Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

167 Of the Workers (*Operariorum*)

There are three kinds of workers, about whom, Apo. 3[:15-16]: “I would you were cold, or hot. But because you are lukewarm, I will begin to vomit you out of my mouth,” etc. Hot are those working faithfully. And Chrysostom, *Super Mattheum*,[[1]](#endnote-1) places three figures through which the good workers are distinguished from the evil. First is the good worker who first looks on the work as to food, but the evil worker on the contrary. So, the servants of God first ought to address the glory of God than his own utility, but the evil on the contrary. The second sign is that the good worker spends the entire day about the work, but a short time about the food, but the evil worker on the contrary. The third sign is that if the good worker cannot perform the work, he blushes to seek the wage, or to appear before his lord, but the evil on the contrary. So, the good ones spiritually if either for the fragility of the weak flesh cannot perform what they intend in their prayers they blush, but the evil on the contrary, because however much the evil do, they presume on the mercy of God.

¶ Others work wickedly and those are cold.

¶ Others work negligently and those are lukewarm who sometimes are worse than the cold. For hot water when it is congealed, more forcefully it is congealed than cold because coldness where one finds greater resistance imprints its power more forcefully. Similarly, iron both cold and hard is heated more forcefully than straw because of the cause just cited, in the same way when the good are made evil they are worse than others, because the devil more forcefully imprints in them his malice because of the great resistance which he finds. However, the evil when they are converted, they are more fervent than the lukewarm, because there God imprints his grace. Therefore, it is said in Eccli. 42[:14]: “For better is the iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn.” Whoever is wicked when he is converted works more fervently than the lukewarm. In every state the work indicates the man and not the office, because in the state of innocence he was held to praise and worship God, Gen. 2[:15] “God put him into the paradise, to dress it.” In the state of fault man was led for labor and pain, Gen. 3[:19]: “In the sweat of your face.” In the state of grace, he was given over to works of penitence after the fall, Apo. 2[:5]: “Be mindful therefore from whence you are fallen: and do the first works.” But for all these he is opposed by sloth which therefore

/fol. 272va/

is compared to a sterile tree and the paralyzed. Wherefore [1] Mach. 9[:55]: “At that time Alcimus was struck, and his works were hindered, and he was taken with a palsy.” Again, he is compared [Mark 9:16-26] to the paralytic boy who was badly tormented because he was afflicted inside and out. Again, he is compared to the thrush by its slowness in flight, so it is said of him who is blocked by his own feces, [Jer.] 48[:11]: “Moab has rested upon lees.”

¶ Again the slothful is called the ass of the devil because he is burdened the entire day, beaten and in the end is fed with troublesome food.

¶ Again, the perilousness of the place in which we are moves us to work.[[2]](#endnote-2) The opportunity of the time which we pass through. The smallness of the pain which we now suffer.[[3]](#endnote-3) The immensity of the reward which we now merit. Therefore, says the Psal. [118:112]: “I have inclined my heart to do your justifications.” Again Psal. [38:8]: “And now what is my hope? Is it not the Lord?” For just as a fire is always in motion, so the heart of man until it has a home for which it longs. Wherefore Augustine in the *Confessions*,[[4]](#endnote-4) Lord, you have made us for yourself and therefore my heart is restless until it comes to you. For thus God has ordered in natural and in artificial things that there is progress from the inferior to the superior, from the small to the great, from the deformed to the beautiful, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the movement to the end. So, also in moral matters from humility and labor of penance to the sublimity and quiet of glory, Luke 6[:25]: “Woe to you that now laugh: for you shall mourn and weep” in the future.

¶ Again fifth, it is the continuity of the struggle in which we labor. For it is a fight against a triple enemy. About which see above in the chapter [84] Enemy (*Hostis*).[[5]](#endnote-5) Sixth, is the multiplex of helps which we now have, namely, the arms of virtues, [1] Cor. 13[:13]: “And now there remain faith, hope, and charity.” And the remedy of the sacraments, Rom. 6[:22]: “Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting.”

¶ For the perfection of excellent work three are required. One is antecedent as if inductive which is flee the evil, Psal. [36:27]: “Decline from evil.” Another is concomitant as preparing, namely, the grace of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 15[:10]: “I have labored more abundantly than all they: yet not I, but the grace.” Third, is common as conservative, namely, the joy of the soul, Psal. [50:14]: “Restore unto me the joy of your salvation.”

¶ This holy man had these three elegantly because he drank nothing, because he was full of the Holy Spirit, because he exalted in the womb, because he held perfectly what the Apostle taught in these words where first he moves us to flee the evil, when he says second to love the good, when he says

/fol. 272vb/

third as a safeguard to the persevering. When he says therefore in the first place [Tit. 1:11], he encourages us to flee evils which “subvert” the largest part of the world, namely, gluttony and lust.

¶ Again, three things move a man to working or making anything, namely, the honor of the deed. Because of which, many are intent for probity as in military tournaments, in student arguments. Second, is the rigor of the commandment because of which subordinates come and go at the order of the prelate. Third, is the love of the reward because of which they are led and labor as workers. And for all our works God wants that we have merit, an example to our neighbor, and praise for God.

¶ Again for strenuous working these things move us, first the observation of God and the angels. Second the assignment of the work to the worker. They labor better in their own area than in another. Third the remuneration of the labor. Concerning these things, it is said in Prov. 22[:29]: “Have you seen a man swift,” as for the first, “in his work,” as for the second, “he shall stand before kings,” as for the third.

¶ Again three things move one for working or persevering, word, example, and reward. This is persuasion of the world, the showing of example, and the magnitude of the reward. Therefore, the Lord says, [Matt. 11:29]: “Learn of me,” behold the first; “because I am meek,” behold the second; “and you shall find rest to your souls,” behold the third.

¶ Again, three things usually move a worker for working, the authority of the officer, the opportunity of the time, and the utility of the one working. Concerning the first from the first condition of man God made him for working, Gen. 2[:15]: “God took man, and put him into paradise, to dress it.” Concerning the second they have all time. Therefore, the Apostle says, Gal. 6[:10]: “While we have time, let us work good to all men.” Concerning the third there will be reward for your work which is nothing other than God himself. Wherefore the Lord said to Abraham, Gen. 15:1]: “I am [your protector], and your reward exceeding great.”

¶ Again three things are required in the one working, to know, to be able, to wish. Because the lazy man does not want. Therefore, our creator who wants all men to be saved sent just as he promised to us one who could, know, and wished to save. Therefore, with merit he is called Lord in whom there is power, Psal. [145:5]: “Great is our Lord, and great is his power.” Just in whom there is wisdom, Wis. 2[:22], The love his judgment. Eccli. 10[:1]: “A wise judge shall judge his people.” Ours in whom there is a clement will, Psal. [45:8, 12]: “The God of Jacob is our protector.”

¶ Again for this because the worker is meritorious, it is responded that he begins early in the morning and finished what he begun. In the perfect

/fol. 273ra/

he perseveres. First, he looks at the sinners. Second to the penitent. Third to the perfect. Concerning the first Psal. [103:22-23]: “The sun rises, and they are gathered together,” etc., up to “Man shall go forth to his work.” Eccle. 9[:10]: “Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly.” Concerning the second, Mala. 1[:14]: “Cursed is the man who” does the work of God negligently. This is against the hypocrites. Therefore, the Apostle, [2] Tim. 2[:15]: “Carefully study to present yourself, a workman that needs not to be ashamed,” etc., up to “the word of truth.”

¶ But I fear because it can be said by a man [Luke 10:2]: “The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few.” Concerning the third [Eccli.] 18[:6]: “When a man has done, then shall he begin, and when he leaves off.” It shall be worked because according to the Apostle, [Rom. 2:6]: “Who will render to every man according to his works.”

¶ Again three things impede man from working, ignorance, displeasure, and difficulty. Because of ignorance Habacuc excused himself for not carrying the meal to Daniel, Dan. 14[:32-34]. Because of displeasure Israel did not want to go up to the promised land, Num. 13[:32]. But some things which seem difficult are easy, of such kind it is to abstain from evil, which certainly is much easier when he proposes nothing than to work, Eccli. 3[:32]: “A wise heart, will abstain from sins.” [1] Pet. 2[:11]: “Refrain yourself from [carnal desires].”

¶ Again it is something working with motion and labor as a man and the other creatures. It is another with motion but without labor as the sun and the moon. And third working without motion and without labor as God. For only his will was sufficient for producing things into being.

¶ Again, the worker, the impure will be let go, the remaining is in need, repairs the loss, receives the aged. For the impure as for the criminals they are to be rooted out, [2] Tim. 2[:15]: “Carefully study to present yourself to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed.” For those remaining like the criminals for acquiring virtues, etc. Therefore, for life itself sufficient to the worker that he be treaded under foot. For the losses such as the sinners they are to be corrected, Luke 10[:2]: “Pray the Lord of the harvest, that he sends [laborers].” For the aged as those enjoying heavenly things, Tim. 5[:18]: “You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. The laborer is worthy of his reward.”

¶ Again in work God will consider three: the multitude of the work, the root of love, and the length of labor.

¶ Concerning the first, Psal. [93:19]: “According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart.” Concerning the second Luke 21[:1-4]: “The widow wanted to offer more than the two mites. But God judged not how much but how she offered. Concerning the third, Matt. 20[:11-12]: “They murmured

/fol. 273rb/

who bore the burden of the day and the heats.” Concerning these three it is said in Wis. 11[:21]: “You have ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight.” Because God rewards the measure of time, the number of works, and the weight of love.

¶ From many theologians disputing among themselves in a school, some foolish one entering, I ask from all of you which of these is better, to do what a man knows, or to learn what he does not know. Finally, it was concluded that it is better to do what a man knows, according to that of James 1[:22]: “Not hearers only” of the law will be justified. For it is less a sin not to know what you desire, than those things which you know but do not fulfill. Therefore, said the foolish man, I confute all of you who labor so much to learn what you do not know, and have no care to fulfill the work which you know.

1. (Pseudo)Chrysostom, *Opus imperfectum in Mattheum* homilia 34 ex cap. 20 (PG 56:818-819): Et sicut mercenarius prius aspicit opus suum, deinde diaria sua: sic et nos si mercenarii Christi sumus, primum debemus aspicere quae ad gloriam Dei pertinent proximique profectum (quia caritas et verus amor erga Deum non quaerunt quae sua, sed ad libitum amati cuncta desiderant perficere), deinde quae ad nostram utilitatem. Et sicut mercenarius totum diem circa domini opus impendit, unam autem horam circa suum cibum: sic et nos omne tempus vitae nostrae debemus impendere circa opus gloriae Dei, modicam autem partem circa usus nostros terrenos. Et sicut si mercenarius qua die opus non fecerit, erubescit intrare domum, et petere sibi panem: quomodo tu non confunderis intrare in ecclesiam, et stare ante conspectum Dei, quando nil boni in conspectu Dei gessisti? [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Here F 128 adds: About which see the chapter [350] Arise (*Surge*). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Here F 128 adds: About which see the chapter [283] Pain (*Pena*). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *Confessiones* 1.1 (LCL 26:2-3): tu excitas ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.

You inspire us to take delight in praising you, for you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Compare with F 128: About which see above in the chapter [167] Enemy (*Hostis*). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)