

SCHOLASTIC IN THE WILDERNESS:  
ALONSO DE LA VERA CRUZ

by David Traboulay

Fray ALONSO DE LA VERA CRUZ was unquestionably the dominant influence in the intellectual life of Mexico in the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Born in 1507 in Caspueñas, a town in the diocese of Toledo, he received his bachelor of arts degree from the university of Alcalá and then went to Salamanca to study philosophy and theology where his master was the famous Dominican professor, FRANCISCO DE VITORIA.<sup>2</sup> Both the mode and content of the teaching and writings of Alonso manifested a definite indebtedness to his master, for the core of his prodigious theological and philosophical works was Thomistic. This was at a time when nominalism was the most influential philosophy at Paris, still the intellectual center of Europe. But the resurgence of Thomism can be accounted for by the activities of a few professors at Paris among whom was Vitoria. The influence of Thomism was not great in the fifteenth century. HENRY OF GORKUM (1418), JOHN VESPORIS (1460), and JOHN OF LAPIDE (1496) were the few Thomists who achieved any significant acclaim. The prevailing popularity of nominalism was partly because it was a *schola non affectata*, that is, it was free from sectional interest, unlike Thomism and realism which were the philosophies of the Dominicans and Franciscans respectively. It was the Belgian professor, PIERRE CROCKAERT, who was at the heart of the renaissance of thomistic studies in the sixteenth century. After joining the Dominicans in 1504, he inculcated in his students a love for the philosophy of St. Thomas and, more importantly, trained them to edit the works of St. Thomas, especially the *Summa theologiae*. Alonso's master, Francisco de Vitoria, was studying at Paris at the time and came under the influence of Pierre Crockaert, whom he called *magister meus doctissimus*.<sup>3</sup>

Fray Alonso was not yet thirty years old when he came to Mexico. Having professed as an Augustinian on July 20, 1537, he was named master of novices of his order. During those first years in Mexico, he learnt the Indian language. In 1542 he was appointed acting bishop of Michoacán and in 1548 he was elected provincial of his order. The Augustinian chronicler, JUAN DE GRIJALVA, related that Alonso performed these duties to the satisfaction and approval of all.<sup>4</sup> In the meantime, he taught a course in philosophy in the Augustinian colleges of Tiripitío, Tacámbaro, and Atonilco. His mode of teaching was this: "It was then the style to read the text aloud and to interpret the parts of St. Thomas until they were understood. If the master illustrated a doctrine or

<sup>1</sup> ARTHUR ENNIS, "Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz", *Augustiniana* V—VII (1955—57); J. A. ALMANDOZ GARMENDIA, *Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz y la encomienda indiana*, (Rome, 1967—68).

<sup>2</sup> L. GETINO, *El maestro Fray Francisco de Vitoria. Su vida, su doctrina, e influencia*, (Madrid, 1930); J. B. SCOTT, *The Spanish origin of international law. Francisco de Vitoria and his law of Nations*, (Washington, 1933).

<sup>3</sup> R. G. VILLOSLADA, *La Universidad de París durante les estudios de Francisco de Vitoria*, (Rome, 1938), p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> JUAN DE GRIJALVA, *Crónica de la orden de San Agustín en las provincias de la nueva España* (Mexico, 1624), bk. IV, ch. x, 585—597.



an example, it was aloud. In this way, those who attended his lectures became students, not secretaries." Outside the normal class schedule, Fray Alonso often explained an article of St. Thomas instead of the customary lesson read by one of the friars during meals or the antiphonal recitation or the discussion which the religious usually conducted after meals, whenever the opportunity or the subject permitted it. These lectures were not always on St. Thomas. Indeed, problems of the day in Mexico and in Spain were discussed by him in this way. Arguments for and against the problem were given and then resolved. The publication of any new book, especially a controversial one, always merited attention from him. At dinner, he would state the theme of the book, present the ideas that were worthy of consideration, and noted the opinions that were not in agreement with St. Thomas, whom he used as his point of reference for all his ideas. Everyday of his life, every hour, GRIJALVA continued, was for him a class. When the great Spanish poet and theologian, Fray LUIS DE LEON, was imprisoned by the Inquisition, Alonso's response was typical of one who shared the true brotherhood of letters: "In truth, they might just as well put me, too, to the stake, for my opinions are the same as his."

In 1553 he was designated bishop of Nicaragua, but declined the position. That year, he was named professor of sacred scripture and Thomistic theology at the university of Mexico. His election as provincial of his order in 1557 forced him to cut short his teaching activity, however. In 1562 he left for Spain with representatives of the Dominican and Franciscan orders to complain about the intrusions of the bishop and secular clergy in the affairs of the friars. The council of Trent had made the regular clergy subject to the bishop. What happened in the Indies was that the bishop was obstructing the work of the friars. There was also great disquietude, because the Indians had to pay tithes both to the bishop and the friars. Alonso was successful in his petition because in 1567 the law making the friars subject to the bishop was revoked in the Indies. While in Spain, Alonso was made confessor of Don Juan de Ovando y Godoy, president of the council of the Indies. Twice Phillip II named him Comisar General of the Orders in the Indies but he refused to accept the position.

He returned to Mexico in 1573, carrying with him sixty cases of books which he placed in the college of San Pablo. In 1575 he was reelected provincial, and again in 1581. He died in July 1584 at the age of 77. His burial was attended by the viceroy, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, the nobility, masters and students of the various colleges, and, above all, the Indians for whom he "was ever their father, apostle, and master".

#### HIS WORKS

During the initial year of the university of Mexico, ALONSO selected as the topic of his course the relative rights of the Spaniards and the Indians to hold property. It may cause some surprise that he should select this theme as professor of sacred scripture. But VITORIA, in his *De potestate civili*, had stated that it was the duty of the theologian to deal with every subject. The lectures were clearly motivated by a desire to give his students the theological and canonical foundation to deal with these current questions which, in his vision, he saw becoming more ponderous.

His teaching method was essentially scholastic. A question was first presented. Then he gave the possible arguments supporting the negative response to the question before giving his own point of view and supporting it with a series of



sylogisms. As for his sources, it was to be expected that he would use the opinions of FRANCISCO DE VITORIA. However, no mention was made of him. Yet a comparison between the treatise of Vitoria and that of ALONSO reveals a remarkable similarity. Both contended that the Indians had legitimate dominion over their lands before the coming of the Spaniards. Neither grace nor faith could bestow dominion, nor the lack of it take it away. Both asserted that the emperor was never the lord of all nations and that the pope did not have any direct temporal power outside the papal states. They therefore concluded that a declaration of war against the Indians because they did not accept the faith was not justified. The similarity between the two theologians could be explained by the fact that they both drew greatly from the *Summa* of St. THOMAS and CAJETAN, the commentator of St. Thomas.

On the question of the rights of the Indians, the opponents of the Indians had made much of ARISTOTLE's theory of the natural superiority of some men and the natural inferiority of others. Alonso interpreted this thesis in a more humane manner. He said that this did not mean that some were born to be masters and others slaves. Superiority was taken to mean a capacity to rule which in no way conferred an inherent sovereignty on the rulers. This interpretation was clearly given to counter the theory of the Spanish Aristotelian at Salamanca, Dr. GINES DE SEPULVEDA, who had used the same source to conclude that the Indians were naturally inferior. ALONSO relied greatly on arguments drawn from Canon und Civil law. The interaction of natural law and international law was fundamental to him. He defined natural law as the duty to do good and avoid evil, and international law as the right to communal property. The eleven questions discussed in his course were: whether those who held natives without any title to them could justly receive tribute or whether they were bound to restore the tribute and free the natives from bondage; whether owners with a just title were bound to attend to the instruction of their charges; whether the colonist, who had just dominion through a royal grant, could occupy lands at will; whether it was permissible to exact arbitrarily from the Indians all the tribute they could pay; whether the Indians were really their own masters; whether the Spaniards who purchased lands from the Indians could be of tranquil conscience, regardless of the price paid; whether the emperor was the lord of the world; whether the emperor was the owner of all things possessed by those subject to him; whether the pope had supreme power; whether the king of Spain could have declared a just war against the Indians; and whether there was any reason to justify war against the inhabitants of the New World.<sup>5</sup>

ALONSO's conclusions were generally in favor of the Indians. The unauthorized exaction of tribute was illegal in his opinion and restitution should be made to the Indian community even if the taxation was moderate and the owners diligent in promoting the welfare of the community: „For neither care nor diligence creates just dominion, if it is not otherwise bestowed by the one possessing the authority.“

The colonist received his grant of land and Indians from the king primarily to instruct the Indians in the Catholic faith. He was obligated to cater for their spiritual welfare. It was for this reason that they were allowed to exact tribute. But this was not being done: "I speak from experience. I know how many men

<sup>5</sup> E. J. BURRUS, *The writings of Fray Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (Sources and studies for the history of the Americas, IV, V), (Rome, 1967).



(otherwise noble in the eyes of the world, and would to Heaven in the eyes of Christ, for whom the only nobility is virtue), the walls of whose homes are covered with pure silk tapestries, who boast of gold and silver plates and cups for food and drink, whose beds are covered with silk . . . but in the church of the Indians from whose tribute they obtain all they have, neither chalice nor the altar furnishings necessary to say Mass can be found."

He felt that the emperor could not claim the acquisition of the common property unless it was for the common good or given to him by the community. A grant made by the emperor did not of itself lie within the competency of the ruler but of the people in whom was vested true sovereignty. For his part, the community transferred its ownership to the king as their defender and promoter. The exaction of taxation outside the realm of the good of the community was *ultra vires*. Any form of arbitrary taxation or tribute was tantamount to tyranny and would result in the loss of the authority delegated to the king by the community.

ALONSO held that in some respects the condition of the Indians was better before the Spaniards came. In his opinion they were really free since they had their own property and family: "Our Spaniards sold them to mine metals, and not only in these regions, but also to the islands; and so these poor people, on leaving their native land, breathed their last." The notion of the common good was essential to his argumentation. It was not conceived in any utilitarian sense, but in a Christian and metaphysical sense. It certainly did not mean that each community had the right to determine its own destiny. This right extended only to the participation in the common good, the Christian good, and did not imply the right of choice between good and its opposite: "Neither the governor, nor the viceroy, nor the entire community has the power to work for the destruction of the common good but has only the power to work for its advancement and promotion . . . the good, the more universal it is, the more God-like it is."

On the question of imperial jurisdiction, ALONSO argued from history that there was never a time when the emperor could claim universal jurisdiction. However, he could obtain this jurisdiction from the pope who possessed universal authority in spiritual affairs. But this jurisdiction was to be given only for the advancement of the Christian commonwealth. This did not mean that the emperor derived his temporal power from the pope. He stated very strongly that neither the emperor nor the pope possessed the right to deprive the Indians of their dominion because they were unbelievers. The papal right was by virtue of a spiritual end and did not obtain if the spiritual motivation was absent: "When the cause of law ceases, its obligation also ceases." ALONSO distinguished between private and corporate ownership, and wisely stated that although the king might possess jurisdiction over all, he did not possess ownership over all: "Jurisdiction and ownership are different . . . inasmuch as he has the jurisdiction of a magistrate over men but does not have ownership over them, since they are not slaves." Therefore, ALONSO concluded that the king did not have the right to arbitrarily grant communal property. In order to do this, the consent of the Indian community was necessary.

In establishing his theory of the totality of the pope's jurisdiction in spiritual matters, he seemed to stress the fact that this right was derived from Christ, not from "the totality of believers" nor from the general council of the Church. Rather, the council derived whatever jurisdiction it had from the pope. He felt that the pope possessed temporal power only in an indirect way: "Spiritual



power has to do with finality, and temporal power with the means or the things that exist for the end, since the temporal exists for the spiritual, not vice versa. Consequently, it is within the competency of the papal power to make use of secular power and temporal goods." ALONSO emphasized that the pope could in no way declare war against the Indians because they were unbelievers. He upheld the idea of a just war, but only in terms of defense: "Natural law allows a man to defend himself and to repel force by force. But defense cannot take place except by waging war. Therefore it is lawful for this reason to wage war." But the war undertaken by the Spaniards could not under any circumstances be termed defensive. Some Spaniards had argued that they were justified in making war on the Indians because their king was an unbeliever and exercised tyrannical sway over his people. To this argument, ALONSO replied: "The right to slay a tyrant does not reside in a private person but rather in the commonwealth from whom the ruler is authorized to govern in matters temporal." The affirmation of the concept of the freedom of the Indians was the main theme of these lectures. He lamented the atrocities meted out to the Indians, the denial of their freedom, and their lack of rights. His response to these problems which clearly hurt his sensibility was consistent with his disposition. For he was by training and temperament an academician. So the context of his response was the university. He dealt with the problems of Indian suffering in the mode proper to the idea of a university, namely, argumentation. In this respect, he was less volatile, less known than LAS CASAS. Yet ALONSO was not less involved. And, there was such a coincidence between the content of their struggle that one could say that Alonso was inspired by Las Casas. ERNEST BURRUS compared them in this way: "As theorists, Las Casas and Vera Cruz had the same lofty purpose in mind: to save the natives of the New World, to defend their rights, to alleviate their sufferings."

The sermons of ALONSO have great appeal and show the expansive nature of his interests and talents.<sup>6</sup> Given during Holy Week in 1555, he began by asking his listeners to consider the passion of Christ, who had suffered such opposition from sinners. He reminded them that Christ was never free from suffering. The agony of his body at the passion was nothing compared to the agony felt by his soul throughout his life. In this way, the Son paid homage to God. He reminded them of the sinful nature of every man: "Some by sins of pride, others by sins of flesh, others by idolatry, others by blasphemy, others by false oaths, others by sins of excessive eating and drinking, others by those of enmity." But Christ redeemed man and this was the significance of the passion: "If you are bitten by pride, gaze upon your redeemer, meek and gentle as a lamb." Then, in a grand style, he exclaimed: "O boundless charity, O infinite goodness! What heart could bring itself to do what you, my God, have done?" Continuing, he said that the passion brought about two deaths, the death of culpability and the death of punishment, and opened "the chest containing the treasures of God and all his riches: thus was man enriched with wisdom". He exhorted them to practice a virtuous life by referring to the wisdom of God manifested in his passion, that is, his humility and all-embracing charity. In his discussion of charity, he made a remark that seemed to relate to the social situation in Mexico: "Rejoice, those of you who are of humble status, for God loves you just as much as he loves gentlemen and nobles." In his conclusion, he reminded the audience that God's love was the highest love because it did not demand anything in return.

<sup>6</sup> BURRUS, *The writings of Alonso de la Vera Cruz* (Rome, 1968), p. 22ff.



The two following sermons showed the same masterly control of style and theme. Christ was the second Adam and had taken the Church as his spouse. The Church grew in strength with the fortitude of Christ conferred in grace and, in turn, Christ became weak with the weakness of the Church. This constituted the boundless mercy of Christ, that he wished to clothe himself with the weakness of man. The ark built by God to destroy sin was the humanity of Christ: "It was the ark wherein dwelt the Divine Word, the treasure-box wherein God enclosed himself, the reliquary of the glory of mankind, the center and acme of all the virtues." But man was not grateful and, in his blindness, rejected God. Then he stressed the theme of ingratitude by referring to Christ's reply to the soldiers who arrested him: "I am the one you are to mock and ridicule. I am the one you will spit on and lash. I am — do you recognize me? — the one who gave you your very existence. I am the one who created you. I saved you. I am your life." He concluded by saying that Christ was not to be sought with weapons but with faith and understanding.

In 1556, ALONSO's most important theological work, the *Speculum coniugiorum*, was published.<sup>7</sup> This treatise presented the orthodox opinions of the Church on marriage, and exhorted readers to submit unreservedly to the judgments of the Church. Such a work was obviously relevant because the Christian tenets of marriage differed in some respects from those practiced by the Indians. Moreover, it possessed a certain sociological value in that it described the matrimonial practices of the Indians. Its popularity caused him to write an *Appendix* which was published in 1571.

He said that the union between a man and a woman was natural. Matrimony stemmed from a natural inclination and obeyed human nature, not the common nature of animals. The primary end of marriage was the procreation of children. Consent was necessary for marriage since marriage was a contract. However, only the consent of both parties was really necessary. The consent of parents was not necessary, although respect demanded it. Consent had to be expressed in words and signs because inner desire was not enough. Freedom was essential to marriage. For the purpose of marriage was hindered if freedom was lacking because freedom was by nature necessary.

The notions of freedom, consent, trust, and love were the basic themes of this work. He felt that a married couple should have faith in each other so that there would be no occasion of adultery. Clandestine marriage was, in his opinion, a mortal sin and he advised that all be married in Church. Marriage was indissoluble for the faithful and pagans alike. Pagans who were married before their conversion to Christianity were not obliged to marry again. He said that a slave could marry against the will of his master because St. Paul had said, "No one in Jesus Christ is a slave, but free". Dealing with marriage among the Indians, ALONSO affirmed their validity since they were uneducated and did not know the truth. Therefore, the natives did not break the natural law because their ignorance was not culpable. Their marriages were valid because the man and woman were joined according to their customs voluntarily, for the procreation of children and the sharing of family tasks. ALONSO noted that it was the custom among the chiefs for parents to speak among themselves concerning the marriage. The father of the prospective groom would send a messenger to the home

<sup>7</sup> VERA CRUZ, *Speculum coniugiorum* (Mexico, 1556), pp. 16—77; —, *Appendix* (Madrid, 1571), pp. 12—98.



of the girl's father to arrange a marriage. After it was agreed upon, those related to the girl would discuss the future marriage, determine the date, and see to the adornment of the bride. The bride would carry a dress for her spouse and take with her a sickle to cut wood for the temples of the Gods and a bed made from rushes. A priest would accompany these ladies to the home of the spouse where everything was prepared for the wedding. The priests would say to them: "May the Gods deign to bring you together to serve each other." Their parents then said to them: "Love each other, give gifts to each other. Let there be no folly and no adultery." Finally, turning to the groom, the priest said: "If you catch your wife in adultery, abandon her and send her back to her home peacefully without inflicting harm to her because she will grieve sufficiently." After this, all relatives and neighbors came together for a feast. The father of the groom gave fields to the newly-married, vestments to the priest and the girls who had accompanied the bride, and gifts to the father of the bride.

Among the lower classes, marriages were also arranged but no priest accompanied the bride. The reciprocation of gifts was followed by the advice of the bride's father: "Do not leave your husband or commit adultery." The groom then told his wife: "I accept you as my wife so that you will prepare my daily food and clothes." She then replied: "I accept you so that you will cultivate the fields."

In a discussion of the indissolubility of marriage, ALONSO declared that nature intended the conservation of humanity and the good of everyone. Any act which violated the principal end of an institution should be forbidden. In marriage, the principal end is the procreation of children and their education. The second end of marriage is the sharing of the toils of man and woman. ALONSO concluded that marriage was a good and thus indissoluble. Divorce was possible before their knowledge of Christ, but not after. ALONSO said that polygamy was not in itself evil. If it was, the patriarchs would have sinned. But he felt that it could not be allowed because family life would be difficult. In addition, he contended that it was clear from the gospels that it was against the Divine law. Generally, mixed marriages between pagans and Christians was forbidden. Citing the Pauline privilege, he held that if two pagans married and one was converted and then rejected by the other, that marriage could be dissolved. One cannot help but marvel at the knowledge of ALONSO. A veritable encyclopedia on the subject, this work evinced a humanity and a respect for the institutions and customs of the Indians that was the hallmark of his personality.

The philosophical writings of ALONSO consisted of the *Recognitio summularum* (1554), the *Dialectica resolutio* (1554), and the *Physica speculatio* (1557).<sup>8</sup> They were written as textbooks for his students of logic. In the preface to the *Recognitio summularum*, he said that for many years he had considered it a matter of great urgency to instruct his students in the essentials of logic, to point out to them the way to sacred theology so that they would not grow old on the shores of the Sirens and not be discouraged in their anxiety over the magnitude of their difficulty. He said that much time was wasted in learning inane syllogisms, which often confused the mind instead of making it sharp and refined. Therefore, he intended to compose his treatise on logic in a simple and lucid style, avoiding what was superfluous but omitting nothing which might be useful. ALONSO was always keenly aware of the dangers inherent

<sup>8</sup> VERA CRUZ, *Recognitio summularum*, (Mexico, 1554); —, *Dialectica resolutio*, (Mexico, 1554); —, *Physica, speculatio*, (Mexico, 1557).



in the study of logic. In the universities of Europe, he had seen it lead to an indulgence of mere verbalism, triteness, and vainglorious display because, as he himself put it, some masters and students had conceived of logic as an end in itself. The study of logic for ALONSO was a means, a preparation, a training of the mind in the tools that were necessary for the study of the queen of the sciences, theology, in which was contained all knowledge and wisdom.

For ALONSO, logic was the science of reason. He defined science as a conclusion or product of the intellect through syllogistic reason, which was a discourse in which certain things having been propounded something else resulted from them. In its capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood, logic was an integral part of philosophy as well as an instrument at the service of philosophy. The logic of BOETHIUS which influenced medieval logicians was a commentary on ARISTOTLE's logic in which was included the commentary of PORPHYRY. BOETHIUS himself had situated the problem that caused great controversy all through the Middle Ages, namely, whether universals were subsistent realities or simple conceptions of the mind. In treating of universals, ALONSO declared that the universal lay in predicating what was postulated formally of individuals. For him there was no doubt that the universal participated in causation and in being. In responding to the question whether they were separate ideas or only objects in the intellect, he declared that ARISTOTLE distinguished individual and universal things and held that knowledge of things was impossible unless they existed in reality. Therefore, there was knowledge of universals, which were the formal element and were prior in nature than individual things. He concluded that the universal was the object of the intellect and had real existence.

In the preface to the *Predicamenta*, ALONSO wrote that there was a book in the library of Cologne which said that ARISTOTLE was saved, which testifies to the influence of Aristotle in the intellectual life of that period. ARISTOTLE's syllogism, he said, required an emphasis on terms which he called univocal, that is, terms having the same meaning each time they were used. On the other hand, equivocation was diverse signification on the part of one and the same word. In his categorization of science, ALONSO hastened to add that God could not be placed in a category because God was good without quality, great without quantity, present without limit, holding all things without habits, whole without any definite place, eternal without time, making all things mutable without himself being mutable. To distinguish between essential and accidental substance, he said that in the Holy Sacrament the substance bread did not remain although the accidental quantities remained. In a discussion on quality, he said that it was the virtue by which people were such and such. One sort of quality was habit. Habits were not only acquired but also infused by God, as the theological and moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

To conclude, he said that scientific knowledge was knowledge of causes, that demonstration must be based on premises prior to and better known than the conclusion. More specifically, scientific knowledge was knowledge of the universal and this was what made clear the cause of an individual perception.

The *Physica, speculatio* was the first book on natural science published in the New World and presented the current teachings of his time on physics, astronomy, biology, meteorology, botany, and psychology. Designed as a textbook for the students at the university, it was dedicated to Santo TOMAS DE VILLANUEVA, who was responsible for bringing the Augustinians to the New



World. He introduced the physics by stating that there was a science of nature, the subject of which was motion. The study of physics in his opinion was speculative because it led to contemplation, not action, and was necessary for man in order to satisfy his inclination and reach his final end.

Prime matter was the first subject of anything. Although it did not possess in itself reality, yet it was inclined towards actuality. It could not exist unformed but existed only in its proper form. Matter could neither be produced nor destroyed. Form was the actualization of the potency of matter. There were four causes of things, namely, material, formal, efficient, and final. Nature did not move by accident but observed a rational law and was directed to a final cause. All bodies consisted of four elements, fire, air, earth, and water. The celestial bodies influenced men and things in the world but man was free and could overcome the destiny inclined by them.

In his treatise on the soul, ALONSO declared that there were three types of souls — the vegetative, the sensitive, and the rational soul.<sup>9</sup> The rational soul is immaterial, immortal, and not deriving its origin from any potency of matter and can subsist alone by itself. This corresponds to metaphysics. However, the knowledge of the rational soul in so far as it is the form of the organic, physical body, corresponds to physics or natural philosophy. The soul is generically a first act since the body is not an act but potency. Even though the soul is a first act, it should not be interpreted as first in an absolute sense because God is the first act. The soul is called first in relation to the living organism in which it coexists. The soul is the principle of movement and knowledge. That which gives being to a living thing and constitutes the principle of its vital operations is the soul. Knowledge of accidents or the body cannot bring distinct knowledge of a substance. The proper object of intellection is the universal. To understand the essence of a substance, one must understand the universal.

Treating of hallucinations and witches, he believed that they were possible. He said that some who were considered witches were mere impostors, lost men who tried to deceive the ignorant. If they managed to cause something supernatural to take place, it was probably due to a pact they made with the devil. He concluded that one should not condemn or accept them completely because they might well have possessed a natural curative talent.

There were four internal senses: common sense, imaginative, cogitative, and the memory. Common sense received the species transmitted to the external senses; the imaginative potency receives images and forms a judgement; the cogitative potency makes a certain comparative judgement; finally, the memory stores the images received by the cogitative potency. The soul was found whole in all the body and in every part in the fullness of its perfection and essence.

On the passions, he said that love was a passion of the appetite modifiable by goodness and knowledge. Spiritual delight was stronger than carnal delight. He felt that man experienced greater delight when he reached the knowledge of something. Thus, intellectual knowledge was more delicious than sensual. Man should abstain from voluptuous pleasures since intellectual knowledge was more noble than sensible knowledge. Intellectual delight was the most intimate, the most perfect, and the most steadfast because it penetrated to the very essence of things.

<sup>9</sup> O. ROBLES, *Alonso de la Vera Cruz, investigación filosófica-natural. Los libros del alma I y II*, (Mexico, 1942).



As in his other works, the opinions of ALONSO were very much in tune with orthodox scholastic teaching. Indeed, it could be criticized on the grounds that it was too traditional. But it was this medieval spirit that characterized the intellectual life of colonial Spanish America. We must admire then the breadth of ALONSO's knowledge. It was no wonder that FRANCISCO CERVANTES DE SALAZAR could exclaim in the preface of this book: "What great joy you must feel, O university of Mexico, to have deserved to have such a great Doctor."

The spirit of ALONSO's intellectual tendency could well be ascertained from the advice he gave to his students at the end of the course in theology. No day should go by without reading an article by St. THOMAS. In reading any book, they should note whatever was novel and useful, comparing it with what St. THOMAS had said on that subject. In this way they would make constant progress in learning. Undoubtedly referring to a habit of his students, he urged them not to skip the arguments and solution at the beginning of the articles of St. THOMAS. Whatever was not clear, they were to jot it down and then consult St. THOMAS or some qualified authority. In discussions on science, their replies or opinions should be given only after mature reflexion and study. Otherwise, they would suffer a loss of esteem. Whenever they had to give their views on subjects on which there were several opinions, they should in all honesty say this. Arguments on theology with people who have never studied theology were to be avoided at all costs and, if in any discussion it appeared that hostility was being engendered, they were not to try win the argument by referring to St. THOMAS: "Do not try to win by saying that you will prove your point in St. THOMAS, in the commentaries, or in your professor's lectures. The reason is this: emotion or shame will induce your opponent to contemn what St. THOMAS says, or he will even claim that he is not to be interpreted in that way. It is better to wait until the contention is over and then you can with kindness persuade the other person to accept what he was ignorant of." He advised them never to look down upon the unlearned especially if they were older because it would make people say that scholars were vain and haughty. The psychological insight of ALONSO was quite remarkable. He conceived of the scholar as in the world but burdened with the responsibility of leading the people to wisdom. He was quick to tell his students that they would often be confronted by the uneducated but at the same time he gave them positive advice to face this situation: "Whenever anyone in your presence displays his knowledge — even if he is not very learned and you know much more about the subject — keep quiet and listen as though you know nothing about the subject; nor be prone to contradict unless evident error is involved and the statements made are dangerous. The reason is this: to contradict is always odious, whereas to keep quiet is advantageous. Afterwards, one can in all kindness and goodness point out the truth and all will gain by such conduct." In their letters and their opinions, he warned them against arrogance, ostentation, vanity, and self praise because "an unaffected conversation and a simple way of dealing with others will more easily win the good opinion of others." Every activity that had to do with study should be prepared. They should not waste time: "For inasmuch as you have the reputation of being theologians, all will take note of what you say and do, receiving a good example from all that is good in you and confusion and scandal from what is not so; and they will have reason to find fault with your learning and with the little progress you made in your studies and lectures." No lecture should be given without first writing it down. A wide margin



should be left for corrections, additions and cancellations. In disputations and discussions, the usage of such harsh responses as "this is heretical, this is an error, this is false" was particularly distasteful. Therefore, courteous replies were more useful and proper to the honor of God and the true faith.

Alluding to the controversy in Europe between the various religious orders and foreshadowing a similar controversy in the New World in the seventeenth century, he warned his students not to argue with the religious of other orders as to whether St. THOMAS or DUNS SCOTUS was more learned. Truth, he said, was to be sought in whatever scholar it could be found "inasmuch as we have solemnly committed ourselves to the words of Christ, not to those of St. Thomas or Duns Scotus." After reviewing St. THOMAS, they should study carefully all the books of Canon Law. For their spiritual life, they should familiarize themselves with the writings of RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR and the Desert fathers. For a knowledge of history, he advised them to read the *City of God* of St. AUGUSTINE with the commentary of it by JUAN LUIS VIVES.

Most important of all these advices, he told them, was the need for prayer. Prayer should be an integral part of their lives. The ideal theologian for ALONSO was not the contemplative scholar but the pastoral scholar. Pastoral work was not an obstacle to learning. ALONSO concluded this wise and practical address to his students with this moving request: "In conclusion, this is the only recompense I ask: pray to God for me that he direct me in order that I may ever serve him; I ask that you love me affectionately in Christ. If you do, then I will be satisfied and consider myself amply rewarded."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> GRIJALVA, *op. cit.*, pp. 492—496.