of faith since they attribute the role of justifying to it alone.

However, all the arguments which we have made . . . clearly demonstrate that faith is a matter of the intellect [in intellectu] and, as a result, in no way pertains to trust which is a matter of the will [in voluntate]. To these [arguments] we can add the testimony of Saint Augustine in his book, De praedestinatione sanctorum, chapter 2,² where he says that believing is nothing else than thinking with assent.³ Thus thinking is a sort of genus [quasi genus]; assent a sort of differentiation [quasi differentia]. For

1

See St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologica, 1 a. q.79, a.1.
". . . Above the intellectual soul of man we must needs suppose a superior intellect, from which the soul acquires the power of understanding. For what is such by participation, and what is movable, and what is imperfect, always requires the pre-existence of something essentially such, immovable and perfect."

²This material appears in chapter 5 of the English translation of The Predestination of The Saints. Aurelius Augustinus, Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, Edited with an introduction and notes by Whitney J. Oates (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1948), I, 780. (Translation by R. E. Wallis.)

³For Aquinas' position see Summa theologica, 2 a 2ae. q. 2 a.1.

as he himself teaches in other places, many know who do not believe. They may even know and, as a result of it, not believe. But no one believes who does not know.¹

Bellarmino clearly identifies Catholic faith as acting according to the powers of man's intellectual understanding (intellectus). Protestant belief is then contrasted as a faith biased in its operations by an individual's strong (i.e., willful or wishful) desire to be assured of salvation. Protestant faith is often equated with opinion² and the result is the fragmentation

1

L.P. VI, 468, A, 17-32. See also L.P. XV 485, B, 34-7 and L.P. 467, A, 63 - B,6. In the second paragraph of the above quotation, Bellarmine is making an analogy between the relation of assent to thinking (i.e., apprehending) as he uses the terms, and, the relation of differentia to genus as terms of Aristotelian logic. See Topica, 128a, 20-9.

"Since some people think that the differentia too, is a predicate of the various species in the category of essence, you should distinguish the genus from the differentia by employing the aforesaid elementary principles--(a) that the genus has a wider denotation than the differentia; (b) that in rendering the essence of a thing it is more fitting to state the genus than the differentia; . . . (c) that the differentia always signifies a quality of the genus, whereas the genus does not do this of the differentia. . . ."

Aristotle, Topica and De sophisticis elenchis tr. W. A. Pickard, Cambridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 128a. (What one must keep in mind is that Aristotle is speaking of the order of essence, Bellarmine, the order of existence.)

2

That is, "When a man inclines to one side or another of an argument with fear of an alternative." This is St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of opinion given in 2a 2ae. q. 2 a.1. There is no hesitation in Abraham's obedience such as confounds the soul with only opinion to guide him. See L.P. VI, 467, B, 4-6.

of the one faith into sects holding "opinions" rather than believing truly.¹

Bellarmino proceeds to define Catholic faith as an act constituted by the two moments of apprehension and assent.

The definition of faith, according to the tradition of the Apostle, contains two properties One makes the things which are hoped for in the future to subsist in the spirit. The other makes the intellect assent to these things which are [of themselves] not understood.²

To clarify his distinction between intellectual and willful faith, Bellarmine is careful to indicate that by apprehension he does not mean the mere notional belief of the Protestant Calvin who "is always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. . . ." ³ For such faith is really human faith and "we know that Christian faith (for this is defined by the

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In attempting to determine the position of the Fathers on the interpretation of the phrase "sola fide," Bellarmine says that "by the word sola, nothing is excluded by St. Leo except false faith and heretical sects. For only Catholic faith justifies, that is, not Arian, not Eutychian not Lutheran." (Emphasis his.) L.P. XXV, 503, A, 38-42. Luther, Bellarmine believes, works himself into a solipsistic corner of alienation from true faith because he is isolated (sectarian=cut off) from faith by his "opinions." L.P. X, 473, B, 18-36. Bellarmine sees Luther as a radical innovator and gives him the title, "Patriarch of Everything New." L.P. XIV, 482, B, 56-7.

2

L.P. V, 465, B, 45-9.

3

L.P. VII, 469, B, 5-7.

Apostle) is distinguished from all other habits of the intellect."¹ We must become deeply involved in belief and not remain at a distance from the object of faith. We should not imagine the res ipsa of faith as something detached and "possessed by us and inhering but only as though it were in the mind in the manner of an object apprehended by an action of the intellect or will."²

¹L. P. V, 465, B, 49-51. Bellarmine continues: "For the phrase, Substantia rerum sperandarum, distinguishes Christian faith from political and human faith. Such human faith is able to be fallacious and thus does not merit the name of substance, that is, of the foundation and basis of firmness and solidity. . . . The word argumentum, or conviction distinguishes Christian faith from opinion, suspicion and doubt. For these others do not convince nor do they drive the intellect to assent. Then these words, non apparentium, distinguish such faith from knowledge and the intellect which do not allow obscurity but require light and evidence."

Bellarmino is following the thought of Aquinas once more but, as usual, does not acknowledge him. See Summa theologica 2a 2ae. q. 2 a.1.

"For among the acts belonging to the intellect, some have a firm assent without any such kind of thinking, as when a man considers the things that he knows by science, or understands, for this consideration is already formed. But some acts of the intellect have unformed thought devoid of a firm assent, whether they incline to neither side, as in one who doubts; or incline to one side rather than the other, but on account of some slight motive, as in one who suspects; or incline to one side yet with fear of the other, as in one who opines. But this act, to believe, cleaves firmly to one side, in which respect belief has something in common with science and understanding; yet its knowledge does not attain the perfection of clear sight, wherein it agrees with doubt, suspicion and opinion. Hence it is proper to the believer to think with assent: so that the act of believing is distinguished from all other acts of the intellect, which are about the true or the false."

2

L.P. XVI, 488, A, 49-52. Maritain provides a commentary on the difference between an instrumental sign which is an object in the mind "which, having, first, its proper value for us as an object, is found, besides, to signify another object." Bellarmine seems to be disclaiming this manner of existence for the res ipsa of faith. Whereas "a formal sign is a sign whose whole essence is to signify." With complete assent, a Christian thus becomes formed in God's intention to save him. See Jacques Maritain, The Degrees of Knowledge, tr. Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), p. 119.

Apprehensions of themselves do not constitute faith. "Apprehension is not faith but something preceding faith. For even the unfaithful are able to apprehend the mysteries of faith."¹ But apprehensions do "drive us to faith."² Therefore, although faith is intellectual in character, it is not an abstract manipulation of notions. Faith depends on notions but not to the extent of science which requires a refined degree of "light and evidence."³ Faith is an intellectual quest. "Faith [as an active search] does not justify in a relational manner [relative], by accepting the clearly offered justification, but in asking, reaching for, seeking, then invoking and obtaining [faith], it justifies."⁴ The intellectual character of faith is to be understood in an active sense since "faith is not something solitary and permanent but an action and operation and apprehends justice as an action and operation"⁵

These "apprehensions" dispose us to accepting the object of faith. But since the validity of one's faith can not be based solely on the evidence of his ideas, no final authority can be attributed to one's individual believing apprehension as such.

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L.P. VII, 469, A, 45-8.

2

L.P. VII, 469, A, 46 and L.P. XVI, 488, A, 30.

3

L.P. V, 466, A, 1-2. Also L.P. VII, 469, A, 60-1. "Prior dicitur notitia (si proprie loqui velimus) posterior fides."

4

L.P. XVII, 491, A, 6-9.

5

L.P. XVI, 488, B, 48-50.

For faith is not said properly to apprehend. For when an apprehension is referred to the intellect, it is knowledge [cognitio] of something according as it is present in the mind in specie¹ and distinguished by a judgment which discerns the thing apprehended and decides whether it is true or false. However, the knowledge apprehended certainly drives one toward faith. Yet it is not itself properly faith for even the infidels are able to apprehend the mysteries of faith when, however, they do not believe these things.²

At this point we can come to three conclusions regarding three aspects of the intellectual character of faith. First, the act of faith includes a stage which Bellarmine calls the apprehensio although "an apprehension can not properly be called a notion when it is crude and confused. However, distinctness and clarity are not necessarily required for faith."³ "For we know that the role of faith is not to act so as to make obscure matters clear but in order that they may be believed even if they are not apparent."⁴ Therefore, the apprehension of faith is not a notion in a philosophical sense nor is it an apprehension at all in a strictly intellectual sense. The essential point to note is that "it is proven then that faith is not a notion but an assent."⁵

¹See footnote 1, p. 46.

²L.P. XVI, 488, A, 24-33.

³L.P. VII, 469, A, 48-50. See also L.P. V, 466, B, 4-7. "Itaque in fide manet res obscura ut antea erat, sed creditur propter auctoritatem dicentis non igitur fides proprie loquendo est notitia, sed assensus."

⁴L.P. V, 466, A, 55-8. On this point Bellarmine cites St. Paul's usage of the phrase fide intellegimus as meaning not that something "is known plainly. . . but rather, by means of this word intellegendi, he [St. Paul] wished to express [i.e., simply and in an unadulterated fashion], the apprehension and assent of the intellect." L.P. V, 466, B, 9-12.

⁵L.P. VII, 468, B, 30-1.

There is then, a second stage to the act of faith; the judicium sive assensus.¹ Moreover:

Faith consists more in judgment than in apprehension.² For whoever judges, whether through knowledge or through faith, nihil apprehendit, sed rem apprehensam, ut dixi, apprehendit et discernit. Therefore, this res is not true because the intellect by believing or knowing judges it to be true. But, contrariwise, the intellect judges truly, that is, knows truly or believes truly because res est vera.³

Because of his realist orientation, Bellarmine is thus concerned to show that in the act of faith, "the intellect moves the will by presenting to it its object . . . and thereby it assigns to the act of the will its proper species, in distinction to the acts performed by the sensitive or merely natural powers. There is therefore here a real and effective movement imparted by the intellect to the will."⁴

As apprehension is something more broadly based than mere notional understanding, assent is not superficial but a matter of complete conviction and full intellectual awareness. Regarding the assent of Abraham's exemplary faith, Bellarmine quotes the wording of Romans 4:21, "Plenissime sciens quia quaecumque promisit Deus, potens est et facere," and comments that:

¹
L.P. VII, 469, A, 44-5.

²
See also L.P. XVI, 489, A, 8-19.

³
L.P. XVI, 488, A, 33-40.

⁴
Gilson, pp. 306-7.

To be fully aware is a matter of intellectual understanding, not of the will; and, on the contrary, to have trust is a matter of the will, not of the understanding. Furthermore, the Greek word, πληροφωρηθεὶς [plenissime sciens], properly means "to have been completely convinced" or "having certainty" which both pertain to intellectual understanding.¹

Third, an essential characteristic of one who truly believes is the malleability of his soul (made possible by faith) in the face of the res ipsa of faith, i.e., in fine, God himself. Ultimately, faith is the substantia rei futurae-- an individual substance (person) with a great capacity for openness with God. Such a person has a potency for being trans-formed by God's word.²

1

L.P. VI, 467, A, 63-B,4. The meaning of assent as Bellarmine explicates it is very much in harmony with Newman's concept of "real assent." See John Henry Newman, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1924). We may wonder whether Newman was influenced at all by Bellarmine's views on assent since he refers to Bellarmine's treatise^a justification in an earlier work. See John Henry Newman, Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914), pp. 10, 25 and 367.

2

Proper respect for the intellectual substance of God's word is, for Bellarmine, an index of the validity of a man's faith. On this basis Bellarmine criticizes Luther who rants about sola fide and "words" without substance. L. P. XIII, 479, B, 20-22. "Justifying faith [would be] a term without a reality behind it or a reality by virtue of a term alone as Luther falsely wrote in his book on the freedom of the will." See also L.P. V, 484, B, 61-485, A,4.

The substance of the future thing is said to be faith because it makes those things present which are otherwise future. And to bring something before the mind [representare] is not a matter of the will as is trust, but a matter for understanding. For the man apprehending the thing per speciem sibi impressam¹ makes the thing to be before it is.²

In a final assertion of his point, Bellarmine sharply distinguishes between knowing independently of belief and knowing which is dependent on belief and expressive of it.

1

A thorough examination of the meaning of the term species used here by Bellarmine is beyond the scope of this paper. He, himself, does not explain it. The term is central to the philosophical edifice of Aristotle. St. Thomas makes extensive use of the term to explain his theory of knowledge. For a more extensive explanation of species and species impressa see Gilson, pp. 227-9; 251-64 and Maritain, pp. 113-28.

" . . . The cognitive species is simply the instrument or medium of knowledge. When we say, then, that the species determines or specifies a power, we really mean that the object accomplishes this important function by virtue of its species. For, the species is the form of the object, with an intentional mode of existence. Its purpose, therefore, may be described as twofold: first, to make possible the union of subject and object, without which knowledge could not be perfected; second, to enable the subject to know the object by actually becoming the object in an intentional way."

Robert Edward Brennan, Thomistic Psychology (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 137. Curiously enough, of the three instances when species is mentioned by Bellarmine, the only reference he cites is not to St. Thomas, as one might expect, but to St. Augustine where the term is used with non-technical meaning. "Igitur Augustinus in enchiridio, . . . cap. 5. dicit, mentem imbui debere fide, ut bene vivendo tendat ad speciem." L.P. IX, 472, A, 44-7.

2

L.P. V, 466, A, 24-9.

We believe and do not comprehend the mysteries of faith which surpass reason, thus faith is distinguished in contrast to knowledge and is determined more by ignorance than by notions.¹

Bellarmino borrows this distinction from Augustine whom he quotes: "For what is faith unless it is to believe what we do not see,"² and, "I am made faithful; I believe what I do not know."³ On the basis of this differentiation between mere knowing and faithful understanding, the stage is set for our investigation of a deeper aspect of Bellarmine's consideration of the problem of justification.

The unity of belief and knowledge.-- We must now inquire about the relation in experience between believing and knowing. It is important to see the unity between the two and not make a false separation between them. The understanding of faith justifies because it is an action more fundamental than mere knowing and therefore conduces toward greater and greater comprehension of the whole man. Provided with this basis of integrity in faith, there issues an ever great expansion of particular knowledge about revelation.⁴ "Thus we see that belief is not knowledge but a way and step

¹L.P. VII, 469, B, 1-4.

²L.P. VII, 469, A, 26-7.

³L.P. VII, 469, A, 31.

⁴See above, p. 14. Fr. McCool provides a formulation of this phenomenon in contemporary terms.

"Faith consists in linking [sic] of the spirit's intrinsic relation to God to a fact or series of facts. It is consequently an affirmation which becomes possible when this fact or series of facts grounds the schematization through which the ensemble of religious categories possessed by the subject can be applied to the sensible order, thus permitting his intentional relation to the One to receive objective expression."

Gerald A. McCool, "Duméry and the Dynamism of the Spirit," Theological Studies, XXX (June, 1969), p. 195.

to knowledge. The philosopher says it in other words [speaking] about natural matters: 'It behoves one to believe in order to learn more.'¹ Bellarmine quotes St. Prosper to the effect that:

'Unless you have believed you will not understand. This is said because faith does not stem from comprehension but comprehension from faith; nor does he who understands believe but he who believes understands.' Thus faith is prior to comprehension, and likewise believing is not knowing.²

Faith provides a basis for knowledge and as such resembles a receptivity to reality in its psychological function -- a precondition in the subject for comprehending the intelligibility of things.

This analysis seems to be justified when later Bellarmine says (speaking of the power of faith to perceive divine prompting behind the mystifying and incomprehensible events of life and history): "Faith makes the things [of hope] to exist in a certain manner . . . and makes such things stand out and be seen which of themselves appear of little consequence."³ Here faith is described as the perceptual sense enabling a Christian to piece together the pattern of God's acts into a coherent plan of salvific meaning. Faith blossoms into love progressively nurtured by God's grace and unites men within themselves and among each other in a comprehensive grasp.⁴

¹
L.P. VII, 468, B, 33-5.

²
L.P. VII, 469, A, 33-8.

³
L.P. V, 465, B, 27-30.

⁴
See L.P. XVI, 489, A, 8-19.

Speaking rhetorically to his opponents' view of faith, Bellarmine expresses his point this way:

If faith justifies because it apprehends justice insofar as I believe or trust that I am just through Christ, then love justifies insofar as I love and rejoice that I am just through Christ. Furthermore, if we are justified through apprehending in this manner, it ought very much to be attributed to charity which reconciles all warring elements within us. For everything is transformed for the common good by loving.¹

Thus, by explaining faith as a basis of knowledge, Bellarmine is led to acknowledge that it is also a basis of love. As the faithful understanding of the Christian ramifies into loving acts, we need to understand belief in its loving expressions in deeds and turn now to one of the most significant divisions between Bellarmine and his opponents: whether faith justifies in the manner of an instrument or as a disposition.

¹
L.P. XVI, 488, A, 57-64.

CHAPTER III

EXTRINSIC AND INTRINSIC BELIEF

Although the adversaries disagree among themselves in many ways,¹ "they all agree on one point: . . . that faith alone justifies, that is, that justification is acquired or, as they say, apprehended by nothing else except faith."² We proceed then to consider Bellarmine's analysis and refutation of the singular place and unique instrumental role of faith in the Protestant scheme of justification.³ As before, what is in dispute is the understanding of the basic relationship between the justified man and God. Bellarmine sees in the Protestant insistence on justification by faith alone a casting of God and man in an extrinsic relationship to each other.

¹ They disagree as to how sola fides justifies, whether other virtues may contribute to justification and on the precise way in which sola fides is to be explained. These disagreements are documented by Bellarmine in Book 12.

² L.P. XII, 478, B, 1-6.

³ See p. 7 for Bellarmine's formulation of the dispute involved here over sola fides which constitutes points two and three of the Catholic-Protestant debate.

. . . Almost all [of the adversaries] at this time teach that faith does not justify in the manner of a formal cause or an efficient physical or meritorious [cause] but that God justifies us in a way such that justice itself or the beginning of justice might come to exist, sed solum relative, quia respicit ac recipit oblatam indulgentiam.

This they want the sense of the proposition, "man is justified by faith," to mean that man is justified through the grace of God non imputantis peccata and that faith receives this grace by believing. They explicate their statement with the illustration of the hand by which the poor man receives alms from the rich. For the hand receiving alms is not itself the alms, nor is it the efficient cause of alms, nor are alms given on account of anything properly belonging to the hand [neque propter ipsam] as if it might merit by its beauty, but it concurs only relationally with a reception of alms. For giving and receiving are relative [to one another], since an alms is not able to be given unless it is received by another.¹

Man is justified "sola fide relative, not on account of the dignity or merit of faith since then grace would not be grace."² According to the Protestant position, "faith is not said to be a cause but a mere organ of justification."³ Bellarmine admits the force of this reasoning⁴ and argues

¹L.P. XII, 478, B, 21-40.

²L.P. XXI, 496, B, 45-7. See also L.P. XVII, 489, A, 30-40: "The particular reason why the adversaries attribute justification to faith alone, that is, as they hold, that faith does not justify through the mode of causation, dignity or merit but only relationally, is that obviously, believing accepts what God offers by promising. For if they could be persuaded that faith justifies by petitioning and meriting and that justification [occurred] in a certain inchoate way, without a doubt they would not deny that it even conduces to love and penance and other good actions."

³
L.P. XII, 478, B, 48-9.

⁴
See also L.P. XXI, 497, B, 7-8.

that "it is not rightly said that faith brings about salvation or that it justifies from sin if in fact it accomplishes nothing in ordine ad justificationem but merely accepts indulgence. . . . But plainly some effect is attributed to faith itself."¹ Bellarmine illustrates his point with several Scripture texts² which testify that "men please God through faith and, through this very worthy and meritorious faith, come to be in the presence of God." He adds the witness of St. Augustine³ and concludes that "faith obtains justification, remission of sins and the grace of working well which justify per modum dispositionis ac meriti,"⁴ and that "truth faith and justification are not (as the adversaries wish) a bare and singular apprehension of justice but a cause [of justification] and have the power of justifying."⁵ Faith therefore is a "true cause"⁶ as the example of Able shows since ex ea fide motus est to offer oblations which pleased God.⁷

¹
L.P. XVII, 490, B, 27-37.

²
L.P. XVII, 490, B, 37-491, A, 22.

³
L.P. XVII, 491, A, 23-B, 16.

⁴
L.P. XVII, 491, B, 6-11.

⁵
L.P. XVII, 489, A, 41-4.

⁶
L.P. XVII, 489, A, 59 and B, 49. See also L.P. XVII, 490, B, 62-491, A, 9.

⁷
L.P. XVII, 490, A, 1-3.

In the sense that belief is an intrinsic principle of operation, expressing a power¹ inherent in the Christian himself, "faith is a first disposition to justice."² In Bellarmine's words:

Men are disposed by [faith and other virtues] to receiving grace in this way, quos Deus in Scripturis sanctis praeexigi, ac praerequiri significat. However, something prerequired according to Scripture, can be an act of faith, fear, hope, penance or love

Add to this what nature herself teaches us. Matter is disposed to a reception of form by certain acts. Those who are eorum similes [i.e. of the acts] attain the form [eorum]. For wood is disposed by heat to receive the form of fire since heat proceeds from fire. Likewise, nothing disposes more than love or penance done out of love to formal justification, the culmination of which is the infusion of charity.³

Since Bellarmine understands faith as a disposition to a continuing development in justice, love is seen as contributing to the form of final justification.⁴ This view sets Bellarmine and the adversaries at odds for

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God wants his power to be believed (L.P. XI, 476, A, 26), through Christ we come to share this power (L.P. VIII, 469, B, 47) and it resides in us as a specialis potentia (L.P. VI, 468, A, 56-7).

2

L.P. XVII, 490, A, 54-5. According to Wuellner, a disposition is "the state of a substance or power ready to receive form; e.g., bodily disposition, disposed matter, disposed faculty." Bernard Wuellner, Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1956), p. 36.

3

L.P. XVIII, 491, B, 42-62.

4

L.P. XIV, 482, A, 59-63: "If faith alone justifies because it justifies relationally, it can not reside in the soul of man since it would be justice at the same time in this one act and without love [the act of faith alone] could not be justice since 'whoever does not love, abides in death,' 1. Joan. 2."

whom justification occurs sola fide apart from the manifestations of justification in subsequent acts of charity.¹ What we have is a difference of views on the relationship between faith and love, between God's justice and God's grace.² What Bellarmine objects to in the Protestant position is the implication that the believer's trust corresponds to an individual juridical act on God's part which constitutes the whole of

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L.P. XVIII, 491, B, 49-51: "[The adversaries] understand these acts [other virtues] as prereduced only by an already received faith insofar as they are immediately present but not insofar as they might be [part of] the apprehension of justification."

2

A word must be said here about the common tendency to lapse into mere semantic debates when trying to define the differences between Protestant and Catholic understandings of justification. Smyth, an evangelical commentator, says that "herein lies much of the confusion between the two parties. Since Romanists look upon the forensic idea of justification as holding a 'legal fiction' and therefore not worthy to be included in morality, they must of necessity teach an increase of justification which in reality is sanctification." (W. Martin Smyth, "Differences Between the Roman and Reformed Doctrines of Justification," The Evangelical Quarterly, XXXVI (January - March, 1964), p. 43.)

According to the Catholic Dictionary:

"Catholics regard justification as an act by which a man is really just; Protestants, as one in which he is merely declared and reputed just, the merits of another--viz. Christ--being made over to his account To the Catholic, sanctification and justification are the same thing, or at most two aspects of the same thing--viz. of the act by which God makes a soul just and holy in his sight. To the Lutheran or Calvinist, they are distinct, both in themselves and in the order of time at which they take place."

(Thomas Arnold and William Edward Addis (eds.), A Catholic Dictionary (6th edition, revised and with additions. New York: The Catholic Publication Society Co., 1889), p. 495.)

what is meant by the word justification.¹ Justification is thus limited to an effect without genuine self-actualizing potential in the believer; an effect which the believer applies entirely within himself alone.² For Bellarmine, this interpretation seems to mechanize the God-man relationship. Justification is thus reduced to a specifically individual act of God and man's solitary acceptance of it. Bellarmine sees justification as a continuous liberation of man co-terminal with a growth in grace.³ The Protestant position seems to imply the impossibility of any genuinely un-predetermined expression of love for God. Whereas, according to Bellarmine, to love at all one must love freely. This is so since:

1

L.P. XIV, 482, A, 39-47:

"If the whole force of justification were in faith alone such that the other virtues which might be present conferred altogether nothing to justification as the adversaries teach, truly such faith would justify as much with them present as with them absent. Thus, if, when they are absent, [faith] can not justify, it can be concluded that the power of justifying is not in it alone but partly in it [faith] and partly in other [virtues]."

2

L.P. XIV, 482, A, 52-6:

"Faith, according to the doctrine of the adversaries, justifies relationally. Therefore justice occurs in man at the same point of time as faith occurs since they occur relatively and are taken away at the same time. One can not exist or be known without the other."

3

L.P. XIV, 482, B, 2-6:

"It cannot be that faith separated from love can justify. Therefore [faith] by itself alone does not justify since (as has been proven) if it could justify alone, it would justify even when separated from all other virtues."

Also lines 25-8:

"[Faith] necessarily needs for its role of justifying not only the presence but the work and effects of fear, hope, love, penitance, and other virtues."

Although love arises from faith, it does not arise as a particular passion which flows by necessity from the subject, but as a virtue to which other virtues dispose and incline, for faith is said to give birth to charity because it disposes and inclines him who believes toward loving him in whom he believes. However, the disposition and inclination do not drive but leave a man free to love if he wishes and not to love if he does not wish to.¹

The theology of the reformers views justification as "a juridical, forensic act" which "takes place once for all" and sanctification as "the continuous process" which only thereafter follows.² Bellarmine disclaims both this distinction of phases and the notion that love inevitably occurs where faith is found.³ He often notes Calvin's teaching on the inseparability of justification and sanctification; on the necessary unity formed by the two, which is like the necessary presence of both heat and light to fire.⁴ According to Calvin, faith alone justifies, but love always follows just as "Christ can not be separated from the Holy Spirit."⁵ But Bellarmine

¹L.P. XV, 485, B, 38-46.

²See Pierre Marcel, "The Relation Between Justification and Sanctification in Calvin's Thought," The Evangelical Quarterly, XXVII (July, 1955), 132-45.

³See L.P. XV, 483, A, 57-484, A, 24. Bellarmine cites testimony from Scripture for those who at first truly believe then fall away.

⁴E.g. L.P. XII, 479, A, 10-13; L.P. XIV, 483, A, 9-23.

⁵L.P. XV, 486, A, 1-5. See John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (2 vols.; 7th American edition; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), I, 60. (Bellarmine's reference to Bk. III, Cap. 2, paragraph 9 for this source occurs in paragraph 8 of Allen's translation.)

insists that faith sometimes occurs without ever coming to fruition in love and that in such cases the believer is not only not sanctified, but also neither has he been justified by his initial faith.

Those who hold to a justification sola fide miscarry grace, and so although Bellarmine agrees with Calvin in that "love is a virtue; that is, living, actual, efficacious, always operating, from which its working can no more be separated than brightness or heat from fire," he feels obliged to assert that "faith does not operate immediately, but mediately through love, to which it itself gives birth, but (as we have said) not producing it properly [i.e., by necessity] as fire produces heat, but by disposing and inclining to it."¹

Bellarmino and Calvin use the metaphor of fire in different ways. Calvin's use is meant to suggest that no heat generated by one's own efforts could ever influence God in his act of righteous judgment. Heat and flame do, however, always occur together. For Bellarmine, the heat of faith kindles a flame of love when it reaches the perfection of the disposition to grace. However, the point emphasized is that the perfection of justification in love can only occur with the free cooperation of the believer's effort if the character of God's grace is to be respected.² For Bellarmine

1

L.P. XV, 486, A, 22-9.

2

Rahner eloquently summarizes the dilemma of faith. The destiny of justification and grace which constitutes the promise cannot be brought to pass when one's self understanding--such as that one to which Bellarmine feels a theology of sola fide conduces--precludes personal growth except by means of extrinsic power. This power exacts a precondition of faith as the requisite attitude cohering with the discreet (albeit, only symbolically) judgment of God. The spiritual offspring of such judgments are all stillborn qua persona. Rahner prefers to view the God-man relation within an anthro-

he who believes either progresses to acts of charity which complete the justification which God initiates, or regresses to a solipsistic contentment with an unfulfilled justification recognizable by a compulsive need to love in place of a free consent to grace.¹ He illustrates his point thusly:

The image of the sick man which Bucer sets before us only proves what we have said, that he who believes is inclined to love him whom he believes. He is not, however, driven to love necessarily unless more by a love of concupiscence which is not love at all but desire [i.e., obsession]. For the sick man desiring health necessarily loves the doctor more often for his own benefit than for the good of the other. . . . It does not follow . . . that the spirit of sanctification and love is always [i.e., by necessity] in the man with faith, unless as a goal [nisi objective] in the same way that health is in the sick man who knows or desires it.²

pological framework which grows progressively less predeterminate.

"For a less than personal entity unconditional [i.e., irrevocable] reference to an end and the 'unexactness' of this end are incompatible assumptions when they are applied to the same thing at the same time. This is especially the case when the matter is looked at from God's point of view, in that he himself constitutes the unconditional reference through his own act of creation. But is this equally simple and obvious where a personal being is in question? Could it not be said here with apparent justice that it is precisely the essence of the personal being (his paradox, without which he cannot be understood) that he is ordained to personal communion with God in love (by nature) and must receive just this love as free gift?" (Emphasis his.)

Karl Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," Theological Investigations, tr. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1961), I, p. 305.

¹See L.P. XV, 483, B, 33-9. Both the reformers and Bellarmine are concerned to preserve the act of faith from what each believed the other's position represented. E. g., Luther assumed that the Catholic Church's (and Bellarmine's) concern about good works indicated a quantification and thus a mechanization of the grace of God. Bellarmine's attitude likewise is that the reformers are so obsessed with man's worthlessness before God that they emphasize an excessive concern for certainty about the very possibility of being loved by God. This paralyzes the soul and results in an exaggeration of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Erikson's remark about the young Luther applies here.

"[Luther] became burdened with that premature sense of judgment which wishes to receive and to render a total account of life before it is lived; one might say that he refused to begin life with an identity of his own before some judgment had been rendered on everything past which might prejudice his coming identity."

(Erik H. Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958), p. 83.)

²L.P. XV, 486, A, 30-45.

Bellarmino's illustration suggests two points. First, there is a tendency to believe and even to love the God who offers satisfaction for our needs. But secondly, such tendencies cripple a man's openness to grace when that prospect of relief dominates his attention and blurs the fuller context of his relations with others. Luther views the God-man relation as occurring essentially between two persons--Christ and the believer.

Bellarmino senses an oversimplification leading to juridicism and compensates with his own emphasis on a partim/partim understanding of the interaction between freedom and grace in justification as a shared reality.

Typical of what Bellarmine feels is an egocentric concern of the reformers is Calvin's statement that, "the apprehension of faith is not confined to our knowing that there is a God, but chiefly consists in our understanding what is his disposition towards us. For it is not of so much importance to us to know what he is in himself, as what he is willing to be to us."¹ Bellarmine's response to this attitude is to try to place those scriptural promises of salvation which are made "nostris, nobis, me et similibus"² in a larger perspective where "these promises . . . testify to the sufficiency of our worth; i.e., of the merits of Christ."³

¹
Calvin, I, p. 602.

²
L.P. XI, 477, B, 58-9.

³
L.P. XI, 478, A, 1-2.

Men can be mesmerized by an excessive concentration on the need for faith and become isolated from the community of faith.¹ For Bellarmine, the traditions of the Church propose the promise of redemption in the social milieu of the Church in a fashion preventing morbid introspection. The Church mediates justice and the pre-eminent media of justice are the sacramental rites without which one "cannot be said to be rightly disposed to justification."² Concern for absolute assurance succeeds only in generating self concern.

For [the adversaries] contend that man is justified by faith alone since, if justification depends on a condition of works or obedience to the law, no one can be certain that he is justified; and since they believe that justification rests on this certitude, what is [really] shown is that justification is impossible.³

Again:

Who (I implore) can hope to have such a faith for himself? And if this faith and only this [faith] justifies, who would trust that he could be just or that he had ever been just?⁴

¹It may even seem that, in his enthusiasm for justification sola fide, Luther argues against his own position. See L.P. XXIII, 500, B, 33-6: "The argument of Luther . . . hurts the Lutherans more than the Catholics. For if God glorifies and justifies them because through faith they exhibit the greatest cult for him, then it follows that we are justified by the merit of faith; that is, on account of the virtue and dignity of faith itself."

²"Whoever has learned that the necessary remedy for correcting sin is the bath of Baptism cannot be said to be rightly disposed to justification unless he desires and requires the means [media] of the sort instituted by the Lord himself. To that end the power of the Baptism of reconciliation has been delegated to priests by Christ." L.P. XIII, 482, A, 10-16. Sacramental institutions reveal the twofold structure of the act of faith described by Bellarmine; apprehension being a sort of genus and assent a sort of differentiation. "Sacraments are quasi visible words which apply the general promises to us They accomplish in a special [i.e., individual] way whatever is general[ly promised]." L.P. XVI 488, B, 5-8. Bellarmine then goes on to say that both faith and the sacraments justify. But if one chooses to interpret justification instrumentally, as do the adversaries, then it is the sacraments that justify more properly than faith since they are more properly instruments. See L.P. XVI, 488, B, 21-35.

³L.P. XV, 486, A, 47-53

⁴L.P. X, 474, B, 52-5.

The adversaries tend to substitute a nominal (i.e., forensic and instrumental) solution to the problem of sin for actual transformation of the substance of faith in grace. Bellarmine suggests that one who puts himself at a distance from the sources of faith in the Church, risks becoming content with an uninvolved and notional acquaintance with faith which is impotent and fruitless. It is St. James who "compares a man having faith without works to him who, seeking the poor begging food and clothing, is content with this knowledge and gives nothing to them. As if nothing would be useful to poor men because rich men know of their poverty. . . ." ¹

¹
L.P. XV, 484, B, 31-6.

CHAPTER IV

FAITH AND WORKS

The last topic for Bellarmine's brief consideration is the relationship between the faith of the justified man and his works--works which possess an inherent value due to the infusion of God's grace.¹ This issue is covered more extensively by Bellarmine in later books and he offers here only a preview outline in order to suggest the complex organic character of the action of justification which he feels the adversaries do not appreciate. Due to an overemphasis on the doctrine of sola fide, they do not understand that "when many causes concur to one effect, Scripture attributes to one cause the effect of another. [Scripture] does not mean to indicate that one cause can suffice [for justification] without the others."² What Scripture does intend, is "not that faith alone suffices but that faith justifies and saves if other [acts] are not lacking, that is, that faith for its own part always justifies and saves in a manner where other [acts] are added which are simultaneously required."³

¹L.P. XVIII, 491, A, 38-9.

²L.P. XX, 495, B, 12-16.

³L.P. XXII, 500, A, 12-16.

This is so because, the faith which gives rise to justice is a living reality "which is born from inchoate faith and is brought to perfect charity and formed faith,"¹ "whereby the prophets certainly teach that life is continued through faith but not through faith alone but through faith united with charity and working through charity. From which it follows that the just man lives not only from faith but even from charity."² Living and working faith may be distinguished from faith which is dead "just as water is said to be alive which flows continually in fountains and rivers and dead which is not moved as in stagnant ponds and swamps when, however, both might truly and properly be water."³

The nature of faith is to develop and "grow and be perfected so that man is always brought to something greater."⁴ Perfect faith or "formed faith" merits an "increase of justice!"⁵ It is not the effort of man apart from God which brings increasing justice "but the work whose entire dignity hangs from grace . . . which is that grace which . . . merits to be increased ut aucta mereatur et perfici."⁶

¹
L.P. XX, 496, A, 52-4.

²
L.P. XX, 496, B, 4-8.

³
L.P. XV, 485, A, 37-41.

⁴
L.P. XX, 496, B, 21-2.

⁵
L.P. XXI, 493, A, 29-30.

⁶
L.P. XXI, 499, A, 21-5.

Following the initiative of St. Augustine, Bellarmine makes a rather clear distinction between the natural and supernatural orders in attempting to understand the relationship between faith and works. Corresponding to the distinction between these two orders, he discusses several other parallel differentiations: between the law of deeds and the law of faith; the justice of deeds or law and the justice of faith; works which are then identifiable as works of the law (quae fiunt ex solis viribus liberi arbitrii) and works of faith (quae fiunt ex gratia, qualis est ipse actus fidei)¹ and, finally, a distinction between the types of merit which accrue to these works. Merit de condigno is a merit of equality of proportionality between merit and reward which therefore can not apply to the case of man with God, and merit de congruo which inherently belongs to the good works of the Christian. We can thus say that "faith, even when disjoined from charity, is valuable and has the power to justify."²

The adversaries maintain an unfounded opposition between "the law, by which they understand the law of deeds which requires works, and the law of faith which requires faith."³ Apparently, the adversaries have not resolved⁴ for themselves the perplexity due to St. Paul's advocacy, on the one hand, of a "justice of law: just works which the law of deeds prescribes,"⁵ and on the other hand, his rejection of "the justice ex lege,

¹L.P. XIX, 493, B, 12-14.

²L.P. III, 463, B, 40-2.

³L.P. XIX, 492, B, 5-7.

⁴Augustine resolves this apparent contradiction for himself. See On the Spirit and the Letter, chapter XVI.

⁵L.P. XIX, 492, B, 32-4.

sive in lege sunt illa opera, quae homines faciunt sine gratia fidei, sola cognitione legis adjuti . . ."¹ What we must be careful to note is that works of themselves are not prohibited as such by St. Paul, but only those works done without faith.² Thus, "b[lessed] Paul rejects that justice [of mere works] as useless as such and opposed to the justice of faith, that is, to good works which are done ex gratia et fide."³

Man can not exclude all works of every kind from his life. However, among the deeds of man can be distinguished those which desiccate the life of grace and those which manifest a supernatural worth--the worth which informs the acts of the justified man and really sustains all the works of man whether done because of the law or purely out of faith. By the law a man knows what is required to live justly but by grace a man is able to live justly.⁴ Bellarmine paraphrases St. Augustine:

1
L.P. XIX, 492, B, 43-5.

2
See L.P. XIX, 493, B, 5-6: "Excludi autem omnia opera facta ante fidem, non autem omnia absolute . . ."

3
L.P. XIX, 492, B, 49-51.

4
L.P. XIX, 493, A, 1-8. Bellarmine quotes Augustine from Against Two Letters of The Pelagians, Book III, Chapter 20:
"For they think that, by the strength of their own will, they will fulfill the commands of the law; and wrapped up in that pride of theirs, they are not converted to the assistance of grace And by this means--marvellous indeed, but yet true--the righteousness which is in the law, even of the law, does not fulfill the righteousness of the law, but that which is in the Spirit of grace."
(Augustinus, Aurelius, The Anti-Pelagian Works of Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Vol. XV, tr. Peter Holmes and R. E. Wallis: The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1876), p. 319.)

The law of deeds, according to the Apostle, is that law which orders what is to be done. The law of faith is that faith which obtains the grace of doing what the law of deeds commands. Thus each law requires works but the law of deeds contains the precept, the law of faith the assistance. The law of deeds prescribes in order that we may know [what to do]; the law of faith acts in order that we may accomplish it. By the law of deeds God says, do what I command; by the law of faith we say to God, give what you command. Then the law of deeds is the letter which torments by commanding and not assisting; the law of faith is the spirit which vivifies the work by acting in order that the justification of law might be fulfilled in us. From which it follows that not only the law of Moses but also the law of Christ, in so far as it commands anything, is a law of deeds, and the law of faith would be the spirit of faith, not only by which we Christians but even the patriarchs and prophets and all the just men of old obtain the grace of God. And the justified freely serve the mandates of the law through this grace.¹

Thus the justice of works is "externa justitia"² which does not justify "coram Deo, sed solum coram hominibus."³ "Man is justified gratis and justified from faith and justified without works. For since faith is the first gift of God, men are justified from grace and gratis because faith itself is from grace."⁴ Therefore, there can be no equivalent value or relationship of meritorious worth between what a man does for God and what God does for man; there can be no merit de condigno.⁵ The justice

¹L.P. XIX, 492, B, 14-31.

²L.P. XIX, 494, A, 5.

³L.P. XIX, 492, B, 46-7.

⁴L.P. XXI, 497, A, 12-17.

⁵L.P. XXI, 499, A, 17-18. See Summa theologiae, 2a 1ae. q. 114 for Aquinas' discussion of merit. See the relevant excellent study by Heiko A. Oberman, "The Tridentine Decree on Justification in the Light of Late Medieval Theology," Distinctive Protestant and Catholic Themes Reconsidered (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 29-54.

of faith is inherent and possesses a merit of congruence (de congruo) with the active intentionality of God to save man.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Just where does Bellarmine's work fit into the history of commentary of the problem of justification? Having examined the content of his notion of justifying faith, it remains now for us to locate Bellarmine with respect to his theological predecessors, his use of theological sources and his analytical method of controversy and refutation. This order of approach is probably the best way to formulate our conclusions since what is initially evident, as an overall characteristic of Bellarmine's work, is not so much his theological originality, since he was not and had no intention to be an innovative theologian, but his massive and scholarly use of the traditional sources of revelation and Catholic tradition in responding to the powerful theological challenge offered by the main figures of the Protestant reformation.

The task of the controversial theologian is to explain comprehensively and to make intelligible from several standpoints, "these Catholic truths which seem at first sight unpleasant or misleading to Protestants."¹ This

¹Karl Rahner, "Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification," Theological Investigations, tr. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press and London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), IV, p. 190.

role of controversial theologian is the dominant factor in the construction of Bellarmine's theology of fides justificans.

The most formative and controlling influence on Bellarmine's development of the idea of fides justificans is the tradition of Scholastic theology in which he was immersed. That the Summa theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas provides Bellarmine with his main lines of approach to the problem is quite clear, although as previously mentioned, Bellarmine himself avoids explicit reference to Aquinas. As with Aquinas, Aristotle's hylemorphic doctrine provides Bellarmine with useful categories for understanding the change in man's state of justice wrought by man's final end and conscious object, God in Christ (see pp. 13-22).¹

1

See Ritschl's summary of Aquinas' position:

"The actions which are peculiar to man as such, and which distinguish him from the other creatures, have it as their distinctive feature that they are elicited by the deliberate contemplation of an end. Here in lies the condition under which man is the master of his own actions or is free in them. . . . By the contemplation of an end is meant that man directs his energies towards good in general (bonum universale), or that he regulates his action by the thought of an ultimate end, even in cases where the thing which he is immediately pursuing is a particular end. . . . But neither is the spontaneous effort of man towards his ultimate end in the perfection of his own being excepted from the sphere of divine guidance; on the contrary, the ground of its possibility rests wholly in God. For man reaches his highest, his perfect self-satisfaction--that is blessedness--in the contemplation of the Being of God (Qu. 3, art. 8). But inasmuch as this transcends the sphere of created being, it can be granted only by God (Qu. 5, art. 6). Yet since man's final end demands at the same time the exercise of his own activity, that blessedness which ultimately rests on God's gift is attained only by means of a number of performances called merits rendered by man himself (art 7). It is obvious that the attribute of spontaneity is inseparably connected, so far as man is concerned, with the distinguishing mark of movement towards the deliberately recognized end. But this does not mean that knowledge is the sole basis of volition; rather knowledge moves the will only in respect of the particular activity, while, on the other hand, it is the will that stirs up all

From his first formulation of the terms of the problem of justification in Book II, Bellarmine's thought is influenced by the Thomist causal schema of the intrinsic principles of matter and form. With man (and all created realities) these intrinsic principles or causes positively influence the total reality of which they are constituents by entering into a dynamic composition with each other. Man, in his individual subsistence, comes to possess the substantia rei futurae by faith (pp. 23-32), that is, his potentialities and dispositions (matter), are actualized and conformed to the character (form) of the truth and revelation to which he is united in knowledge, i.e., "everything disclosed by God for our belief."¹ (pp. 14-17) Provided we do not

the faculties (and consequently also that of knowledge) to their general activity. But if the will of the creature alternates between capability unexercised and activity, then the latter presupposes as a universal law that the human will is set in motion ab extra just like the mechanism of material nature. Since, however, no movement can be originated in the last-mentioned sphere, unless the outward cause stand in some sort of connexion with the universal cause of all nature, in like manner the movement of the will can arise from no outward cause other than that which is the cause of the will as a whole. This then is God. . . . "

Albrecht Ritschl, A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, tr. John S. Black (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), pp. 74-6.

1

See the excellent treatment of this point: Stephanus Pffrtner, Luther and Aquinas--a Conversation (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), pp. 35-83.

understand knowledge in a merely notional sense (pp. 40-42), this transformative relation of knowledge between man and God in Christ "moves" man from a state of uninformed injustice to faith formed in justice which is love. (pp. 62-64) Faith differs from knowledge in that the motive for assent is not the evidence of the thing itself but the authority of the agency of God's word; Scripture and the traditions of the Church. (pp. 36-38)

The action of justification must then begin with an apprehension of the truth which is presented to a man about his salvation. But to interpret Bellarmine's understanding of faith as explicated in terms of a Scholastic theory of knowledge might lead to an unwarranted reduction of his thought unless we keep in mind the dynamic and organic meaning which the Scholastics attach to knowledge. "In the service of truth, we must note that what Thomas [and Bellarmine] calls 'faith' is only one moment, the intellectual assent, within Luther's comprehensive idea of faith. . . . [But] it is clear that when [Thomas] says that faith must be 'formed,' or more exactly, that God's gift of saving faith is in fact formed by charity, then he is saying that actually the intellectual assent is integrated within the totality of a more comprehensive act of accepting salvation."¹ Otto Pesch has characterized Thomas' manner of theologizing as "sapiential" in contrast to the "existential" way Luther goes about theology.² This designation applies equally well to the character of Bellarmine's understanding of faith as an intellectual yet personal and contemplative grasp of revealed truth in the medieval sense of wisdom.

¹ See essay by Pesch.

² See essay by Pesch.

Bellarmino's dependence on the teaching of the Council of Trent on justification is evident in numerous citations from the Council throughout his treatise. That he maintains complete fidelity to both the substance and intent of the Council is particularly clear in Book II where the several causes of the process of justification are discussed in turn after the fashion of Chapter seven of the Council's decree on justification; also in Book thirteen where the several virtuous actions which compliment faith in bringing the believer to perfect justice are described as in Chapter six.

Bellarmino refutes Protestant positions which conflict with conciliar statements precisely as they are opposed in Chapters nine against presumptuous trust and eleven against rash presumption. He teaches the cooperation with grace as in Chapter five, the increase of justice as in Chapter ten, the preservation of faith in spite of sin as in Chapter fifteen, the merit of good works as in Chapter sixteen and the insufficiency of nature and the Law to justify man as in Chapter one. And finally, he builds his entire theology of fides justificans on the definition in Chapter eight of the statement of the sinner's gratuitous justification by faith.

In-depth observations on Bellarmino's use of Scripture and his hermeneutical method go beyond the scope of this paper. That Bellarmino was an exegete of uncommon ability can not be doubted since he participated both on the revision of the Septuagint and on the commission to provide an authoritative version of the Vulgate in keeping with the directive of the Council of Trent. He makes extensive use of the analyses of Scriptural passages particularly of those from St. Paul. There is no attempt to avoid ambiguous texts which may lend support to Protestant interpretations, indeed Bellarmino is courageous in his attempts to found both his refutations and

his positive arguments on firm Scriptural bases. Two weaknesses of method are, however, noticeable: a tendency to muster numbers of texts which make similar points without consistent emphasis on thorough exegesis and the use of texts to support arguments rather than to discover them.

Bellarmino's knowledge of the writings of the Fathers is voluminous. His extensive organization and use of materials from patristic sources adds considerable authority to his attempts to demonstrate the radical novelty of the doctrines of the reformers. It is certainly true that ". . . Bellarmine attached great importance of the argument drawn from the Fathers." However, Fr. Polman's comment is an overstatement in reference to the Book on fides justificans. "When [the argument of the Fathers] represents the common opinion of the Church it is of more value than the argument from Scripture. The interpretation of the latter is indeed often difficult, whereas the faith of the universal Church is infallible."¹ Bellarmine is, however, a theologian of the church par excellence, and the importance of her traditions and the views of the Fathers take on proportionate importance.

As has been mentioned, Bellarmine can be credited with a major advance in establishing a Catholic tradition of "positive" theology based on Scripture, the Fathers and historical tradition as opposed to the decadent "speculative" theology of the fifteenth century. It was due to his profound interest in the Fathers that these rather extensive researches into the history of the Church were realized.²

¹P. Polman, L'élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVI^e siècle (Gembloux, 1932), quoted in Ryan, p. 144.

²See particularly Ryan, pp. 63-102. An interesting problem for future research is the possible study of Bellarmine's patristic hermeneutic; such a study as has been completed on the works of Melancthon by Peter Fraenkel, Testimonia Patrum (Geneva, 1961).

In the matter of fides justificans, Bellarmine's primary patristic authority, of course, is St. Augustine. Augustine's tracts which uphold the gratuity of grace against the heretics of his time seem especially applicable in refuting the heretics of Bellarmine's time. Books XIX and XXI, crucial to Bellarmine's development of the theme of good works and "formed faith," quote long verbatim remarks from Augustine. The exemplar of faith which Bellarmine consistently offers for our edification is the Abraham of Augustine's Commentary on the Psalms.

Finally, a word must be said about the form and style of the Controversies which is due to Bellarmine's method of engaging the adversaries in published debates. There is, first of all, no question as to the integrity of Bellarmine's accuracy and even "impartiality . . . in his citation of the Protestant authors, and to the honesty with which he exposes their best arguments, often in their own words."¹ The original publication of the Controversies created much consternation among Catholics because of the complete citation of the exact positions of the adversaries with which Bellarmine disagreed.²

However, Bellarmine's position is essentially a defensive one and the prerogative of choosing points for emphasis lies with the adversaries. As a result, we can not assume that the theology of fides justificans herein developed possesses the balance which Bellarmine might have preferred under different conditions. Indeed, the constant effort at exposing adversaries' positions prompts our asking whether Bellarmine really understood the reformers at all. Bellarmine's role as a controversial theologian was to highlight differences not agreements. This is the way doctrines have usually developed in the history of the Church. Without such religious contentions the Controversies would not have been written.

¹Ryan, 146.

²Brodrick, 76-8.

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