

## CHRISTIAN MANLINESS

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MAN is defined in Scholastic Philosophy as a *rational animal*. This definition can hardly be denied by reasoning men because it fulfills the requirements of a real definition. By the term *animal* the genus of man is established. Animality he has in common with all other animals whether they be dogs, cats or horses. Animality explains man's material part. Being *rational*, man is essentially distinct from all other animals; he is high in the scale of being—a little less than the angels. Such is his spiritual part. Every being therefore, whose essence is composed of animality and rationality, whose *matter* is body and whose *form* is a rational soul, is substantially a man and he essentially remains so, no more, no less.

We find, however, persons who lack every semblance of that which we term, in common parlance, a true man. Some have sunk so low in the estimation of society that we hesitate to class them as men, but would rather describe them as beasts. There are others whom we are wont to call supermen or angels, whether they be deserving or undeserving of the name. Yet substantially and essentially they are all men. Whence then arise all the statements that this individual is a real man and that individual a cad? Such statements arise in the recognition of certain qualities or *accidents* which exist in the rational animal. They are the perfections or imperfections which inhere in the substance and go to make up the whole man, the complete man. Accordingly, as they are perfections consonant with the nature of man, they make the true and perfect man. If these accidents are imperfections out of harmony with man's nature, we have an imperfect and untrue man.

The falsity of the values that the world proposes if examined in the light of reason, becomes evident to all. The worldly idea of what the true man should be is no exception to this general rule. How often have we seen the prizefighter, baseball star, swimmer and gangster glorified as the zenith of manliness by screen and press? True manhood is portrayed by the big, broad-shouldered, handsome type

who can defend himself at all times by the excellence and control of his physique. So some material-minded individuals would have us believe. Stars in every field of sport are held up as heroes to be emulated by the younger generation. If perchance, the youngster, who sees qualities in these various idols that are unbecoming a man, does not wish to follow in the footsteps of such a leader, he is dubbed a weakling and is told that he will never grow up to be a true man. This opinion, as can be readily observed, stresses the physical side of man, regardless of the moral. It is a tenet of that class of people who judge only the surface of things. Their sense of value is awry either because they are too lazy to think beyond that which is presented to their senses, or they have not the mental capacity to do so.

Artists in their various fields of painting, music and dramatics, etc., are revered by some as bearing the stamp of the perfect man. Those drawn by the esthetic ideal, who mistake esthetic perfection for spiritual perfection usually are of this mind. The power, honor and fame which fall to the lot of captains of industry, to use the trite expression, come in for their share of adulation as the requisites for manhood. Not a thought is given to the ways, however dubious by which these 'captains' reached their high estate.

It is not our purpose to disparage persons of any profession, vocation or avocation as not being of the manly stamp, for we may find splendid examples of the true man in all ranks. But what are the qualities that we should recognize at all times, under all circumstances, in any walk of life that are the unmistakable marks of the complete and true man? For the Christian, the qualities which are the criteria of the true man should be the virtues.

Etymologically virtue means power, and it should be noted that *man* is rendered in the Latin by the term *vir*. The traditional definition of virtue runs thus: Virtue is a good quality of the mind by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God forms in us without us.<sup>1</sup> This definition of virtue by St. Augustine is the one adopted by St. Thomas. It includes the whole reason of virtue in as much as it takes in all the causes of virtue. The last words, "which God forms in us without us," are added to denote the efficient cause of the *infused* virtues, otherwise the definition is common to all virtue.<sup>2</sup>

Virtue then, is a habit which disposes its subjects to incline always to the good, which renders the possessors acts easy, prompt and

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., *De Libero Arbitrio* I. 2, c. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theol.* I-II q. 55, a. 4.

delightful. And because it is a habit it is difficult to lose, once it is possessed. It is opposed to vice in all its forms and can never be used for an evil purpose. True, virtue may be abused by hypocrisy, and a man may take undue pride in his virtue, but the virtue itself can not be used as the principle or source of an evil operation, but only as the object of such an evil operation.<sup>3</sup>

The seat of the virtues are the intellect and the will. Principally in the will do they reside. However, virtue may reside also in all the other faculties so long as they are subjected or obedient to the command of reason.<sup>4</sup> The intellect and will are the rational animal's highest powers. In their perfection by virtue we will find proportionately the perfect man. Of course, we must distinguish between infused and natural virtues. Natural virtue is that which is acquired by man through his own natural powers, such as fortitude, which may be had by repeated acts of this virtue. But we are concerned with the infused virtues. For, being a son of God by adoption, the Christian is ordained to a supernatural end which is union with God in heaven. Consequently he must have the supernatural means to this supernatural end. These means are the infused virtues which God forms in the soul at Baptism together with the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Here we are more particularly concerned with the moral virtues. They are the virtues which direct man in action. They are the powers of our faculties which direct us to the supernatural end. These moral virtues may be reduced to four principal or Cardinal Virtues, so-called because they are the hinges on which depend all the other moral virtues, both by reason of being the general conditions required in every virtue and by reason of being concerned with the principal moral matters which man encounters in life.<sup>5</sup> Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance are these key virtues.

Prudence, defined as the *right reason of things to be done*, is the virtue which at all times counsels, judges and commands that which is to be done. It chooses rightly the means to the end which we desire. The prudent man has before his mind, in all his acts, his ultimate end. He judges all things, not in the light of worldly gain, but in the light of eternity. In a word, the prudent man provides for himself in the next world. Then too, Prudence directs all the other virtues.

<sup>3</sup> *Summa Theol.* I-II q. 55, a. 4, ad 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Summa Theol.* I-II q. 56, a. 3, 4, 5, 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Summa Theol.* I-II q. 61, a. 1, 2, 3.

Justice, the virtue so much in demand today, is that superlative quality by which a man renders to his fellowmen that which is due to them. All man's external relations should be governed by the virtue of Justice. The virtues of Religion, Piety, Observance, Obedience, Gratitude, Truthfulness, Affability and Liberality are the *potential parts* of Justice. They are not Justice in the strict sense, but to some extent are of the same nature. They are allied to Justice. Religion inclines us to give God His due worship. Piety regulates the honor due to parents and country; the honor due to persons in any position of dignity is regulated by Observance. In Obedience man recognizes and obeys the laws of God and all lawfully constituted authority under God. Gratitude is the appreciation of and the will to repay the kindnesses of God and neighbor. Truthfulness and Affability explain themselves. Lastly, Liberality directs the proper use of money and material goods.

The third of the Cardinal Virtues, Fortitude, strengthens man to bear all trials, troubles and difficulties with firmness and courage—even in the face of death. Through the virtue of Patience man bears trials and sorrows and by Perseverance he overcomes these difficulties. These virtues are akin to Fortitude.

Temperance moderates the lower appetites of man by keeping them within the confines of right reason. As Temperance moderates the use of food it is called Abstinence; as it moderates the use of drink it is Sobriety. As Temperance preserves the sanctity of the marriage state, widowhood and single blessedness it is called Chastity. Gentleness or Meekness and Humility are also reducible to Temperance.

By reason of being general conditions required in every virtue and by reason of being concerned with the principal moral matters of life, the Cardinal Virtues are so connected that one is not had perfectly without the others.<sup>6</sup> We find some men very prudent in their investments of a business nature, yet they are without the slightest concern whether they are just in their duties to God and in their dealings with their associates. Neither are they strong and patient in bearing the sufferings sent to them by God. Nor are they temperate with regard to conjugal chastity. Often we find a teetotaler at the head of a temperance league who thinks that temperance pertains only to the use of intoxicating liquors and forgets that it applies not only to food and drink, but also to amusements and chas-

<sup>6</sup> *Summa Theol.* I-II q. 65, a. 1.

tity. Also he is unaware that his temperance may be unjust and imprudent. Fortitude may be possessed by one in an admirable degree in the matter of accepting the loss of money or friends, but may be openly violated when he is held to fulfill the duties of his marriage contract.

True, as we have pointed out, Temperance or any one of the other Cardinal Virtues may be found in an individual without the others, but then it is only an imperfect virtue. Perfection in any one of the Cardinal Virtues means that the four of them must be found simultaneously in the person. So if any man would aspire to be a virtuous man in the strict sense of the term, let Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance be discerned in all his acts.

But we are imperfect creatures and it is a bit rigorous to demand full perfection in virtue of a man that he be a true and complete man. Still the fact remains and we must rely on the grace of God which is never lacking to those who will coöperate. We are accountable for our trial. Now in this trial of life the virtues are the *positive* means to attain our supernatural end. Too often do we stress the *negative* means, that is, the avoidance of sin to obtain our ultimate goal. But this is not enough, for all are bound to strive after perfection which lies in the cultivation of the virtues. If we are content merely to avoid sin and do not try to better our condition by the practice of more and more perfect virtue we will soon give up even the avoidance of sin.

Our exemplar in virtue is the Perfect Man, Jesus Christ, Who is also God. In so far as we reproduce in our lives the virtues we see in His life will we become true men worthy of the name. Nor do we have to look far for models to follow in the imitation of Christ. The Saints who have been raised to the altar of the Church and those unsung heroes of our own day who daily pursue the practice of virtue are splendid examples of True Men.