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Job 5[:7]: “Man is born to labor and the bird to fly.” For just as a bird does not acquire its prey except by flying, so neither does man except by working. For man had to go to work immediately after sin, Gen. 3[:19].

Wherefore this is to be noted that to the extent that animals are more noble, with just so much more work do they acquire their sustenance, as the eagle which flies from land to land for catching its prey. But by how much less accomplished, so much less they work for their needs. The figures for this, Gen. 25[:27] and 30[:37] Jacob with great labor acquired his needs, where Esau was luxurious on his land, Psal. [127:2]: “For you shall eat the labors of your hands: blessed are you.” And [2] Tim 2[:3]: “Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” And Isai. 1[:14]: “I am weary of bearing them.” And Augustine, *De civitate*, book 18, c. 12,[[1]](#endnote-1) says that Hercules through immense labors, etc. On the other hand, the labors toward the promised land and they never entered it, Num. 14[:23].

Wherefore Chrysostom, *Homilia* 19,[[2]](#endnote-2) in no business can repose be found without work having preceded it, which ought to move men to working. It is touched upon in Gen. 49[:14-15],[[3]](#endnote-3) where it is said that Ysacar is interpreted as remembering the Lord, and certainly such a one recognized he is a servant and donkey of the Lord, that is, to the service ordained to the Lord because an ass is good for nothing, namely except for service. For his carcass is not fit for eating nor his skin for selling, from which it is evident that the whole is worthless except for serving. And certainly, a man is worth less than an ass if he does not work, because they want neither his skin nor his flesh. It follows “lying down between the borders,” namely, between the beginning of life and the end he labors although he is helped a little by his parents in the beginning. In the end however he is not helped by them, but he is given to the worms. It follows, “He saw rest, that it was good.” All animals naturally desire rest, but for rest they hurry toward it through labor. “And the land that it was excellent.” That land is best in which there is no destitution, but such is heaven, about which in the Psal. [26:13]: “I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living.”

Therefore “he bowed his shoulders to carry” [Gen. 49:15]. Such ones took better rest just like one accustomed to be fatigued, Job [3:17]: “There the wearied in strength are at rest.” Gregory, book 7 of the *Moralia*,[[4]](#endnote-4) when some without labors seek virtuous attainments, they know nothing of the contests of war in the field, and they desire to have the triumphs for war in the city. Wherefore Augustine, in his *Sermo de Sancto Vincentio,[[5]](#endnote-5)* Jesus Christ commands something and promises something. What he promises is rest and reward. Therefore, first we must work and afterwards we will be rewarded.

¶ The reverse order is this, to desire the reward and not to work. What you demand up front is what God promised. If you do not do what God commanded first, hear the warnings and afterwards work out the counter promises.

¶ Again, some have labored here and in the future like fire, of such kind are the cupidinous, Psal. [48:9-10]: “He shall labor forever; and shall still live unto the end.” Some have quiet here and in the future as the contemplatives, Luke 10[:42]: “Mary has chosen the best part. Some rest here, but they will work in the future like the lethargic, of such kind are the voluptuous and the proud who are not in the labor of men, Luke 12[:19]: “Soul, you have much goods,” etc. And Job [21:13]: “They spend their days in wealth,” etc. The fourth kind labor here but rest in the future like the luminaries of heaven, of such kind are the active good, the preachers, and the prelates, Eccli. last chapter [51:35]: “I have labored a little and have found much rest to myself.”

Again, three kind of men labor: the penitents, the preachers, and the penitent rulers. Certainly, in triplicate, because in the heart through contrition, Psal. [6:7]: “I have labored in my groanings,” etc. For this is the labor of the one giving birth, it is in the mouth through confession, Psal. [24:18]: “See my abjection and my labor,” and forgive me. And this is the work of the handmaiden undressing her mistress. The third is in the work through satisfaction and is the labor of the rustic plowing, Psal. [127:2]: “For you shall eat the labors of your hands: blessed are you.”

¶ Again, those preaching work triply: by studying beforehand as formerly did the philosophers, Eccli. 51[:35]: “I have labored a little and have found much rest to myself.” Second in writing and compiling, Eccle. 2[:21]: “For when a man labors in wisdom, and knowledge, he leaves what he has gotten to an idle man.” This is the work of the artist who works for himself and for others, Eccli. 24[:47]: “See that I have not labored for myself only, but for all that seek out the truth.” Third in teaching, Psal. [68:4]: “I have labored with crying.” And [2] Tim. the last [4:5]: “But be vigilant, labor in all things.” This is the work of rewards.

¶ Again, the rulers work in three ways: namely in providing, preaching, and protecting. Wherefore their first work is the solitary diligence in the heart, Jer. 45[:3]: “Woe is me, wretch that I am, for the Lord has added labor to my sorrow: I am in labor with my groans.” Their second work is of preaching discreetly in the mouth, 1 Tim. 5[:17]: “Let the priests that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honor: especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” Their third labor is the protection of the flock in work, 2 Tim. 2[:3]: “Labor as a good soldier of Christ.”

Again, we read that some labor as the insane, some as the foolish, or some as boys, as some infirm, as those limited of whom they work nothing as good soldiers of Christ.

For some labor as the insane who engage in the insanity of sins committed out of pure maliciousness, Jer. 9[:5]: “They have labored to commit iniquity.” What greater insanity than to work around the long sword for killing oneself, such is the wicked sinner, Eccli. 2q1[:4]: “All iniquity is like a two-edged sword.” And notice that the insane then is most delirious when he thinks, namely, he acts most prudently. For such a one delirious and knows not that he suffers and does not feel but is undone with fury when he understands that he was deceived. The example of the man in living in a cloud and afterwards going out and looking back.

Second, some labor as the foolish or boys in so far as they work on account of following leisure, as far as those struggling to procure the material concerning their business. But in this is the difference, because the sensible at any rate at last bring back a profit or consolation from their labor, but nothing but exhaustion as every conqueror of history, Eccle. 5[:14]: “As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return, and shall take nothing away with him of his labor.”

¶ The example of boys running after butterflies.

Third, some labor as the infirm whom concupiscence of the will destroyed, for just as unnatural heat generates in the body a physical sickness, so concupiscible motives generate in the soul a spiritual sickness which is so much the more dangerous as it is closer to the heart, about whom in the Psal. [106:12]: “Their heart was humbled with labors: they were weakened, and there was none to help them.” And why because he had not acquired that one who knew he could and wished to help, namely, God.

¶ The figure for this 4 Kings 1[:2-7] concerning the king Ochozias who sent to Beelzebub whether he should recover. However, the Lord sent to him through the prophet that he would not arise from his bed.

¶ Fourth, some work as contractors whom laziness or torpor for doing anything is to be counted, where it is to be noted that one so contracted labors more in one mile than an agile man in four such lengths, certainly not on account of the heaviness of life but on account of the reluctance of the person. So, the lazy person in a medical procedure labors more than another in a great operation, according to that of Prov. 26[:15]: “The slothful hides his hand under his armpit, and it grieves him to turn it to his mouth.”

¶ Note here that the slothful easily opens his mouth for speaking because he seems to himself wiser than seven men speaking judgments. But he labors if he puts his hand to his mouth, that is, if he completes the work what he spoke with his mouth, to which that can be appropriate, Psal. [93:20]: “Does the seat of iniquity stick to you, who frame labor in commandment?” Woe the slothful who shapes labor in the precept of God where when in the time of Christ, he said that his yoke was sweet [Matt. 11:30]. And [1] John 5[:3] it is said, “His commandments are not heavy.” But this slothfulness is heavy and weighs down the possessor himself, which if it would be shaken off this operation would be light. For “They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall run and not be weary,” Isai. [40:31]. Therefore, one must labor in the good countenance of Christ in three ways: in the exercise of action, in the war on temptation, and in the office of the prelate or the preacher.

¶ As for the first, Martha is to be followed, Luke 10[:38-42] who labored concerning frequent ministry to which she was encouraged, 2 Cor. 6[:4-5]: “But in all things let us exhibit ourselves,” etc. up to “in labors.” Willingly one carries the yoke which one hopes to be acceptable to the king, Psal. [127:2]: “You shall eat the labors of your hands.”

Second, it is to be labored in the war on temptation by following the prophets concerning whom, James 5[:10]. Take the example of the brothers, the departure of longsuffering evils, and the labors and the patience of the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord and especially the example of Christ himself the prince of the prophets, Heb. 12[:3]: “He endured such opposition from sinners against himself.” Therefore, he himself says, Matt. 11[:28]: “Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened.”

¶ Fourth, it is to be labored in the office of prelate, diligently by this example of Timothy to whom Paul writes, 2 Tim. 4[:5]: “But be vigilant, labor in all things,” etc., as if saying, that you preach by the mouth, attest by the work, not like that one who constrains heavy burdens to the shoulders of men but to the finger I know they fly like a bird. But you not so, rather be vigilant, labor that you may be worthy of the double honor according to that, 1 Tim. 5[:17]: “Let the priests that rule well, be esteemed worthy of double honor,” and it follows “they who labor in the word and doctrine.”

1. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 18.12 (PL 41:569-570): Hunc sane Herculem, cujus ingentia duodecim facta numerant, inter quae Antaei Afri necem non commemorant, quod ea res ad alterum Herculem pertinet, in Oeta monte a se ipso, incensum produnt suis litteris, cum ea virtute, [Col.0570] qua monstra subegerat, morbum tamen, quo languebat, sustinere non posset. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. (Pseudo-)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* Homilia 19 (PG 56:736): In nullo enim negotio potest requies inveniri, nisi praecesserit labor: Quanto magis in spiritualibus rebus, nisi praecesserit tentatio, non potest esse probatio! [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Nicolai de Lyra, *Glossa ordinaria* Gen. 49:14 (col. 455): Asinum augem osseum vocat et humerum ad portandum deditum, quia in labore tgerrae et vehendis mercibas ad mare, quae in suis finibus naicebantur, plurimum laboraret. ... (col. 456): Fortis asinus requiem vidit, et terram optimam cum simplex gentilitas, ad robur operis se erexit, quia ad vitae patriam tendit Moraliter 5 (col. 455): *Issachar ast.* per quem potest intelligire religiosus, qui tanquam asinus super scapulas debet portare crucem mortificationis. ... *Accubans intger ter*., scilicet, uitae presentis in qua habet habitare cor- (col. 456) pore propter necessitate vnae corporalis, et vitae caelestis in qua debet habitare mente. *Vidit requiem*, vitae contemplatiuae. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Gregory, *Moralia* 7.28.34 (PL 75:785): cumque adipisci virtutes quaerunt, sed labores virtutum fugiunt, quid aliud quam et belli certamina in campo nesciunt, et triumphare in urbibus de bello concupiscunt. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Augustine, *Sermo* 382.1.1 (PL 39:685): Dominus noster Jesus Christus, fratres, jubet nobis aliquid, et promittit nobis aliquid. Quod jubet, hic est: quod promittit alibi est. Quod jubet, finitur, quia temporale est: quod promittit, non finitur, quia aeternum est. Quod jubet, opus est: quod promittit, merces est. ... Qua fronte postulas quod promisit Deus, si non facis quod jussit Deus? Prius audi monitiones, et sic exige repromissiones. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)