

only prefers what is just to what is useful and agreeable; but also despises this miserable world and all its greatness, out of a desire of possessing God. He is a true Christian, who, not falling into any excesses, and avoiding all forbidden or superfluous pleasures, which reason itself obliges us to avoid, makes use of things only out of necessity and to sustain nature; which is the practice of Christian temperance. I call him a Christian who receives adversity, prosperity, and the ups and downs of life with a calm mind, and who, animated with truly Christian fortitude, despises death and looks upon it only as the very threshold of Paradise... Lastly, a true Christian gives to every one his due, which is the first claim of justice, but above all its other duties, Christian justice gathers together all the powers of the soul, the mind, the heart and the will, in order to unite itself to God, and to preserve that union inviolate. There are a great many Christians, if we only consider the name, the profession, and the common practices and exterior works of religion; but how few there are when we come to consider the actions which ought to result from the sanctity of that vocation!

The third step, which I simply mention and should be constantly studied in the lives of the saints, is attained by those souls who, completely transformed in God, as far as a mere creature is able to be in this world, *practise, in a nobler and more heroic manner, the virtues* of which we have already spoken.

St Thomas having thus explained the distinction existing between the moral virtues, the different ways of practising them, and the empire they give us over our passions, answers a complaint frequently made by persons living in the world. They do not blame the saints, who attract men's admiration. But they complain of those who, having neglected at first their soul, begin to lead Christian lives. For when it is seen that they cease to frequent society, that they withdraw, as far as their state of life will admit, from all commerce with men, and set aside the things of this world, in order to think of heaven alone, they are looked upon as useless and idle persons. They are people of the other world, it is said, whose devotion has turned their brain.