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Markus Koch

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_kochm@csl.edu

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LAURENTIUS VALLA AND THE
DONATION OF CONSTANTINE

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Concordia Seminary

Department of Historical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Divinity

by

Markus Koch

December 1944

Approved by:

W. G. Polack

John Stoyer

LAURENTIUS VALLA AND THE
DONATION OF CONSTANTINE

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Outline
for
LAURENTIUS VALLA AND THE
DONATION OF CONSTANTINE

Introduction

Laurentius Valla is introduced by the opinions of the various historians. The reasons for the interest in this man and his work are stated as the aims of the investigation.

- I. The times of Valla were full of many difficulties, problems and changes.
 - A. The condition of the church is very bad.
 1. The church is at war with itself. A conflict of aims of churchman and people is known. Reform is widely urged. The church is criticized.
 2. The church is at war with the nations, who have become tired of papal dictation.
 3. In spite of these difficulties the church is still powerful.
 - B. The time of Valla was also the age in which man discovers himself. This is known as the humanistic movement.
 1. Humanism defined means that man takes an interest in human letters and temporal affairs.
 2. The movement arose after the tremendous changes brought into the society of the world through the Crusades.
 3. Its contributions were many; it broadened man's interests and deepened his critical insights.
- II. Laurentius is a man of his time. A brief biography of Valla is presented.
 - A. The early years of his life were spent in Rome.
 1. He received a fine training from the best teachers of his day.
 2. He already begins to form his critical attitudes.
 - B. His life at Pavia, as an instructor at the university is filled with quarrels and literary writings. Here his critical attitudes bring some fruit.
 - C. His life with King Alfonso at Naples is particularly fruitful.

1. He gets into trouble with the monks and priests
 2. He gets into conflict with the papacy itself and writes his Donation of Constantine.
 3. His quarrel on the Apostles creed excites the jealousy of the monks and he is called before the Inquisitorial court.
- D. Valla finally gets into the good graces of the Pope and serves the papacy in Rome until his death.
- E. Valla had a great influence and made marvelous contributions.
1. He laid the foundation for scientific study of eloquence.
 2. He created the principles for the science of criticism.
 3. He may be called one of the founders of N.T. criticism.
 4. He was a tremendous influence on Erasmus and Luther.

III. It is necessary to investigate the backgrounds of the Donation of Constantine if one is best able to evaluate Valla's treatise.

- A. The legends and superstitions of the time of Constantine were brought together in the Sylvester-Constantine legend.
1. There were many superstitions of divine aid known at that time... a strange mixture..truth and fiction.
 2. There are many different accounts of Constantine's conversion
 3. Gradually names of church-man appeared with these legends.. so that the Emperor's conversion was attached with the Bishop of Rome. This became the Sylvester-Constantine legend.
- B. The donation of Constantine was taken from the Sylvester-Donstantine legend.
1. Spurious accounts were said to have been existent in many false works.
 2. The donation was probably touched up by some monk and placed in one of the collections of canon law.
 3. It took some time before the legends were accepted to all.
 4. Various opinions concerning its rise and its inclusion in the Pseudo-Isidean decretals.
- C. The Donation was used by many people of the Middle Ages.
- D. The document is believed to have become an instrument of papal power, rather than originally written for that purpose.
- E. The criticism of the work was only mild at first. It becomes much stronger by the 14th century.

1. The more important criticisms prior to Valla were those of Marsilius of Padua, and Nicholas of Cusa.
2. There were some less important criticisms of the donation made after Valla too.

IV. The Discourse of Valla on the Donation of Constantine is one of his most significant works.

- A. His treatment of the donation is a marvelous product of original research.
 1. He shows that the Donation of Constantine is false from external considerations.
 2. He shows that the work does not agree internally.
 3. His method of word study is a very important contribution.
- B. His treatment is sharp, keen and humorous and filled with many examples of Scripture and literature.
- C. The main point of the treatise is that the temporal power of the pope is bad and that it should be abandoned and that the donation is a forgery.
 1. Valla contended for the separation of church and state.
 2. He also believed that man had a right to rebel against tyranny and slavery.

Concluding Remarks.

The life and works of Laurentius Valla are worth studying. We see a powerful man at work, gifted in every way. It is true he has many bad qualities, but his good qualities have been used to make lasting contributions to an uncritical age.

INTRODUCTION

In the passing parade of history, one can see the ceaseless march of personalities, both great and small — great men whose dominant energies have soared above the common lot of mankind and who by their stupendous power and gifts have turned the tide of human thought and action. Such men as Alexander The Great, Mohammed, Luther and Napoleon have left their mark upon the lives of their fellowmen and have influenced and changed the history of succeeding generations. As one looks upon their achievements, one feels quite in agreement with Carlyle's much decried theses that history is largely affected by the influence of great personalities upon their contemporaries.

But history also records the achievements of lesser men.... men who are significant because they too have made specific discoveries and thereby have contributed to the overall general advance of mankind. The work of such lesser men are indicative of certain general trends of human action each of which when viewed in the perspective of history, marks a progressive advance in the history of the world ... man gradually heading for some epochal change. Such changes do not come overnight, but develop in the hearts and minds of every spirit in each generation until they have coalesced in more or less set patterns. They accumulate power and strength and soon by sheer momentum sweep

away the older institutions or ideas and bring to the fore their own new ones. Thus a change is effected in human history.

Laurentius Valla was such a lesser character. His influence upon history was considerably less than that made by the great beacon lights of history. Yet he was a part of a trend that led and paved the way for greater events. He received the praise and censure of great men of his own time and later days. Both Luther and Erasmus thought very highly of Valla. Luther, though with an imperfect understanding of the man, calls him "ein gelehrter trefflicher Mann."^{1.} Erasmus wrote of Valla as a man, of great ability;^{2.}

"Valla, a man who with so much energy, zeal and labor, refuted the stupidities of the barbarians, saved half-buried letters from extinction, restored Italy to her ancient splendor of eloquence, and forced even the learned to express themselves henceforth with more circumspection."

Later historians have said good things about him. Hulme calls him, "one of the greatest historians of the entire era."^{3.} Hyma says that Valla is sometimes called "the incarnation of the spirit of humanism."^{4.} Coleman, a man who has written an interesting study of Valla and his treatise *The Donation of Constantine*, says that he was "the greatest of professional Italian humanists."^{5.} Schaff speaks of him

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1. Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften, (St. Louis Ed.), Vol. 16, para. 2051.
 2. Christopher B. Coleman, The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine, p. 3.
 3. Edward Maslin Hulme, The Renaissance, the Protestant Revolution and the Catholic Reformation, p. 129.
 4. Albert Hyma, The Youth of Erasmus, p. 44.
 5. Op. cit., p. 1.

as a "born critic" and as "one of the earliest pioneers of the right of private judgment."^{6.} But not all speak well of him. Cardinal Bellarmin thinks of Valla as "einen Vorlaeufer der lutherischen Ketzerei."^{7.} Consistent with that Catholic expression, we find that Laurentius Valla earned the distinction of having his name placed on the Catholic Index of Venice of 1554,^{8.} so that all of his works are banned from the Catholic eye. Valla must have done something to earn both such praise and blame by men of history. However, all men of mark receive honor and glory as well as blame and ridicule. Each critic in turn describes the man from his particular point of view... 'tendenz history,' .. which sometimes makes it difficult to arrive at a clear picture of an individual's real person and character. The material on Valla which is at our disposal is limited, far too limited to discover that clear picture of the man we would like to have. Generally, historians refer to Laurentius Valla, or Lorenzo Valla, or just plain Laurentius with a line or two and then dismiss his real significance. Quite evidently there is more to the man Valla, than a mere sentence of praise or condemnation. He must have done something to earn for himself the title as the greatest critic of his age, as a forerunner of the Lutheran 'heresy', as the first scientific critical historian. He was not just

6. David S. Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 5. p.595.

7. H.C.G.Paulus, Aufklaerende Beitraege zu Dogmen-Kirchen und Religions Geschichte, p.315.

8. George H. Putnam, The Censorship of the Church of Rome, Vol.I, p.160.

an ordinary person, if he received the praise of a Luther and an Erasmus. This readily becomes apparent, even inspite of the limited character of this study, when we look into the writings of his contemporaries and into his own writings and there find revealed a picture of his fame. The treatise of Valla on the Donation of Constantine is perhaps his greatest single achievement and it gives one a better understanding of his great courage, of his marvelous ability and of his personality and character. The presentation of these impressions is the subject matter of this investigation.

PART I.

THE TIMES OF
LAURENTIUS VALLA

In the discovery of the man Laurentius Valla, one must picture him as a product of his time, as a man who was what he was, because he lived when he lived.

It was during Valla's time that man was gradually lifting himself from the darkness of the medieval night. Man was learning how to discard the age-old medieval cowl and to peer into the beauty of the world beyond. The church was the dominant institution of that day and it controlled the lives and minds of the people. Men were born into the church, they did not just join a church. From the cradle to the grave, the church regulated the lives of men. Even after death, the influence of the church continued.

Yet the church had become arrogant, proud, boastful; its leadership was corrupt, its life was spiritually nil, and its morale was very low. The church needed reform. It needed a change. Many men urged the reform of the church. Charges against the immorality of the clergy, the ignorance of the priests, the greediness of the bishops, and the political intrigues of wily cardinals were made again and again. The Babylonian Captivity of the Church (1305-1376) and the Great Schism (1378-1417), the former in which the papacy became a tool of France, and the latter in which several popes embarrassed each other by claiming the divine supremacy, tre-

mendously weakened the prestige of the papacy. The attackers were directed not only for reform but also against the papacy itself. The reform councils, Pisa, (1409), Constance, (1414-1418), and Basel (1431-1449), all urged reform and legislated against the papacy, but to no avail.

It was an evil age for the papacy. There were many who were discontented with the position of the church. Men started to write against the papacy. Dante, who by no means loved the unchurchly condition of the papacy, protested in his De Monarchia, that the Pope and the State should be separated, for the Pope, he contended, had only spiritual power, and the State received its authority directly from God, not from the Pope. Marsilius of Padua, believed that the papacy is the spiritual power confirmed by the church and that the council is superior to the Pope. He promoted the idea of the sovereignty of the people and applied it to the church.^{9.} William Occam (1280-1349), said the Pope was unnecessary, and that he was not infallible, because the Bible alone is infallible and the only source and norm of human conduct. Occam also taught that the state is independent of the church which is really subordinate to the state. Wyclif believed the spiritual power of the Pope in terms of service, which he kept only as he renders service. These opinions spread, but actually did little more than effect a preparation for what was to come. The papal machinery was still too strong. Suppression by excommunication and interdict

9. Cf. Ephraim Emerton, "The Defensor Pacis of Marsiglio of Padua, a Critical Study," Harvard Theological Studies VIII.

were still formidable weapons. But nevertheless, it is significant that the papacy itself was more and more on the defensive.

In every land the voices crying for reform increased. Gerson of the University of Paris, Henry of Langenstein, Theodore of Niem, Nicholas of Cusa, Meister Eckhart and John Tauler of Germany, Girolamo Savonrola of Italy, Wyclif of England, Hus of Bohemia, Gerhard Groot's Brethren of Common life in the Netherlands, all of them urged reform. This is indicative of the unrest, the ferment, the struggle through which the Church was passing. Truly, the Church was warring within itself. No longer was the essential medieval unity so apparent. The papacy was losing its hold in the affairs of men.^{10.}

If the church was at war with itself, it is reasonable that its hold on the nations was also weakened. This history also bears out.

It was a time in which nationalism was gradually developing among the peoples. Men were becoming more and more conscious of their national aspirations. At this time too England was an enemy of Rome. The English peoples had long waged war with the papacy by her anti-papal legislation; the Statutes of Winchester, the Constitutions of Clarendon, the Acts of Provisors, Praemunire were directed against the Roman scourge. The pope countered with the ex-

10. Cf. Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, pp. 186-202.

communication and interdict decrees, when he felt his power and prestige threatened and he soon won his way. But it was not always so. Boniface VIII interfered in the war between France and England demanding that the respective kings, Philip the Fair of France and Edward I of England, refrain from taxing the clergy for their military purposes. His bull Clericis Laicos was ignored by these kings. The French king prohibited the flow of money from France into the papal coffers. Later he seized and imprisoned Boniface in the presence of the long dreaded interdict. Now for seventy years, the papacy shamefully was compelled to serve French interests. This time no king went to Canossa, rather the process was reversed and the Pope now humiliatingly made that journey.

In Bohemia, likewise, we find that anti-Catholics were welcomed. Nationalistic fervor against the infiltrating Germans who had high positions in the Church. The Hussite movement was marching also against the papacy. Albigenses, Waldensians and others were also welcomed. Huss was the leader of the Bohemian nationalist movement which now waged a bitter war against the papacy. But he was defeated; here the papacy won an early victory and was destined to fight many more, because Huss' ideas and thoughts, already brought from England spread far and wide. Thus the pope was at war with the nations.

All this is indicative of the political, economic, and religious unrest of the time in which Valla lived. Clearly some great change was soon to be effected in the affairs of men.

Some great reform was desperately needed for an ailing church. Something new was on the way. It is interesting to note the spirit and the difficulties of achieving a reform of the church as we find it advocated at the Council of Constance: It is given ^{11.} in the form of a recipe:

"Recipe for the stomach of St. Peter and total healing of the same, issued at the council of Constance. Take twenty-four cardinals, one hundred archbishops and prelates, the same number from each nation, and as many curials, as you can get. Immerse in Rhine water and keep submerged there for three days. It will be good for St. Peter's stomach and for the cure of all his diseases."

Eventhough the great difficulties were in the way, the reform movement would reach its goal after the time of Valla.

Turning aside from the problems of the church in the time of Valla, we enter another spirited movement of the day. This is the beginning of secularization or the discovery of man, or better known as the humanist movement. Humanism is ^{12.} defined as consisting,

"in a new and vital perception of the dignity of man as a rational being apart from theological determinations, and in the further perception that classic literature alone displayed human nature in the plenitude of intellectual and moral freedom. It was partly a reaction against ecclesiastical despotism, partly an attempt to find the point of unity for all that had been thought and done by man, within the mind restored to consciousness of its own sovereign faculty."^{13.}

Hyma expressed it somewhat differently,

"The humanists stressed what contemporaries called humanitas, or humanity -- something neglected and even despised by

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11. Louis R. Loomis, "Nationality at the Council of Constance," The American Historical Review, XLIV (April, 1939) p.527.
 12. John Addington Symonds, Renaissance in Italy, Vol.I., p.362.
 13. Op. cit., p.11.

the medieval scribes. The humanists taught that man has a perfect right to enjoy himself in this world, that human nature is not fundamentally bad and that human beings have great innate power, for which reason they need not to be self-depreciating. They exalted human nature, but were less interested in pure theology."

Thus humanism embodied an interest in the things of this world, in literature and art, and in the expression of what is within man.

This interest of man in human achievement did not suddenly appear on the pages of history. It developed only gradually. After the Crusades, men returned from their adventure refreshed by their contact with new ideas. Man had seen another culture and it impressed him deeply. These crusaders thus brought with them influences which gave shape to the new ideas of man. Interest in the idea of medieval unity began to wane, while a feeling of emancipation waxed stronger and stronger. Man felt that there was something good in what these other peoples had, something that his own civilization missed, and he did all he could to encourage the spread of new ideas. Thus the results of the Crusades were manifold and tremendous as far as the cultural advance of mankind was concerned. New wealth from the vast economic trade and the rise of town aided the process tremendously.^{14.}

With it all there was thus a movement away from medieval ideals. Christian merchants hoped to compete with

14. See Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, esp. pp. 30-33, 75, and 154.

the merchants of Jewish and Moslem extraction. They found this competition very keen. Their religious restrictions, and the domination of the church hampered them. The church was interested only in the things of the other world. Trade and luxury, were they not a part of this world? There was a conflict here. Merchant classes thus were clamoring for freedom from the domination of the church. They wanted a philosophy which would give them a new lease on life. This philosophy of life they too found in their new contacts. Interest in the ancient writers of Greece developed. Here they thought they would see the means of expressing their entire human personality. The ancients were not entirely forgotten by the medieval peoples. Many classic quotations were found in the writings of the scholastics. These excerpts were interesting and soon were investigated in the original sources. Search for libraries and manuscripts soon occupied the ancient students. Libraries and manuscripts written in Greek and Hebrew, of course, had to be understood. So they learned these languages. With all this came new ideas. The Italian humanist movement was thus inaugurated. So the interest in man came into being.^{15.}

There are three stages in the history of scholarship during the Renaissance. Symonds says:^{16.}

"The first is the age of passionate desire: Petrarch poring over a Homer he could not understand, and Boccaccio in his maturity learning Greek in order that

15. E.C.Schwiebert, Reformation Lectures, pp.79ff.
16. Op. cit., pp.12,13,14.

he might drink from the well head of poetic inspiration, are heroes of this period. They inspired the Italians with a thirst for antique culture. Next comes the age of acquisition and of libraries. Nicholas V. who founded the Vatican library in 1453. Cosmo De' Medici, who began the Medicean Collection a little earlier and Poggio Bracciolini, who ransacked all the cities and convents of Europe for Manuscripts together with the teachers of Greek who in the first half of the fifteenth century escaped from Constantinople with precious freights of classic literature, are heroes of this second period. It was an age of accumulation, of uncritical and indiscriminate enthusiasm." ... Criticism was to follow... "Then came the third age of scholarship — the age of the critics, philologers and printers. What had been collected by Poggio and Aurispa had now to be explained by Ficino, Polizano, and Erasmus." — "The third age reached its climax in Erasmus: by this time the Italian learning has spread to northern nations. Intellectual liberty had now made a beginning."

The results of the humanist interests were tremendous. Man's interests broadened. Travel, art and literature were appreciated and enjoyed. In the arts the classical ideals were lauded and praised. Reason of man was lifted up. Man looked at himself and found that his judgment could evaluate good and great things without the supervision of the church. The intellectual narrowed interests of the Middle Ages were thus cast aside.

With the advent of many books and manuscripts came the study of Greek. This was of great importance, particularly when we think of Valla's position as a critic. The study of Greek implied the birth of criticism. Men could compare what the scholastics had said about the Greek writers. They could think beyond the scholastic art of ancient quotation and investigate the meanings of the ancients themselves. All the writings of the ancients, known to the Medieval mind now came

under the scrutiny of the Greek Scholars. The germs of a new age of science, were suggested by this research. That was the beginning of the art of criticism.

But humanism could not rid the church of its apparent evils. In fact humanism became just as wicked as the papacy itself. Man's reason was carried logically along the lines of freedom until it passed the bounds of common morality. It became recklessly immoral. The students of ancient lore and literature familiarized themselves with the pagans, corrupt and unchristian as they were. They followed the classic ideal. So they too imbibed too deeply of the spirit of the classic age, taking not only their style and their philosophy, but also their libertine morality. The church did not particularly disapprove of their immoral writings, unless they became so indecent, as e.g. Hermaphroditus by Beccadelli against which there was only a mild reaction. However, generally speaking the church smiled upon these immoral productions, happy that its own so-called orthodoxy was not tainted by any serious doctrinal disputations. Even the papacy itself became so very characteristically humanistic. It was Julius II, who said, "If we are not ourselves pious, why should we prevent others from being so?" Leo X characteristic motto seems to be rooted in the enjoyment of this life, he said, "Let us enjoy the Papacy now that God has given it to us."^{17.}

Humanism was therefore not a reliable reforming agency.

17. Symonds, Op. cit., p.338.

Nor did the church have a beneficial effect in its fellowship with humanism upon its morality. The church used the humanists as secretaries, authors of its state papers and in many other duties. As a result of this fellowship neither was the church cleansed of its evils nor was it brought to a knowledge of its sins by the flagrant examples of debased scholars. The church thus cared little for its morality, it was interested only in its ability.

So humanism interested in the things of this world, brought man from the darkness of the middle ages to the lamp of learning and then into the laxity of immorality. It brought many new manuscripts to light. It furthered the study of ancient languages, led to the development of printing, after which its researches and art could be spread over the face of the earth. But it did not change the moral condition. It did pave the way for reform by producing men like Valla, whose gifts and discoveries were known and used by the Great Reformer.

PART II.

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF LAURENTIUS VALLA

Laurentius Valla was born in 1406 in Piacenza, Italy, where his father was a lawyer. In Rome Valla received the very best instruction that was known in that day. Great humanists as Leonardo Bruni tutored him in Latin, while Giovanni Aurispa and Rinucci initiated him into Greek. Valla was nursed by the very highest and great literary minds and scholars of his day. He tried to get a position as a papal secretary but did not succeed and so left Rome. It is said that Valla mocked the Cardinals with fierce invectives which contributed no little to his failure of securing the position. While yet in Rome Valla wrote a comparison between Cicero and Quintilian (Vergleiche zwischen Cicero und Quintilianus).

This already showed the whole spirit of Vallæ. As a severe critic he attacks Cicero as a stylist and writer. On the other hand, he extols the style and talents of Quintilian, whom he deeply admired. As always Valla brings many examples to prove his contentions. The work caused no little

18. The material for the life of Valla was very difficult to find. The best biography, according to Coleman is that of G. Mancini, an Italian work, published in Florence in 1891. There is no satisfactory account in English. Other biographies are: J. Vahlen, Vienna, 1864, Berlin 1870; J. Clausen, Copenhagen, 1861; M. von Wolff, Leipsic 1893; L.V.Schwahn, Berlin, 1896. C.C.Zampt in Zeitschrift fuer Geschichtswissenschaft, Iv, 397ff; A. Gaspary, Geshichte der italienischen Litteratur, Vol. II, Strasburg, 1888; and Georg Voigt, Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Altertums, Vol. I, Berlin, 1893, pp.460-480. This last account forms the basis of the material of the life of Valla, as used in this thesis.

stir in Rome. His good friend Beccadelli tried to smooth over his almost blasphemous contention against Cicero by pointing out that it was a 'prelude to a greater work,' and that its purpose was to practice and awaken certain people and that Valla really esteemed Cicero very highly after all. Many attacks were launched against Valla because of this work. Already at this time Poggio quarreled with him.

But Valla did not stop with his war on Cicero, even though all Rome might go against him. He continued with his criticisms. Priscianus, he said, knew no grammar, Aristotle no dialectic and that Pindarus Thebanus was better than Vergil. Boethius, the father of scholastics and Jerome also were not spared in his attacks. Even Christ was criticized. He thought little of the eloquence of the ancients and nothing at all of the newer spirits of his time. Today we might call Valla a "debunker."

During his professorship with the University of Pavia(1431) he produced his second great work, De Voluptate. He reworked this two years later and renamed it De Vero Bono.
19.
This work consists of three books. Hyma describes the work as follows:

"the first half of the first book contains a speech by a stoic philosopher; the second half of the first book and the whole of the second book present the views of an epicurean philosopher; and the third book gives the opinions of a Christian philosopher. Each in turn defends his own ideals, but when the third speaker has finished, the other two congratulate him, and it appears as if he has won. Nevertheless, Valla does not repudiate

the scandalous suggestions of the epicurean philosopher. So the question has often been raised: How could a man like Valla present systems of thought which were diametrically opposed to each other, and yet were approved by him? The answer lies no doubt in the peculiar combination of the formal acceptance of the Roman Catholic creed and the views of pagan philosophers. Italy had so long been Christian that even the most flippant scholars on this peninsula scarcely dreamed of rejecting the doctrines of their church. Valla was irreligious most of the time, but a thousand years of habit on the part of his ancestors had left an indelible impress on his mind which would occasionally assert its rights. Hence it became possible for him and his friends to admire doctrines which were the opposite of those taught by their own church."

While he was at Pavia, Valla also attacked the formal discipline of philosophy and logic. He wrote a work called Dialectic Disputations. Although he does not attack Aristotle directly in this work, he nevertheless does ridicule the modern philosophers of his time, who considered Aristotle the last word on philosophy. He tries to show that the great dialecticians did not understand language and that they were sophists who were most unclear in their thinking and writing. He tries to show how simple philosophy becomes, if only the rules of rhetoric are properly applied. This work was not a positive contribution to philosophy, but rather aided in the destruction of Scholasticism. 20.

One of the greatest works of Valla was his De Elegantia Linguae Latinae. Valla began his work on this masterpiece in 1435 and in 1444 Aurispa had it published. This was a mistake on the part of Aurispa, for the work

caused a disturbance in Roman literary circles. Valla was in the midst of many controversies which certainly did not help him in his attempt to redeem himself in the eyes of the Pope Eugenius IV. But nevertheless it was a great work. Valla attempted to give eloquence a new scientific foundation. He laments that no one for centuries was able to write Latin. At his time, Valla contended, only barbaric Latin was known and written. This was a great insult for the literary figures of that day and naturally would arouse their anger against Valla. In many ways he thought highly of the old grammarians as Donatus, Servius, Priscianus, but he still believed that he knew more than they did. In his opinion writers as Papias, Isidorus, Hugutio were worthless and made their students even worse. In spite of its poor recognition by the writers of his day, it was nevertheless an excellent attempt to deal with grammar in a scientific spirit, which made him also superior to men like Poggio who were merely literary Latinists.^{21.}

We have a remarkable insight into his critical ability and his character in the words of his attack against the legal minds at the university of Pavia. He^{22.} said:

"Among the jurists at the present time there is not a single one who is not contemptible and ludicrous. They have been so poorly trained in every field of knowledge particularly in rhetoric, that I am sorry for civil law because of these commentators. It would have been much better if it had never been written, since it is being interpreted by these beasts."

21. M. Creighton, A History of the Papacy, Vol. III. p.170.

22. Hyma, op. cit., p.41.

The lawyers were very angry at this outburst — so angry that they could have torn him apart in the streets. Valla also boasted that he had read the writings of the law and that he was acquainted with its peculiarities too. Valla's tactics were sharp and to the point and it is not at all surprising that he had so many enemies.

It was at this time, too, that according to his enemies, he had forged a will and was ordered to public penance by the Bishop. But this is just a story spread by his enemies and it is not known whether it actually happened or not.^{23.}

In view of his many verbal outbursts, Valla did not last long at Pavia. So he left the unhealthy atmosphere of the university and wandered about in Milan, Genoa, Ferrara and Mantua, without a real home.

Somewhat later however, he found a home at the court of Alfonso, king of Naples, who gave him employment. This court at Naples was noted for its immoralities and frivolities^{24.} from which Valla was not entirely free. But his associations and work with the king were particularly fruitful from a literary point of view. It gave Valla an opportunity to study and write. His duties were simple. As a learned man and a scholar he read and wrote for the king. He discussed his readings and its problems with the king. He thus had an opportunity to develop his thought and talents.

During his stay with Alfonso, Valla's work assumed

23. Symonds, op. cit., p. 447.

24. The Catholic Encyclopedia, XV, p. 257.

political significance. Alfonso had an imperfect title to his throne. He had claimed the crown of Naples in 1435, on the death of Giovanna II, since he was the supposed adopted heir. The Pope Eugenius IV claimed it as a papal fief through his Cardinal Vitelleschi.²⁵ Alfonso was captured by the Genoese Fleet, who were watching their interests off the island of Ponza. Filippo Maria Visconti held Alfonso prisoner for a while in Milan. It was then that Alfonso allied himself with Filippo and thus got control of Naples. The Pope, headed the league with Florence, Venice and Genoa, which had revolted from Milan and continued to fight against Alfonso.^{26.} In his fight with the Pope, Alfonso supported the Council of Basle which opposed Eugenius and set up Felix V. The Pope claimed jurisdiction over and above the claims of Alfonso. Valla became deeply interested in the question of the Donation of Constantine in which the Pope received lands and power from Constantine the Great. He thought deeply about this question. His attention was arrested when he viewed the many intrigues of the Papacy and the frightful condition of Italy. The work of Nicholas of Cusa brought to him an even greater certainty that the claims of Rome were false. So he wrote his famous De falso credita et ementita Constantini Donatione Declamatio in the year 1440, six years after the Roman rebellions in which the Pope had to flee. (1434)

25. Valla mentions Vitelleschi in his treatise on the Donation of Constantine, as a "monster of depravity." p.163.

26. Christopher B. Coleman, "Constantine the Great and Christianity," Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, vol. LX. no.1., p.194.

This pamphlet proclaimed war to the death between the Pope and Valla. The treatise excited a real storm and for a short while, he had to flee. He went to Barcelona where he stayed for a short time, until he was sure again of Alfonso's protection. His writing on the Donation takes on political significance. It was propaganda par excellence... propaganda eventho^x was the truth. It was meant as an attack on the temporal claims of the papacy. From now on Valla was in real trouble.

As before he criticized the lawyers, so he now attacks theologians with relentless fury. He got into a quarrel with the Bishop of Urgel and showed that the letter of Christ to Abgar from Edessa, announced to the world by the historian Eusebius, was a curious interpolation. He then wrote his De libero arbitrio in which he says that the foreknowledge of God is not incompatible with free will, and maintains that our intellect is unable to comprehend this truth. His teaching was in direct opposition to the doctrine of Boethius which the church held.^{27.}

His next attacks were directed against the monastic orders and the clergy in his De Professione Religiosorum (1442). This work was written in dialogue and follows this situation; Valla meets a number of learned brethren and friends on the market-place. Here, near the church they discuss the knowledge of a conspiracy against the king. A monk joins in the conversation. Someone remarks

27. Catholic Encyclopedia, XV, p. 258.

that the clergy probably has its part in the conspiracy since it always meddles in politics. The monk angered, defends the clergy. When asked why they have so many privileges, the monk announces that they come from God. A lively discussion ensues. Valla is asked to defend the laity. He says,

28.
"You clericals act from compulsion, we from free will. You keep the fear of God, we the love of God. You would never have taken the vows if it had not been out of fear of damnation. That is the reason why the worst people, who despair of finding another occupation, come to you. One may truly name monasteries asylums in which outcasts seek shelter, such as bankrupts, slaves, criminals, wretches — in short, all those who have nothing to lose and much to gain However, I shall attack you no further lest it seem as if I were hostile to you. I will rather admit that the monks have much in their favor. It is they who in a certain sense support the Church; they preach to the people, they give alms; they sponsor the holy ceremonies of the Church; and they endeavor to write edifying and illuminating books."

Valla had many enemies as a result of his critical attitude. For a long while he was left alone by the monks and clergy. However, after Eugenius IV was successful in returning to Rome in 1443, when he made an agreement with Alfonso, the enemies of Valla, particularly the Monks, received new courage and hoped that they might soon catch their enemy.

In 1444 Fra Antonio da Bitonto preached in Naples. At this time Valla got into a dispute with this learned brother concerning the authenticity of the Apostles' Creed. Valla visited the services of this preacher and learned that he taught that the Apostles' Creed was produced by the Apostles

themselves. Valla then later went to visit him, in an effort to learn the real proof of this teaching. The dispute which resulted was a big one. Valla mocked the great Bonaventura, the patron saint of the order to which Antonio belonged and he likened him to a gladiator. Antonio conspired with his fellow monks how to punish Valla. Every day they preached against Valla, hoping to arouse the sympathies of a mob. Alfonso finally stopped this. But Valla was still unsatisfied. He wanted to debate the issue. He invited important officials to the debate. However the King feared a disturbance and so wished the date of the debate changed. Valla already considered this a sign of victory and wrote a distichon proclaiming himself as the victor. His enemies became very angry now. They wanted him condemned as a heretic. So they organized themselves with the aid of the Bishop of Pozzuoli of the Franciscan order. They demanded that Valla appear before them. This order was obtained through the vicar of the archbishop, who himself was absent. So under the pretense that a debate was to be held, he appeared before these monks. His adversaries had already gathered statements from his theses for the debate which they intended as a proof that he denied the decrees of the church and the fathers. However their findings were most peculiar. They intentionally left out the most pertinent writing of Valla, his treatise on the Donation of Constantine. This document which denies the temporal power of the Pope, might have been the most powerful evidence that they could bring

against Valla. But this they avoided. Furthermore, their statements against Valla were most faultily divided. They placed philosophical and grammatical questions under a theological heading. They accused him of condemning the authorities on grammar and philosophy. As a whole their accusations showed their ignorance as well as betraying their jealousy of Valla's talents. When Valla came to the disputation, he was surprised to find an inquisitorial court. He was asked how he felt concerning the origin of the Apostles' creed. Valla answered that the Synod of Nicea, not the Apostles gave the creed its birth. The inquisitors told him that such an opinion was heretical. He was asked to admit his mistake. Valla then mildly confessed that he believed as the church believed on the question. When they attacked his dialectics, he answered with biting sarcasm, that the Mother church knew nothing of argumentation, but that even here he felt as the Mother Church. As he pondered upon the arrogance of the court, he thought of his protection by King Alfonso and he behaved accordingly. He soon left the court, as a declared heretic, but found refuge in the king's words. Alfonso saw immediately that jealousy was at the bottom of the trial of Valla and he severely rebuked them and forbade any abusive action against his secretary. Valla the grammarian, had defeated the theologians and another tradition was broken.

Valla now set to work on the New Testament. He

used his learned philological background in an effort to correct the Vulgate of its many mistakes, which he did by comparison with the Greek New Testament. Again this was a slanderous action against Jerome, the official translation of the church. Much of his New Testament research is embodied in his Annotations on the New Testament. So Valla used his critical attitude to good advantage.

Valla was not always antagonistic. There came a time when he wanted to visit his friends in Rome, but the hate and fear of enemies prevented him. So he asked the Pope Eugenius IV if he would pardon him, because his invective was performed for the sake of art; he also added that he would be of great service to his church in the future. He also asked the Pope for special protection to visit Rome. We do not actually know if he received that protection, but at any rate he did go to Rome. Again his enemies the monks plotted against him. They could not forgive him for his brilliant victory over them at Naples. They brought their accusations to the Pope, saying that Valla had written against Eugenius to the council of Basle in behalf of king Alfonso. Valla did not wait very long and escaped before the inquisition could get its mighty machine rolling. From Ostia, his place of hiding he wrote his Apologia ad Eugenio IV, in which he accused himself of many faults and he promised amendment. But Valla did not succeed in gaining Eugene's favor. He remained in disgrace until the Pope's death in 1447.

Valla fought many verbal battles with Poggio, Bec-

cadelli, George Trapezuntius, and many others. After his On the Elegance of the Latin Language ^{WAS PUBLISHED} in 1444, Valla was particularly attacked. Poggio was one of his foremost opponents. This learned man never seemed to find names hard enough which he might fling at Valla. All this did Valla much harm when he attempted to mollify papal anger. One occasion of his contest with Poggio resulted when Poggio himself discovered a copy of his own epistles annotated by a Spanish nobleman who was a pupil of Laurentius Valla. Poggio's Latin was not spared in the marginal lines penned by the young student. Poggio in all his fiery anger concluded that the Master Valla and not the pupil had dictated them, and he discharged his usual furious invective against Valla. ^{29.} He warred with Beccadelli at the court of Alfonso, because his monograph on the three philosophies in De vero bono was unsatisfactory to Beccadelli. He fought with Trapezuntios because he preferred Quintilian and Trapezuntios liked Cicero better. In his debates and arguments Valla never gave in, but contended for what he thought was right.

Valla's papal disfavor soon disappeared. Nicholas V called the scholar to Rome in 1447. Certainly so great a writer and critic could not be discarded, so the Pope at first gave him a position as a scriptor and later on the high honor of Apostolic Secretary. Callistus III also

29. Symonds, op. cit., p. 439.

honored him with the presentation of a canonry in St. John's Lateran, which he held for several years. For Pope Nicholas Valla busied himself by translating Thucydides and did it so well that the humanist Pope gave him five hundred ducats and begged him to translate Herodotus too. Valla began the task but he did not finish it. In 1450 he opened a school of eloquence in Rome. Just why Valla should have received all these favors has never been actually explained according to the Catholic Historian, Pastor.^{30.}

During his stay in Rome, he seems to have tainted his character again and again. He lived in the home of his brother-in-law and here had a curious love-affair. His relatives accused him as being too cold to arouse the love of women, and so was unfit for married life. Valla decided that he would prove his ability. He seduced a servant of his brother-in-law, and became the father of three children in two years. Then his friends urged him to marry, and he refused saying he had planned to enter the holy orders and become a priest. Stories such as these were spread far and wide by his enemies.^{31.}

Pastor writes much about the lascivious character of L. Valla. He believes that his treatise De vero bono has an epicurean pleasure theme. Valla, in his estimation, was a man who believed that the individual may lawfully indulge in all his immoral appetites. Adultery is the nat-

30. Ludwig Pastor, History of the Popes, Vol. II., p.333.
31. Hyma, op. cit., p.44.

ural order. Indeed all women ought to be common. Plato's community is in accord with nature. Adultery and unchastity are to be considered only when danger attends them otherwise all sensual pleasure is good. "Continnence is a crime against 'king' nature." Thus Pastor's opinion of Valla is none too high.^{32.}

Valla's career was a turbulent one. We can see that he was a born critic, a pioneer of the right of judgment. We can see him as a man who thought little of morality. Anyone who considers, " the virtue of virginity as a violence to nature's law,"^{33.} ... certainly does not belong in the group of the morally clean. Nor does his controversy with Poggio show any quality of virtuous regard of man. Nor was Valla's character placed in a stronger light, when we notice him beg for presents and places in terms of flattery.^{34.} These factors do not picture Valla in a favorable light. Nor can we go to the other extreme and say that Valla tried to purify Christianity, for his opinions and adverseness to Christianity certainly appear far from the point of purifying the Church.^{35.} But Valla's character must not be evaluated because of these evil qualities, but rather in spite of them. All these traits of immorality, begging for presents, flatterous compliments, fiery invective,

32. Op.cit., Vol.I., pp.15-17.

33. Symonds, op. cit., p. 447.

34. Schaff, op. cit., p.610.

35. Hyma, op. cit., p.44.

legalistic fervor for pure Latinity, and sharp critical attitudes were part of his humanistic development. It was a part too of the spirit of that time. Certainly there were qualities that were far more worthwhile in the Man Valla. His tremendous courage, his depth of thought, his great ability, his political sharpness, and his rebellious attitude toward evil are traits which rate high in our estimation. One dare not forget his great thirst for truth. It is this desire for the truth that led him to original sources, that made him take nothing for granted. It was this drive in his personality that directed him to many new discoveries, all of which were unpopular in his day, but which he announced to all the world with great courage. Such factors of his personality make one conscious of his real position.

Mancini a recent biographer of Valla and the
36.
greatest authority on his life's work writes,

"It was his misfortune to clash with Poggio who persecuted him without rest or surcease even beyond his grave. He thus had against him Poggio's followers, and all who wrote in sympathy with the Curia. What availed it that he cultivated Christian principles and served the truth? A father of modern criticism, he exercised the thorny office, not for the sake of bending it to his personal interests, but to elevate humanity. In the process he did not always observe the right measure in his own defense; he answered with insult where he might have silenced the adversary by compelling force and sharpness of demonstration. Hence, brilliant embodiment of the Italian intellect though he was, he did not find the recognition that was his due, in his own time; though now there is justly conceded him a place among the great ones whose achievements have richly furthered human culture."

36. New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,
vol. XII, p.137.

Valla made definite contributions to scholarship. He did much to aid the formation of the science of N.T. criticism. Through his humanist approach he learned that Scripture must be interpreted by the laws of grammar and language. The proposition that St. Paul appeared to St. Thomas Aquinas and complimented him by saying that no one understood his Epistles so well, was cynically countered with a question, why did Paul not show Thomas his many mistakes? Valla was not in sympathy with Catholic legends and disproved many of them. His criticisms of Augustine and the Vulgate are based on his own private investigations. His Annotations on the N.T. though not of great religious significance recognizes the supreme importance of abandoning erroneous rendering of translations and of discovering what the Apostles and Evangelists actually wrote and taught. So while he remained a humanist, he remained intellectually honest. Valla's work in the New Testament may give him the honor of being one of the founders of textual criticism. ^{37.}

Valla is important also because he influenced other great men. We are told that no one humanist seems to have made as great an impression upon the mind of Erasmus as Valla. Whenever he spoke highly of him, Erasmus thought particularly of his scholarly techniques and skills which he admired so much. ^{38.} It actually seems that with Erasmus' printing of Valla's Remarks on the New Testament in 1505 the actual biblical studies of this scholar begins. Somewhat

^{37.} Frederic W. Farrar, History of Interpretation, pp. 312-314.

^{38.} Hyma, op.cit., p. 41.

later Erasmus wrote and published Annotations on the New Testament and also his Paraphrases on the Whole New Testament except Revelation. These publications were very popular and were also widely used and seems to have supplanted the scholasticism of previous ages by better theological study. Thus Erasmus in historical criticism as applied to Scripture, followed the method of Laurentius Valla. Erasmus, it has been said, "laid the egg" and "Luther hatched it."^{39.} This work of Valla and Erasmus was of stupendous importance for Luther's later work as the Reformer. All this work did have a tremendous bearing on the Reformation. Reinhold Seeberg^{40.} comments the following concerning this issue,

"In die theologische Bewegung griffen endlich die Renaissance-ideen auch direkt ein, nachdem sie schon seit langem durch die veraenderte Lebensstimmung indirekt auch das theologische Denken beeinflusst hatten Die Bewegung hat zunaechst den geistigen Horizont und das historische Interesse erweitert und die Grundlagen der historischen Kritik geschaffen. Man denke an die Nachweise des Laurentius Valla bezueglich der Uebersetzungsfehler der Vulgata, der Unechtheit der Schriften des Areopagiten, der nichtapostolischen Entstehung des Apostolikums, der Faelschung der Donatio Constantini, um zu verstehen, wie tief dies alles in die Theologie eingriff. Hiermit verband sich der Rueckgang zu den Quellen des Urchristentums. Die alleinige Autoritaet der Bibel hatten die praktischen Reformer sowie die nominalistischen Scholastiker im Prinzip klar hervorgehoben. Der Humanismus nahm diese Tendenz auf und foerderte ihre Durchfuehrung durch die Belebung der Sprachstudien. Von hier aus konnte dann die Kritik der Misbraeuche und des Aberglaubens in der Kirche schaefer und klarer werden als bei den Nominalisten und Bibli-zisten des 14. Jahrhunderts."

^{41.}
James Mackinnon makes a similar observation, he says,

" In their reaction from the scholastic theology, Luther

39. Milton s. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, pp.46-47.

40. Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Dritter Band, pp.636-637.

41. The Origins of the Reformation, p.414.

and his fellow-reformers were only continuing and carrying further the anti-scholastic reaction led by a Valla, a Crotus Rubianus, an Erasmus, and a Colet. This reaction, combined with personal religious experience, inevitably led to a re-evaluation of Christianity, a transformation of the Church— its creed and institutions — based on the New Testament. It discarded a one-sided theological and monastic view of life for the larger humanist conception, the free development of the individual, the free exercise of the reason for the mediaeval system of authority. It evoked the critical spirit and threw the searchlight of criticism on institutions, systems, doctrines. Most important of all, it gave a potent impulse to the study of the Scriptures and the early Christian writers in the original languages, the historical origins of Christianity in contrast to its later mediaeval developments. It applied the test of historic criticism to the papal claims and the mediaeval dogmatic spirit."

That Luther was influenced by the work of Valla we can find in his own writings. He thought very highly of Valla's ability and of his achievements. There are particularly two writings of Valla that especially interested Luther and evoked a positive response. These works are De libero Arbitrio and the Donation of Constantine.

42.

On the Freedom of the will Luther said,

"Laurentius Valla ist der beste Wal, den ich mein Lebtag gesehen oder erfahren habe: De libero Arbitrio bene disputat, quaerit simplicitatem in pietate, et in literis simul, Erasmus eam tantum in literis quaerit, pietatem ridet."

However more important is Luther's relation with Valla's treatise on the Donation of Constantine. It was through the works of Ulrich von Hutten that Luther received the copy of Valla's work. Hutten had found a copy of the Valla exposure at the house of Cochlaeus and resolved to

42. Luther's Saemtliche Schriften, Vol. 22, para.39.

print the document. In the early part of the year 1519, this work probably came off the press, tho the public did not receive it until the beginning of the year 1520. In the Leipsic Debate Luther was led to do some reflective thinking on the idea of the church. It was then that the edition of Hutten came into his hands.^{43.} It is most interesting to note Luther's comment about this pamphlet which is found in a letter to his friend Spalatin. The letter is dated February 24, 1520.^{44.} It reads,

"I have at hand Lorenzo Valla's proof (edited by Hutten) that the Donation of Constantine is a forgery. Good heavens! what darkness and wickedness is at Rome! You wonder at the judgment of God that such unauthentic, crass, impudent lies not only lived but prevailed for so many centuries, that they were incorporated in the Canon Law, and (that no degree of horror might be wanting) that they became as articles of faith. I am in such a passion that I scarcely doubt that the Pope is the Antichrist expected by the world, so closely do their acts, lives, sayings, and laws agree. But more of this when I see you. If you have not seen the book, I shall take care that you read it."

This work must have had a tremendous effect upon Luther at least if we can judge from his first impression of the work. Through the Treatise of Valla, Luther came to recognize that the grants of Constantine were legends, lies perhaps deliberate lies at that. These strong impressions he again registers in his "Open Letter to the Christian Nobility," in 1520. He says that the Romanists have built three walls about themselves so that no one can reform them and this has been the cause of the terrible corruption of Christianity. One these walls was, " When pressed by the

43. Hajo Holborn, Ulrich Von Hutten and the German Reformation, pp.81 and 142.

44. Preserved Smith, Life and Letters of Martin Luther, p.73.

temporal power they have made decrees and said that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but on the other hand the spiritual power is above the temporal power." 45.

Again a little later on in the same work Luther says, 46.

"It is also ridiculous and childish that the pope, with such perverted and deluded reasoning, boasts in his decretal Pastoralis, that he is rightful heir to the Empire, in case of a vacancy. Who has given him this right? Did Christ, when He said, 'The princes of the Gentiles are lords, but ye shall not be so? Did St. Peter will it to him? It vexes me that we must read and learn such shameless, gross, crazy lies in the canon law, and must even hold them for Christian doctrine, when they are devilish lies. Of the same sort is also that unheard of lie about the 'Donation of Constantine.' It must have been some special plague of God that so many people of understanding have let themselves to be talked into accepting such lies as these, which are so manifest and clumsy that I should think any drunken peasant could lie more adroitly and skilfully."

Thus the discovery of Valla's treatise of the forgery was highly interesting to Luther. It made him think very well of a man, " the like of whom," Luther thought, "neither Italy nor the whole Church had produced in many centuries." 47.

Valla's document influenced Luther as late as 1537, when he saw fit to translate the Donation of Constantine and to comment on the significance of the forgery. 48.

But Luther also learned much from the critical approaches of Valla. Luther's back to the Scripture idea is a part of the discovery of the text, by means of criticism,

45. A.J.Holman, Works of Martin Luther, Vol.II.p.65.

46. Ibid., pp.109-110.

47. Luther's Saemmtliche Schriften, Vol.15, para.1350-1351.

48. Ibid., Vol.16, para.2045-2068.

textual study and the like. This Valla gave to Erasmus, who edited the New Testament and so paved the way for Luther to prepare a great German translation of the Bible.

Luther also must give credit to Valla for his discovery of many historical facts as well as the historical method. Luther, however does give him credit for these great achievements. Of course, it may be said that Luther did not fully know the character of this man, and therefore could not validly judge Valla's real worth. If he had known what Valla actually stood for, perhaps then his opinion would have been much different. However Luther evaluates Valla on the basis of his contributions, which stand up despite his lax character, and therefore is justified in a true and correct evaluation of Valla's great ability and remarkable contributions.

PART III
A HISTORY OF THE
DONATION OF CONSTANTINE

The major work of Valla under our consideration is his De Falso Credita et Ementita Constantini Donatione Declamatio, or The Discourse of Lorenzo Valla on the Forgery of the Alleged Donation of Constantine. However, before we consider this treatise, it is necessary to investigate briefly the development and rise of the Donation document.

The study of the background of the gift of Constantine is an interesting chapter in the history of the church. It takes us back to the early legends of divine aid circulated at the time of the Great Emperor. We find many versions of his conversion to Christianity in that myth loving age. These legends play an important part in the development of the famous grant of Constantine.^{49.}

As we look back upon that remote age, we find that Constantine even as a pagan was considered the recipient of divine help of the heathen gods. In 310 Eumenius speaks of a close tie between Constantine and Apollo. In 313 another orator mentions that Constantine has access to the supreme divine wisdom, while other mortals are left to lesser gods. In 321 Nazarius of Rome says that

49. The major portion of the material in the history of the Donation in this thesis is taken from Coleman, "Constantine The Great and Christianity," of the Columbia University Studies in History Economics and Public Law. Coleman's sources are very good, the best to be found and they contain the latest research on the subject.

heavenly warriors march for Constantine in his war with Maxentius. Of course celestial armies always were fighting for Constantine, except that now for the first time they are visible to others.... at least such is the opinion of the writers. There is little doubt that men at this time thought that Castor and Pollux took part in the visible battles of old. A similar event occurred in Constantine's campaign against Licinius. Now even a Christian writer, Eusebius, "father of church history, speaks of divine aid to Constantine. He writes that Constantine's men were seen marching through cities at mid-day though not one soldier was present. He says that this appearance was visible through the agency of a divine and superior power. This Eusebian account was at least 15 years later than Nazarius'. We can not prove a connection between these two, but we must say only that it is probable, that each gave voice to the stories that were then currently popular. Most great events when told to others were associated with some god or God, angels or demons. This was the case when repeated by Christians or by pagans. Up to the year 321 pagans extolled Constantine's victories to pagan gods. Beginning with 312, Constantine began the use of Christian Symbols. Now after 321, the Great Emperor became more and more Christian in ideas and policy. Now it was the Christian God who victoriously fought for him. Before a battle Constantine, as the ancient Romans would ask their pagan

gods for omens, now petitioned the Christian God for victory. After his prayer he would rush out of the battlefield tabernacle and command a speedy charge --- that was a Constantine battle strategy. This marks the beginning of Christian legend in the life of Constantine.

There were also many legends of his miraculous conversion current at that time. The earliest comes from Eusebius who eulogizes Constantine a great deal and makes many references to his continued supernatural revelations. To one of these revelations Eusebius ascribes Constantine's conversion. The lovers of pagan gods also ascribed the circumstances of Constantine's first revelation to his conversion. This gave pagan panegyrists their last chance to portray their gods as Constantine's helpers, it gave the Christians there first opportunity to picture their God as the cause of the emperor's victory. It was a marvelous setting for his miraculous conversion. Eusebius says that Constantine saw Maxentius' tyrannical Roman rule and wanted to overthrow it, but he saw Maxentius' superiority as to the power of his army and his great magical enchantments, and at the same time he remembered his Father's successful campaigns and also his fervent prayers for victory, therefore he decided to honor his Father's God. It was about noon of that day that Constantine saw a cross with an inscription "Conquer by this." His whole army saw this sight. In a dream he understood what was meant. He was to make model of the sign and use it against his enemies. So the next morning

he commanded his craftsmen to construct a sign of gold and precious stones. Shortly after Constantine decided to read the inspired writings. Priests of God now became his advisers. This account of Eusebius in his Life of Constantine is a legend. In his Church History Eusebius makes no mention of any conversion of Constantine. This latter work was written by Eusebius earlier than his Life of Constantine, that is nearer the time of Constantine's campaign against Maxentius. Moreover there is no other account found in contemporary literature. There are many stories of the use of the Christian monogram, but there is no evidence supporting the claim that it originated from a miraculous vision. Thus the heavenly vision is nowhere else mentioned except by Eusebius and he records it under circumstances that make it highly improbable, speaking at least 24 years after the event. Then too he writes about it in another section of the Roman Empire, as the Emperor told it to him. Even then he was not very familiar with the Emperor, having seen him rarely. So it is probable then that he knew little about the whole story. It is also to be noted that he does not mention it in an oration of praise to the Emperor himself. The account of Eusebius was continually used by the later writers with some modification and remained popular until Sylvester's legend came to prominence. Even after that it again regained its popularity when the Sylvestrian legend was discredited.

There is another legend of the conversion of the Emperor Constantine which attributes the change in his life to the influence of his mother Helena.

Many legends of Constantine's leprosy are also extant. These stories arose in the 5th and 6th century by men who knew nothing of the historical facts of the case. The oldest known account was found in a Syriac writing of James of Sarug in Mesopotamia (452-521A.D.), a Monophysitic Bishop. This account states that Constantine from his birth was afflicted with an incurable leprosy on his forehead and lips. He sought for a cure and found none. Once he sent for the Chaldeans of Babylon who advised that he bathe in the blood of infants. The babies were collected, but the mothers and a chief of slaves desired to avoid the slaughter of innocent babes and so suggested that he be cured by baptism. An angel appeared and gave power to the suggestion. Constantine then went to a priest for baptism. First the Emperor was anointed with oil, a cleansing agent so that he would not pollute the water. The leprosy fell from him. Then he went into the water with the priest, but a flame burning above the water, kept him from stepping further. The Emperor removed his crown and the baptism continued. After his baptism he also celebrated the Lord's Supper. This account was probably not original with James of Sarug, since it was found in one of his homilies, but it must have been current in his time.

The Armenian version is also an important one. It

was found in the history of Armenia under the name of Moses of Chorene, and it dates around the 7th and 8th century. It tells how Constantine, while a Caesar, turned defeat into a victory by placing a cross on his banners as he was advised in a dream. Later through the advice of his wife Maximina, he persecuted the Christians and as a punishment was smitten a leper. It was incurable. Priests asked him to bathe in infant's blood, but from such an execution Constantine is supposed to have shuddered in horror. A dream told him to be baptized by Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome which would also free him of his leprosy. Constantine is said to have done this and so was healed.

The difference between the legend by James of Sarug and Moses of Chorene is that the former only mentions Constantine while the latter also includes the name of the priest Sylvester, the Bishop of Rome, who is supposed to have baptized him. This may be explained by the legendary completion of details as the story develops from tongue to tongue. The final date of the writing of Moses of Chorene's history makes it possible that the details to which he referred may have come from the Vita Sylvestri, or that they came from Armenia and Syria and that through Moses of Chorene came into the Vita Sylvestri. But why was the baptism located at Rome and the priest called Sylvester? It was the purpose of the legend to place its origin at Rome itself. Eusebius of Nicomedia, the man who actually did

baptize Constantine, performed the rite at New Rome. In the West this would mean Rome. Now there was a Eusebius who was bishop at Rome during Constantine's time. So what was done was to merely substitute the Roman Eusebius for the Nicomedian Eusebius and all things were believed to have been correct. But then it was realized that the bishopric of Eusebius came too early for Constantine, so they used the name of a successor of Eusebius, Sylvester, and so his name then appeared in the legend. ^{50.} (A legend of the finding of the cross, in which Constantine is said to have been instructed and baptized by Eusebius of Rome, is given as a proof of the changing of the name from Eusebius to Sylvester.) However, this document does not contain a record of the Roman baptism in its earliest form. The baptistry in the Lateran Church of Rome, which Constantine erected is used to prove the Sylvestrian part of the legend, but the identification of the place of the act came too late. It would be absurd to identify the event of his baptism in a building which was erected in gratitude for a cure supposedly received in that baptism. Generally, the identification of Constantine's baptism at Rome with Sylvester as the presiding priest can best be explained on the consideration that Rome was the ancient famous capital of the world at that time and Sylvester was its bishop. This legend was incorporated in the Vita Sylvestri.

50. The dates for the popes at the time of Constantine the great are, Eusebius 310; Miltiades 311-314; Sylvester I 314-335; See the List of Popes in Francis X. Seppelt, and Clement Loeffler, A Short History of the Popes, p.553.

These early legends then developed into the Sylvester-Constantine legend. In its development we must make a point of distinction between the legend itself and the variant details of the different versions. The barest forms and outlines of the legend probably did not originate at Rome, but were formed on the outskirts of the empire among people who were familiar only with great names and events of Roman history. It grew only very slowly in popularity. The confusion and scarcity of topographical references, and the stress it lays upon the visit and advice of a certain Timotheus, show a foreign, possibly an eastern source, perhaps of Syriac and Armenian origin. The earliest references to the legend to the books containing it, come to light in the time of Pope Symmachus (498-514). Coleman says, "There is no record in writers, historians, poets, official documents, liturgies, or inscriptions of any local Roman tradition connected with the legend until the eighth century." ⁵¹ Even in Rome it was taken up very slowly and then only when it was well known and accepted in other places. This too speaks against a Roman source of the legend. Furthermore there is no trace of the legend in extant documents or inscriptions up to the 10th century. However the legend of Constantine as a leper and his cure was known in Rome already by the end of the 5th century or even earlier. The legend and a book containing it appeared in the forged documents of the Pope

51. Op.cit., p.165

Symmachus' time. The false "Decretum Gelasii P. de recipiendis et non recipiendis libris," says the Acts of Sylvester are read by many in Rome and in other places. It does not condemn the practice of reading the Acts of Sylvester. The false "Constitutum Silvestri" briefly mentions the leprosy and the cure. Another false document the Gesta Liberii also extant around the early part of the 6th cent. refers to an old work which speaks of Constantine's leprosy and the cure by Sylvester. These references show that a book containing the Sylvester-Constantine legend was extant, but no author's name was associated with it, for its veracity seems to have been questioned and it also at the same time needed apology.

It is very probable that towards the end of the 6th century some papist lover touched up the legend, hoping to use it for the primacy of the Roman doctrine. Little is made of it though at this time. At Gregory's (the Great) time we find a version with added details in a text by Mombricitus. Here it is made to appear as having been taken from a collection of twenty books of the Acts by Eusebius of Caesarea. This book of acts of martyrs and bishops of the principal sees contains the name of Sylvester's mother, his speech against the Jewish rabbis and a representation of Constantine emphasizing the primacy of Rome. This version spread in the East probably before the 6th century, where the Vita Silvestri now became popular and displaced the original Eastern form of the legend of Constantine's conversion.

A curious passage in the letters of Gregory the Great shows a certain Eulogius, patriarch of Constantinople who asked the pope of the West for a copy of the collection of the Acts of martyrs and bishops written by Eusebius. Gregory seems to have answered that he did not know whether they were collected or not and that he had not been able to find in his archives at Rome anything except a few scattered Acts in one manuscript volume. However, as soon as he would find the copy, he would send it. This is interpreted that the Vita Sylvestri was worked over in the interest of the primacy of the bishop of Rome and validated by a preface claiming Eusebian authorship. Eulogius had found it and read it. He put Rome on the spot when he wrote for the collection of these Acts of Eusebius in which the Vita Sylvestri claimed to have been found, and which was written in its preface. So Gregory in answer begs for more time. After the time of Gregory the Vita Sylvestri was worthily appraised in a Roman pilgrim book composed under Pope Honorius (625-638). Then the Liber Pontificalis put Sylvester's life in its collection mentioning his flight and Constantine's baptism by him and his cure from leprosy. This legend did not remain completely unchanged. Not long afterward a modified version appeared. This was the famous Constitutum Constantini, which has the Donation of Constantine.

For a long while the documents of both East and West tried to show that the baptism of Constantine occurred at Nicomedia in opposition to the Roman claim. Some like

Isidore (636, Freegar (658), Frehulf (640), Herman the Lame of Reichenau (ca. 1050) and Marianus Scotus (1050) held to the older version. But soon the Sylvester legend held the field and in the Middle Ages it was seldom disputed. It furnished an argument at the 2nd Council of Nicea for the use of images. Modern times found Baronius including it in his Annals. The story was also included in the ten pictures in the oratory of St. Sylvester next to the Quattro Incoronati Romae, which probably dates from the 13th century, when they were restored. So its real popularity was known before the time that historical fact could disprove it.

To the churchman of the Middle Ages it was unthinkable that an unbaptized Constantine should preside at Nicea. Then too Constantine's baptism by an Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia also seemed improbable because that was considered a relapse to paganism. Constantine also could not have postponed baptism until his death-bed. There was still more evidence for the Roman baptism of Constantine to be found in the baptistry which bore his name and which was in Rome. The Roman view also contained the necessary miraculous element.... necessary so that it would be widely accepted.

After accepting the Roman legend they very easily disposed of the historical Nicomedian baptism. The Gesta Liberii smoothed over the hard points by placing another

emperor of the same name in the document. Ekkehard(1100) believed both accounts, harmonizing them by supposing that Constantine after his Roman baptism fell into Arianism and so the rite was repeated by Eusebius of Nicomedia. From all points of view the Medieval mind was satisfied. Even today it is a part of the Roman breviary read on Sylvester's day the last day of the year. This was the general development of the legends, facts and fictions that culminated in the rise of the Sylvester-Constantine legend, from which the Donation of Constantine was taken and constructed.

The Donation document expanded the Vita Sylvestri picturing Constantine's expression of piety and thankfulness for the cure effected in him. It contains three thousand words, reputed and written in Constantine's name and with imperial subscription. It has the usual divisions of a medieval legal charter: "the invocation of the Trinity," "title of the emperor," "address," "greeting," a long "proem," in the confessional form and a long "narration" of the emperor's leprosy and its cure as based on the Vita Sylvestri. Then follows the "disposition" saying that Sylvester and his successors are to have extended power over the other sees, Antioch, Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and the whole universal church because they are vicars of the Son of God. Constantine says that he built the Lateran Church and the baptistry and "makes it head and summit of all the churches." He built churches of St. Peter and St. Paul and gave them endowments in Judaea, Greece, Asia,

Thrace, Africa, Italy and other places to supply them with oil. He gives Sylvester, the Pope of the Roman world, the Lateran palace, his own diadem or crown, frigium, collar, purple robe, scarlet tunic and all imperial insignia, sceptre, seals and other things. The Roman clergy is to receive privileges of Roman nobility, the right to use white coverings for their horses and other distinctive trappings and the Pope sole priestly honors. Again he gives his crown to the Pope, but since this crown would fit his priestly garb, he says he will honor him by acting as the Pope's squire and leading his horse. He again gives the Pope his palace and the city of Rome, and "all the provinces, places and states of Italy and the Western regions," (i.e. Lombardy, Venetia, and Istria): Then too he removed the seat of the empire to Byzantium, because where the Pope is in authority there should not be two rulers. Then comes the "sanction" confirming the gift forever and threatening the opposition of the Saints Peter and Paul now and hereafter to all who scoff at the gift. Finally the "corroboration," ... signature, benediction and a date which is given in an imaginary and impossible consulship.

This was the Donation of Constantine. It became better known through the Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals which were collected about 847-852. Some of it was included in the medieval collections of canon law, Anselm's *Deus-dedit's* and Gratian's *Decretum* or *Concordia discordantium*

canonum. The question as to its origin is a highly perplexing one. So far historical research has no unanimity as to the place and exact time of the forgery. The difference of time given for the forgery's composition is about 100 years from 750-850. Both Italy and France are given as possible places for its origin. It is known that the accounts of the Constantine legend and the imperial concession were current in Rome before the 8th century. Bishop Hadrian (772-795) knew of it since he endorsed its use. It is also said that the Frankish King Pippin saw the document. Doellinger gives his opinion,^{52.}

"Das Dokument war wohl bestimmt, dem Frankenkoenige Pipin gezeigt zu werden, und ist also nicht vor dem Jahre 754 verfertigt worden. Constantin berichtet naemlich darin, dasz er, um den Papst zu ehren, Reitknechtsdienste bei ihm verrichtet und sein Pferd eine Strecke weit gefuehrt habe. Die bewog denn Pipin, diese den Franken so ganz fremde Huldigung dem Papste zu erweisen, und dieser sagte dem Koenig gleich von Anbeginn an, dasz es nicht eine Schenkung, sondern einen Restitution sei, welche er von ihm und seinen Franken erwarte."

Doellinger also believes that a Roman cleric wrote the document about this time.

The earliest manuscript is the Codex Parisiensis Lat. 2778 found in a Collectio Sancti Dionysii of the monastery of St. Denis in France. This goes back to the last years of the 8th century perhaps even later, but it antedates the Pseudo-Isidorean collection by a generation or more. All other early manuscripts including the Pseudo-

52. J. Doellinger, Das Papsthum, p.28.

Isidorean decretals were found in France. The French writers were the first to refer to the Donation, and this fact has led many to believe that it was first composed in France, however, the language definitely shows a Roman source as general circumstances seem to point to Rome.

Paul Scheffer-Boichorst, a great critical historian has made an exhaustive study of the linguistic peculiarities of the document. Other briefer studies on the language of the donation document have been made by Brunner and Doellinger. The point is fairly well established that the language of the forgery seems to be similar in ideas, style and vocabulary, ^{to the time} of Stephen II (752-757) and Paul I (757-767). Therefore the date of the forgery is placed at that time, believing that it was meant to glorify Sylvester to whom Paul also dedicated a monastery in 761. This interpretation also places it at Rome. Beyond this it is almost impossible at this time to place the source and prigin at any degree of certainty. All is speculation based on many appealing facts.

At any rate this Donation of Constantine was incorporated in the collection ascribed to St. Isidore of Seville. It is believed to have been made in the period from 847-852 in the ecclesiastical province of Rheims France. The first part of this spurious collection consists of false decretals of the popes up to Melchiades (311-314) and the so-called Apostolic Canons, in its second part we find the genuh e decrees of a number of councils

from Nicea to Toledo 683. Among them we find the Donation of Constantine. The third part consists of spurious decrees of the Popes from Sylvester to Gregory II. 53.

The purpose of the collection must be considered remotely from the Papacy. It was a production of the corrupt conditions of the church in France in the ninth century. Civil war had produced unstable conditions under which the clergy received many injustices from the powers of state. The imperial synods tried to improve these conditions by an appeal to ancient canons. A synod or council was held. They found no relief in the secular legislations. So from this reform party the mysterious document is said to have arisen in hope that the resort to fiction might produce pressure on the arrogant nobility and help their cause. There is also an opinion which maintains that the chief concern of the work is to maintain the rights of the bishops in particular. 54. Thus the Donation of Constantine finally reached its place in the collection of Isidor.

The Donation was soon considered authoritative. Ado of Vienne, Hincmar of Rheims quote it and consider it authentic. Canon law collections such as Anselm of Lucca, Cardinal Deus-dedit, Ivo of Chartre, Hugo of Fleury gave it due consideration. Eventho Gratian omitted it, someone nevertheless placed it under "palea" and so that

53. Seppelt and Loeffler, op.cit., pp.87-88.

54. Lbyd B. Holsapple, Constantine the Great, pp.379-380.

(Holsapple is Roman Catholic as noted by the reviewer of the book in Church History (XII) Sept.1943.)

this work gave it an authoritative position through the centuries.

We also know that many popes made use of the material of the Donation. The following Popes used the work, Leo IX, Urban II, Eugenius III, Innocent III, Gregory IX, Innocent IV, Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, and John XXII. Gregory VII however did not apparently use it, though his representative Peter Damiani did. It was possibly used by popes in extracting oaths from other emperors that they would give their rights to the papal see. It might also have influenced Hadrian IV. The majority of the writers lawyers, historians, and theologians of the Middle Ages accepted the writing as authentic. Those that regretted its origin or those that denied it to be valid or who wanted no broadening of papal power did not question its genuineness. Dante never liked the idea of papal power but he never denied that the donation had taken place. Roman theologians had extraordinary powers of harmonization. An inconsistency was once discovered when it was noted that papal power had come directly from God and not from man. So they found an answer that Constantine merely returned what other emperors had usurped.

The Greeks also accepted it. They were not adverse to the elevation of a Roman bishop. They felt that since their bishop at Constantinople had received powers equal with the Roman bishop -- at the 2nd Ecumenical Council, they had nothing to loose and so were in favor of it. Matthew

Elastares (ca.1335) and Theodore Balsamon (ca.1169) placed it in their collections. It was also used by other Greeks.

But there were many who did not like its implications and spoke and wrote about its evil. However, we shall bring these early criticisms of the document in another section of this thesis.

The Donation of Constantine widely and uncritically accepted, had a peculiar importance attached to its rise. It had an important position in the Middle Ages. E. M. Hodgkin wrote, "The story of the Donation fully told would almost be the history of the Middle Ages." ^{55.} Innocent III, Gregory IX, Boniface VIII constantly appealed to its support so that they could rule the world. "For three centuries after this, the canonists take the Donation as a basis of airy edifices." ^{56.} Yet all this importance is overemphasized. The donation did influence in the formation of politico-ecclesiastical theories, but many men were able by argument to take out the strength of the donation. Some said it was invalid because Constantine was a heretic, baptized or rebaptized in the Arian faith. Others said that it was invalid because the empire cannot be separated without the people's consent. Others limited its authority to Constantine's own realm. It was said that the Donation shows power derived from men, and not from God. Then too Gregory VII made no use of it at all.

55. Coleman, op.cit., p.180.

56. Ibid.

The real power of the papacy grew out of aggressive ambition and met success only with the power that its promoters could enforce. Claims in these forged documents helped to be sure, but they did not found such institutions. The claims when realized were embodied in canon law and political theory. We are told,

"that in the ninth, just as in the fifth century, men believed firmly that the two authorities were separate and independent, each sacred and supreme in its own sphere... that the ecclesiastic owed allegiance to the king in secular matters, and that the king owed allegiance to the church in spiritual matters. But also, secondly, that the practical experience of the ninth century made it clear that it was very difficult to distinguish the two spheres by any hard and fast line. Still, we think that the writers of the ninth century held to the theory of a dual authority in society: we think that they would have repudiated any other conception."

On the Donation of Constantine, this same authority states that it did not have anything to do with the relation of church and state in the ninth century and only at a later time did it arrive at that meaning, which might be taken from the words of the donation, but which far rather suggest a different circumstance, namely of the hope of reverting to Byzantine rule in Italy. The Bishops of Rome came to be the actual representatives of the Roman res publica in Italy in the eighth century. This may have been part of tradition of that time and from this tradition the document may have taken form in the mind of the author. In other words the opinion that is here given is that the document is not a result of unreasonable

57. R.W. and A.J. Carlyle, A History of Medieval Political Theory in the West, Vol.I. p.287.

greed at the time of its origin, for the "leadership of the Roman res publica in the West was forced upon them rather than deliberately sought." It is also thought that it was natural that the papacy should desire to maintain and even extend their authority. "It was then generally thought that the purpose of the Donation was to assist the Bishops of Rome in establishing a claim to the re-^{58.}version of the Byzantine authority in Italy." At another place in his work Carlyle states, that "whatever ambiguities there may be as to the original purpose of the Donation, one thing is very clear, and that is, that no writer in the ninth century suggests that it means that the Pope has temporal authority over the Empire in the West."^{59.}

Harnack ventures his opinion on the question of^{60.} the place of the Donation of Constantine,

"Historical research does not support those who say that the dignity of the papacy was only acquired in the Middle Ages by violent usurpations, bold plunderings and forged deeds. Such have not been wanting, indeed, but they never have been determinative nor decisive. The tree was of such sturdy and purposeful growth that we can say that even without forged deeds, bold usurpation etc. its development would scarcely have been different. Here, as usual, the actual development of internal control and power over others came first and then followed theories, legal maxims, occasionally also forgeries, in order to give existing power a biblical and historical foundation. These theories then, later redounded to the advantage of the existing power, but they did not found that power."

So the chief significance of the Donation aside

58. Ibid., pp.288-289.

59. Ibid., p.374.

60. Coleman, op. cit., p.183.

from its origin and influence to help the desires of the papacy, lies in illustrating the contrast between the church of the 8th - 9th century and the church of the 4th and 5th century. Christians created an emperor who did pious things for God after his miraculous conversion. Later on this was not good enough for them, there must be supremacy for lands and a crown for the ecclesiastical organization. By the 8th century this was a papal aspiration. There was a tendency in that age of wedding the spiritual power to worldly advantages, rights and honors and this was expressed in the forgery.

During the Middle Ages the European peoples passed through an uncritical age. They accepted the donation. They possessed in Jerome's Historia Tripartitia sufficient material to refute the legend. But they were not searching for the truth. They were in the habit of harmonizing inconsistencies rather than critically appraising materials. In the 12th century sharp bold criticism did not shake the people's trust in the document. Criticism of it came again in the 14th century, but it too did little for the destruction of the document.

In the 12th century Otto III the Holy Roman Emperor believed the donation was spurious. In the papal reign of Paschal II (1104-1105) the donation was used as an authority by the Roman nobles under the papacy to seize a certain castle. The opponents Sabine Benedictines said

that the document gave only spiritual power, but no temporal power and that if the grant had been made, popes would not seek land for buildings or confirmation of the emperor's name as they always did. Some fifty years later Wetzel of Arnold's (Brescia) party considered the Donation a fraud. They contended that Constantine was already a Christian when he met Sylvester. The Historia Tripartita and an apocryphal document found in the Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals and in Gratian were quoted in evidence. The apocryphal document said that Sylvester's predecessor, Miltiades refers to Constantine's great benefactions to the church. Wetzel hoped for help against the Pope from Emperor Frederic I but none was forthcoming.

Gottfried of Bamberg in his Pantheon, dedicated to Urban III (1186) considers it a form of a debate between a papist who upholds the Donation, saying God would permit no mistake on such an important point and an imperialist, who speaks of the continuance of imperial rule and division of the empire among the sons of Constantine. Somewhat later Leopold of Bebenburg made the same point as this hypothetical Ghibelline, neither made any progress. So the Ghibellines of Germany did not like the document and its implications either. Walter von der Vogelweide († 1250) wrote about it,

"King Constantine, he gave so much -- as I will tell you -- to see Rome, spear, cross, and crown." Then an angel cried, "Alas! Alas! Alas! Christendom before

stood crowned with righteousness. Now is poison
fallen on her, and her honey turned to gall --Woe
to the world henceforth!"

Dante has already been mentioned as not in favor
of the idea of temporal power of the papacy, yet he did
not announce his refusal of the donation's authentic character.
He wrote,

"Ah Constantine, to how much ill gave birth
Not thy conversion, but that dower
Which the first rich father took from thee."
(Inferno xix 115-118 .. Carlyle)

Again, he refers to Constantine as one

"With good intention that bore evil fruit,
To give place to the pastor made himself a Greek."
(Paradise xx 56, 57, (Wicksteed)

Ariosto gives us a different conception,

"He passed a heap of flowers that erst distilled
Sweet savors, and now noisome odors shed;
The gift (if it may lawfully be said)
Which Constantine to good Sylvester gave."
(Orlando Furioso xxxiv, 80 Trans. by W.S. Rose)

Another outstanding criticism of the Donation
prior to the 15th century was that of Marsilius of Padua.
He was not so sure about the document. He mentions St.
Bernard's opinion that pompous popes follow after Constantine.
This attitude was quite common at this time. But nothing
came of the criticism until later.

The greatest of all the critical appraisals of the
Donation before Valla's contribution became known was the
work of Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1461). During the Babylon-
ian Captivity of the papacy, the era of the reforming

62. See Emerton, op. cit.

councils while the papacy was under attack, an attempt was made to curb the financial and political ambitions of the papacy. Reformers tried to bring order into the papal chaos. So they went to the Council of Constance with ideas of not only ending the schism, but also of re-organizing the relations of church and state. It was then that men looked into the historical patterns and backgrounds of the papacy. Schism was fixed at Constance, but the realization of reform was postponed. So the Council of Basle 1431 tried again. Again the contention for reform particularly the system of conciliar government instead of papal absolutism was considered. Eugenius IV dissolved this council and papal absolutism held sway. Nicholas of Cusa was a leader in this council. In 1433 he wrote his De Concordantia Catholica, which contained the ideal of the reforming party, a united church reformed in soul and body, in priesthood and laity, by the action of a Council which should administer the duties of Christianity on earth. He, as many others left Basle disillusioned and discouraged. Later he became most efficient in helping the Pope Eugenius. In his work, De Concordantia Catholica, he examined the Donation of Constantine. This was used by the council as a text-book. It was presented at one of its sessions. Cusa's treatise is a fine treatment. Valla's work, however is much longer and more rhetorical and better known, but Valla no doubt had Cusa's work as a guide for his treatise.

Cusa believed that there was no reference to the document in earlier writings. Histories tell us of Constantine's baptism and his gifts but they mention nothing of his transfer of temporal power. The Emperor had power to do this, as Pippin, and Charlemagne. The Emperor had the power and used it. Cusa mentions passages from papal letters showing imperial jurisdiction was long in Italy after the supposed Grant. He compares critically the Roman baptism with Jerome's statements and with historical fact. He shows the Donation was not in original canon law of Gratian, but added under the "palea." He concludes that the Donation is a doubtful argument for the papacy's control.

Critical appraisals of the Donation were also made after Valla. Baronius (1538-1607) criticized it too. He tried to show that even tho it is a forgery it was not the fault of a Catholic, but strangely enough attributes its origin to the Greeks ... (His lack of the command of the Greek language brought him much criticism by the learned of his day and later) The argument of Baronius was mighty weak, even tho a few manuscripts were actually found in Greece. Other criticisms were made by Sir Reginald Peacocke, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II) and Father Jerome Paul and others. Some writings were made on this subject in the 17th and 18th centuries, but generally the Catholic writers tried to find some scape goat as the forger, while Protestant writers attribute it to the knavery of some papalist.

PART IV.

THE DISCOURSE OF VALLA

ON THE DONATION OF CONSTANTINE

As we have before indicated Valla's treatise on the Donation of Constantine is the greatest of all the critical appraisals. In his work he passionately and oratorically ^{denounces} the forgery as a crime against European civilization. As a humanist Valla possessed most of the merits and few of the faults of Renaissance scholarship. He was equipped as a real literary soldier of fortune. He was recklessly charging to the attack of any who might be a competitor or a dangerous rival. " An attack upon the purity of one's Latinity and Valla was always making them, was sure to provoke an invective in which the honor of one's mother, one's character and his private conduct were assailed with accusations as scandalous as they were unfounded." ^{63.} Valla had a genuine critical insight and loved scientific truth. That is one of the reasons he was so admired by Erasmus. So we see him criticizing sharply, keenly and without regard for what people might think of him or his opinion. He did not hide the truth nor was he afraid of it. Sometimes his writings break not only with medieval, but even with Christian morals. There are many such instances where he placed the scandalous opinion in the mouth of another individual, for he, as a true scholar concealed

63. Coleman, op. cit., p. 191

his own personal conviction. He brands the papacy as the cause of disunion in Italy and dignifies the modern state. The work of Valla was not completely original. He was a friend and admirer of Cusa and no doubt took much from him. But the criticism of the language, and vocabulary of the Donation which is much of the entire treatise, probably results from Valla's own literary studies.

Valla's method was particularly from three points of view, first, from the external critical position, second, from inherent improbability and third as an attack on the medieval language. We find him a ready wit, a sharp antagonist and as one who understands much of Holy Scripture.^{64.}

In his introduction to the work, Valla admits that he has been widely attacked and he now wonders what will happen when they learn of his newest attack, .. this time aimed at the very papacy itself. He does indeed expect to be punished for his rash judgment, He might be punished in a spiritual way, by excommunication and curses, or perhaps even bodily through priestly violence, perhaps even by death. But nonetheless, he does not propose to evade the truth just because it might bring him trouble. For he has a particular purpose of writing, namely, to free men from error and to compel the papacy to bring good instead of bad fruit.

His thesis is that the document is forged either through ignorance or by the sheer determination and avari-

64. This thesis used for its study, Coleman's parallel translation, The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine.

cious ambition of an unmoral priesthood. Then he lists the various points that he wishes to stress.

His first issue is that the donation was unknown to both Constantine and to Sylvester. He asks kings and princes to take the position of Constantine, would they, as a proud emperor, give away the prized possessions of their realm? The usual course of kingly policy is to increase their realm rather than decrease it. He takes the example of Alexander the Great who strove to conquer all lands. Even many crimes have been committed that empires might be increased. In other words an emperor, a king seeks to increase his dominions with a firm resolve and determination to preserve what he possesses always with a hope of increasing its extent. No king wants to loose any part of his kingdom, even by force let alone give it away by partition. So it would seem entirely improbable that an emperor of Constantine's high position would give the pope such an extent of land as a gift.

Then he comes back with a possible reply.... as tho someone were bringing up a new argument... that Constantine did this because he was a Christian and because he was grateful for his cure of leprosy. This too is improbable in Valla's opinion, for sovereignty does not change for Christians or for infidels, nor would the king give away half his empire, because he was cured of a disease, such a thing has never been done before.

Nor could Constantine have done so. For his people would have objected. They would have remonstrated that they still wanted to worship the gods. They would have reminded Constantine of the coming of barbarian foes, and that the weakening of the empire by partition would not have helped them in this fight. They would have impressed Constantine that even if he did not consider his contemporaries, he ought also think of the generations that followed. So Valla contended that Constantine's subjects would have objected to this gift to the pope.

Now he turns to Sylvester. Valla mentions that there is no extant document of the Pope's acceptance. If he would have accepted it then Constantine would have to show the new ruler to the people, and there would have been receptions, parades and displays, but there was no such exhibition at all, at least, Valla reminds us the record is not to be found. History likewise completely overlooks this so-called Sylvestrian reign. None of the historians mention it or even refer to it. It is true history records that a partition was made at the time of Jovian, successor to Julian, a son of the brother of Constantine... a thing never before occurring in the history of the empire. Is it not reasonable to assume that he would have mentioned the first sharing of an empire with a Pope? It would seem that such news would have been most important for historical print.

At this point of his criticism Valla speaks directly to Eugenius IV the pope of his own day. He laments the fact that Eugenius extracts confessions of kings, and threatens the princes, only on such a false claim as the Donation.

Then he continues on the main thread of the narrative again and says that if the Pope actually became ruler and received the grant from Constantine, he would certainly have commemorated the event by dedicating coins or inscriptions to the occasion. However, no coins, no inscriptions, no memorials can be found. So Valla suggests that the reason is that the Pope never received a grant and thus had no cause for such dedication.

Now he comes forth with a new proof, namely that Constantine was a Christian even before the pontificate of the Pope Sylvester. For this proof he quotes a letter (Spurious) of Miltiades, the predecessor of Sylvester, in which it is said that Constantine who was a Christian gave the church many privileges and even some lands. Thus sarcastically, Valla says that the Donation even ante-dates Sylvester. These are some of the external considerations of the document that Valla attacks. There are more to follow.

Then Valla selects the very gift itself as a basis of further criticism. He laments the stupidity of a dishonest writer who tried to play Gratian and add sections to his work, hoping to convince the people that Gratian has a record of the gift. He points to the fact that the remainder of the Decretum does not agree with the interpolation, and then he makes a pun on the supposed author's name, "palea," the meaning of

which was unknown, but which Valla proposes to call straw, as compared to the real grain of the Decretum. Valla thus cannot accept such a false claim that it was a part of the famous decrees of Gratian. Again he mentions that the gift is not recorded or mentioned by James of Voragine in his Acts of the Saints, for he, Valla assumes, does not consider it a writing fit to be found in the Acts of Sylvester. But then the writing is not even mentioned in these Acts of Sylvester as is claimed. Again Valla satirizes the idea that they accept a gift as true without knowing what it is, or where it is recorded, or who the author might be. He thinks it is a shameful thing that such credulity is accepted on the part of the people.

But great facts are recorded indelibly, as we can learn from history. Judas Maccabeus' alliance with Rome was engraved on brass, Moses' tables of the Decalogue was carved on stone, Jubal's teachings were inscribed on brick and stone. This was all done to preserve the great facts from destruction. Yet the donation, which should be considered a very important fact, was never kept, never preserved for posterity. Probably for good reason too, since it never took place.

Then Valla launches into an attack of a quotation from the Life of the Pope Sylvester, which states that the rulers of Caesar honored the Roman Church within the first days of the supposed grant of Constantine. This quotation uses the word satraps. The word satraps was never used in

the council of the Romans. The philologist Valla speaks quite excitedly about it,^{65.}

"What! How do you want to have satraps in here? Numskull, blockhead! Do Caesars speak thus: are Roman decrees usually drafted thus; Whoever heard of satraps being mentioned in the councils of the Romans."

Again Valla suggests that the document is a forgery. But he goes on to attack the quotation as inappropriate. It is said to have arisen in the Life of Sylvester. It speaks of the gifts by the rulers after the first few days of the grant, yet in the very Life of Sylvester, Valla observes, it is said that the people were not willing to accept the Roman religion and that Constantine had to bribe the poor people so that they would be baptized. The implication to Valla is plain again. It shows that the gift was a miserable fabrication. The forger, made a terrible mistake, when he speaks of Constantinople as a patriarchate even before it was in existence, even before it was planned. Valla remarks in the words of an old proverb, "liars need good memories."^{66.}

Valla's experience as a grammarian and a philologist¹⁰ makes him recognize many inconsistencies and inaccuracies of speech. He dislikes the idea that the Roman people were called "subject peoples," because the Romans were at that time an imperial ruling nation and the idea of subject peoples was most insulting. He also hates the imitation of elegant language that the writer of the Donation docu-

65. Ibid., p. 85.

66. Ibid., p. 97

ment intends to show and he says,

"Come back to life for a little while, Firmianus Lactantius, Stop this ass who brays so loudly and outrageously. So delighted is he with the sound of swelling words, that he repeats the same terms and reiterates what he has just said."

"I will not speak here of the barbarism in (the forger's language when he says 'chief over the priests' instead of chief of the priests; when he puts in the same sentence 'extiterit' and 'existat' (confusing meanings, moods, and tenses).

There are many such mistakes that Valla notes and criticizes. Geographical representation were considered very faulty and inexact in the document by Valla. It simply does not seem probable that Constantine would have so described his empire in that manner. The writer used words incorrectly and foolishly, e.g. "diadem i.e.crown" ... as tho no one knew it to be a crown and then he adds gold, though he did not know that a diadem was made of cloth and not of precious stones and gold. Then he calls the shoulder band a strap. This is the band that encircles the emperor's neck. The word strap is usually applied to the band of a harness or a whip. If it is a gold band, it usually refers to a harness band which is put on the neck of a horse, or as Valla remarks, "so you wish to put a strap around the Caesar's neck or Sylvester's, you change a man, an Emperor, a supreme pontiff, into a horse or an ass."^{68.} Words like "mantle" "scarlet tunic" are also misused. Finally the writer of the document stops and adds "all imperial garments" to which Valla suggests "that he might not betray himself as a liar by continuing longer on the separate garments."^{69.}

He scorns the lack of harmony, jumping from garments to ranks of the imperial cavalry, then on to a conference of 'sceptres'... using the plural, which to Valla's mind is wrong since there is but one sceptre, then the writer quickly changes again to 'standards.' All this is not in keeping with the quality of language expected of an imperial writer. It is not at all in keeping with the dignity and grace of the emperor.

But there are many other inconsistencies. Peter and Paul are called blessed in the donation, while Sylvester is most blessed, Constantine's mandate is called sacred, though just before he was a pagan. A large gift was bestowed upon the Pope, when the world was impoverished. The document mentions that something was given before, and then it states that they first began to honor the pope with this donation. The writer of the donation refers to churches dedicated to Peter and Paul. That too indicated an inaccurate knowledge of the conditions of the time, when actually Christians had to meet in secluded places and not in churches and temples. Then the clergy seems to have been made consuls and patricians. The term patrician was applied in times previous to Constantine. One was a patrician and not made one. That the clergy should have been made consuls too seems improbable. Then, too, Valla said there were only two consuls. It also seemed inconsistent and illogical to Valla, that Constantine who was supposedly recently baptized would have,

or even could have given the Pope authority to make priests just as though he did not or could not have done so before. Inconsistencies mount up continually before the critical eye of Valla. Everything is attacked. He also attacks the statement that the donation implied authority over "all the provinces, places and cities of Italy or of the Western regions," saying, that no grant would or could give away all nations in a single word, and all this coming from a man who understood so little about all the details of imperial regalia and official terms. To Valla it seems as if the man did not know what these regions were and so wrote in confused language.

The author of the donation calls the crown, the tiara, a symbol of the Lord's resurrection, making Constantine, an imitation of Caesar's power and a symbol of the spiritual. Valla thought that these two spheres of influence were most widely apart. It seems as though this statement alone shows his position in regard to church and state. To him the mixing of church and state, or the union of state under the church as proposed by the donation was a wicked and deliberate scheme. He does not sympathize with it at all.

Valla does not like the statement in reference to the founding of the city of Byzantia. The word for city used by the writer really means state. Then no reason is given for the selection of the site of the city. Then too

the reference that Constantine makes to himself as a royal personage was never done by the emperor himself. He also thinks that the statement is absurd that Constantine would move to Byzantia because he as a secular ruler would have no right to remain in Rome with a ruling spiritual power. David, Solomon must have been stupid indeed because they ruled in Jerusalem with the chief priests, and Constantine on the other hand was even wiser than these great believers and then only after three days after his conversion. These statements too do not elevate the document to the point of authenticity.

When the document refers to its decrees as sacred, and that they should remain unto the end of the world, Valla asserts that this is inconsistent with what has been said before, when the King was considered an earthly character and now all of a sudden he becomes sacred. Furthermore, that the decrees should remain for all time, is, according to Valla assuming too much authority, for no one has the right to dictate such longevity of decretal power. The threat that the document voices against those who might break the decree of Constantine, likewise, meets the reproach of Valla. He believes that if the decree is sacred, if it is of God, then it will not perish and there is no need to fear destruction, but if it is not then it is likely to perish, and then only is an oath necessary to guarantee its permanent validity. Valla believes that the decree is not sacred and not of God and therefore there is no place

place of fear of its destruction in the mind of the writer.

70.

Valla becomes a bit sarcastic in this connection,

"This terrible threat is the usual one, not of a secular ruler, but of the early priests and flamens, and now a days, of ecclesiastics. And so this is not the utterance of Constantine, but of some fool of a priest, who stuffed and pudgy knew neither what to say nor how to say it, and gorged with eating and heated with wine, belched out these wordy sentences which convey nothing to another, but turn against the author himself."

Nor does Valla like the idea that the page referring to the document was placed on the body of St. Peter. His body was not in the temple at that time, but if anyone should happen to look there and not find it (and no one would find it) then it could be said that it rotted away. That to Valla is far from historical accuracy and a poor proof for the documents authenticity.

He also considers the date of the document as entirely impossible. The consul had a fourth consulship. A man who was reputed to have had leprosy, would not, it occurs to Valla, continue that long in office. Moreover the word given for the date is one that is usually attached to letters and not to documents.

Valla's criticisms then hinge on the foolishness that popes believe tales and legends as this, and that they do it merely to further their own ambitions. This they have done many times as is apparent in the many examples which Valla again and again gives. He also voices his incredulity of the Sylvester legends. One of the stories told

described a gigantic serpent which had killed many people at Rome with its breath and which was appeased only by fair maidens. But the Pope Sylvester was supposed to have taken care of the disposal of this monster. Valla comments that serpents kill with their bites, not with their breathe. This story he believed, the Pope copied from Daniel, an account which all men had considered apocryphal. No truth needs the support of fiction and legend to prove itself. Valla very nicely strengthens this observation in his statement, 71.

"True Christianity does not need the patronage of falsehood: it is maintained satisfactorily by itself, and by its own light and truth, without those lying and deceitful fables, unmitigated insults to God, to Christ and to the Holy Spirit."

Because of its legendary character, Valla thought that the account of the Life of Sylvester ought not to be accepted.

Valla then proposes that the emperors themselves deny the donation. The trouble is the emperor has no power to do this. He gives his allegiance to the Pope and must affirm the donation on his accession to the throne. In other words the emperor is weaker than the Pope and received from him the power and must do what the Pope wishes him to do. Valla does not blame the emperor for they are truly the cruel victims of an unholy situation. But he does decry the power of a spiritual ruler which took away the power from the hands of the people. So Valla would contend that even if the Donation were valid, it would still not mean that the Pope could assume such powers of slavery.

71. Ibid., p.147.

Thus Valla believes that mankind has a right to revolt against papal tyranny, and he speaks against the right of subjugating peoples. Then he discusses the four reasons for war, avenging a wrong and defending friends, that is, he considers it a just cause, second, fear that disaster follows if other increase in power, this Valla considers less honorable, third, for the sake of gaining booty and last as a desire to gain glory. The last two Valla considers as dishonorable. So in view of this Valla thinks the people have a right to avenge the wrong created by what Constantine is supposed to have done through his gift. The oldest people should have the right to rule. No Pope has a right to use the donation in subjugating people that were once free. People who were free should never be compelled to revert to an old estate of life formerly endured. And this the document attempts to do. This is not the right assumption eventho the document itself is not a forgery... the Valla will not admit that. Moreover, the very idea that the Pope demands that the Emperor confirm the donation weakens the very claim that they say they have by prescription. If the title is clear, age will not weaken the prescription claim. If it is a valid claim they do not even need prescription. Again the suggestion is given that the whole document is an absurd concoction.

Again he reminds the reader that the popes have always resorted to fraud and craft for their own purposes. They have held sway by force and war, because the people have tried to rebel again and again. So the main object of

the Pope is to keep liberty from the people.

If the people came to the Pope of their own free will as is contended in the document, then they can also leave whenever they will. Rome has no right to govern against the will of the people. Papal tyranny, heavier taxes, impoverishment of the land, despoiling and outraging their matrons and maidens, drenching the city in blood, all are symbols of bad government and this alone gives the people the right to rebel if they will.

Valla in closing then remarks that the Pope should change his ways, and not incite the princes against him, but in hope that the Pope would change and so he threatens that if he does not change his tactics he would write another treatise.

This in brief is the treatment of Laurentius Valla of the Donation. We note that Valla was an accurate historian testing the individual statement, as to its correctness and accuracy. He is interested in original sources,

72.

"O avarice, ever blind and ill-advised! Let us suppose that you may be able to adduce even genuine documents for the assent of Sylvester, not tampered with, authentic: even so, were the grants actually made which are found in such documents? Where is any taking possession, any delivery? For if Constantine gave a charter only, he did not want to befriend Sylvester, but to mock him..."

Valla recognizes that the thesis of the writer of the Donatio is full of absurd contradictions, improper evaluation and understanding of the time. Externally he proves the document to be false, by showing the grant to be improbable. But

particularly interesting is his internal approach. He has learnt his grammar well, he understood the technique of the proper choice of words, he knew how to speak precisely and accurately. As a philologist he studied words and in his criticism he utilized that skill to good advantage. That was an important contribution. It meant the beginning of internal comparison of any writing. In the case of the donation, a document which was supposed to have been written by an imperial authority, a man of learning, Valla discerns its internal inconsistency. A man who describes some state transaction certainly would seem to be familiar with the proper words used to explain official state business. But this the writer of the document did not do. This Valla saw. Valla was not the first who ever made a literary or historical criticism. For it has been said that this science was inaugurated when a certain Salutato, who died in 1406, discovered that Seneca was not the author of the tragedies ascribed to him.^{73.} But Valla was the first to use such an exacting thorough technique of word study, attempting at the same time to get at the original sources and to show that a work is not inkeeping with external considerations. This is an important contribution.

As we read Valla's discourse we also see his vitriolic, abusive and sardonic speech. He is a sharp debater. He does not hesitate to attach desultory and ridiculous epithets to the supposed author of the Donation.

73. Schaff, op. cit., p.579.

Read some of them, "this crazy man" (homo vesanus) ^{74.}
 O you scoundrel, thou villain!" (O scelerate atque malefice) ^{75.}
 "O you scoundrel" (O furcifer) ^{76.} "this sycophant" (hec
 sycophanta) ^{77.} "this most abandoned scoundrel: so full of
 insanity are all the words he vomits forth," (hunc perditissimum
 nebulonem. Ita omnia verba plena insaniae evomit.) ^{78.} "an
 exceedingly stupid man," (stultissimum hominem) ^{79.} "this
 two-legged ass," (hic bipes asellus) ^{80.} There are many more
 like these throughout the work.

Valla also attempts some humorous remarks. In as-
 suming that Sylvester took over the kingdom which Constantine
 gave him, Valla asks what wars he fought, what governors he
 appointed, how did he carry on his government, and the
 answer that he himself supplies is that we don't know of
 these circumstances. Then Valla answers " So I think all
 this was done in the night time, and no one saw it at all!" ^{81.}
 Another, " And that the story may be filled in in every
 respect, horses are given the clergy, -- lest they sit on
 asses' colts in that asinine way of Christ's." ^{82.}

Valla even calls on Jesus to declare the forgery
 false, ^{83.}

"O holy Jesus! will you not answer him from a

74. Coleman, op. cit., pp.82-83.

75. Ibid., pp. 84-85.

76. Ibid., pp. 96-97.

77. Ibid., pp.104-105.

78. Ibid., pp.122-123.

79. Ibid., pp.122-123.

80. Ibid., pp.116-117.

81. Ibid., pp.64-65.

82. Ibid., p.115.

83. Ibid., p.103.

whirlwind? will you not send the thunder? Will you not hurl avenging lightnings at such great blasphemy? Will you endure such wickedness in your household? Can you hear this, see this, let it go on so long and overlook it? But you are longsuffering and full of compassion. Yet I fear lest this your longsuffering may rather be wrath and condemnation, such as it was against those of whom you said, "So I gave them up unto their heart's lust; and they walked in their own counsels," and elsewhere, "Even as they did not like me in their knowledge, I gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." (Rom.1,28.)

Valla likes to quote the Scriptures through-out his work. The Bible is quoted at least forty-two times and the Apocrypha at least three times, besides numerous allusions to scriptural literature. The majority of these passages are quoted in opposition to some apparent evil in the church, showing that the church is not really doing its duty. One passage 1 Cor. 6,2-5 Valla used in a distorted sense. He wished to show that the passage teaches that church leaders are not to be judges, while Paul hopes to transmit the point that even the humblest Christians are to be considered as able judges in points of dispute.

Valla also makes use of numerous illustrations as well as examples from literature. There are references to the classics Vergil, Livy, Terrentius Varro, Eusebius and others. This too makes the work very interesting, as well as convey the wide range of Valla's knowledge.

The main point of the entire treatise is that the temporal power of the pope is bad and that it should be abandoned because the Donation of Constantine is a forgery. Valla seems to have contended to a separation of the temporal

significance of the papacy from its true spiritual power. He seems to have wanted a separation of Church and State. He says, in answer that the Lord's resurrection is represented by the tiara and that it is an imitation of Caesar's power...^{84.} "two things which differ most widely from each other."

It is here that he becomes most bitter against the author of the document. Valla believed that the great difficulties of Italy, in the throes of civil war, impoverished and tyrannized was in its miserable condition because of the papacy. Valla was working for the king Alfonso, who he had been victimized by the encroaching policies of a land and crown greedy Pope. He saw what was meant by this increasing power. He did not like it. It is here that he tries to see a way out of the difficulties of the church control. He thinks that the people have a solemn right to rebel if their government does not serve them. If the pope, mixing his duties as a spiritual head, and as a temporal ruler can't take care of both, then let the people take away from him their own responsibilities and rule themselves. There is no conflict between the two, that is there does not have to be a conflict. The many wars and disturbances of the past have shown the wicked design that the Donation has advanced. The domination of peoples, the suppression of liberty certainly did not seem to him to be the cause of justice, at least not when a graft infested clergy, an immoral lot of priests were the dominating power.

84. Ibid., p. 123.

But throughout the work Valla attacks only the temporal power. He wants the church and the state separate. He does not attack the spiritual power of the papacy. The idea of the pope was probably considered a spiritual necessary, in fact he probably was not so much interested in the spiritual side, humanist that he was. He wanted to be free of the papal shackles. He himself felt the clutches of the inquisition, he too was persecuted by the church, he had to fear punishment. All this was wrong in his eyes. No one had the right to stifle the thought of a man, or an action in his own personal life. This was a privilege of every human being in any government. The papacy wanted men to live according to its own rigid system. They held men in their grasp, gave and took away empires, and claiming authority to do so. This was not in keeping with Valla's thesis. He did not agree with the theory behind the statement of Gregory, "the church is the sun and the state the moon, the moon receives its light only from the sun, so the state has its power from the church." Valla shows clearly that such an opinion is entirely false.

But he did want the papacy to continue its power in its spiritual estate. This is indicated in his closing words, "if only I may see the time when the Pope is vicar of Christ alone, and not of Caesar also!"^{85.} In his closing remarks Valla seems to tone down considerable as though he felt he was going to achieve something by his work.

85. Ibid., p.183.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

That is the work of Laurentius Valla. It gives us an introduction into the techniques of historical criticism, the weighing of good and evil and teaches us at the same time much of the type of thinking that went on in his day. We learn too of what was implied in the various institutions of that time, by the many examples and illustrations that he gives. We too understand with greater clarity what benefits are derived from word studies. We are reminded again of the facts of critical analysis of ancient writings. This is very much worthwhile.

Laurentius Valla, critic, libertine, rebel, innovator, propagandist, scholar is a most appealing character. A man who did so much to break the bonds of scholasticism, one who discredited so many legends and who sounded for the truth by a return to the original sources, one who gave all future ages benefits of his scholarship, a man who to all intents and purposes did most to elevate better Scriptural study through methods of critical inquiry for the selection of a better text, ... all these qualities are marks of an interesting personage.

Valla is interesting too for his tremendous courage and his sharp rebelliousness against intolerance and prejudice. He stood for the truth and also taught men how to find that truth. His courage to stand before all the forces of his age to renounce what they stood for are evidences of his greatness. To me the study of his achievements and scholarship has been most worthwhile.

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