

Objection 1. It would seem that religious are bound to manual labor. For religious are not exempt from the observance of precepts. Now manual labor is a matter of precept according to 1 Thess. 4:11, “Work with your own hands as we commanded you”; wherefore Augustine says (De oper. Monach. xxx): “But who can allow these insolent men,” namely religious that do no work, of whom he is speaking there, “who disregard the most salutary admonishment of the Apostle, not merely to be borne with as being weaker than others, but even to preach as though they were holier than others.” Therefore it would seem that religious are bound to manual labor.

Objection 2. Further, a gloss* on 2 Thess. 3:10, “If any man will not work, neither let him eat,” says: “Some say that this command of the Apostle refers to spiritual works, and not to the bodily labor of the farmer or craftsman”; and further on: “But it is useless for them to try to hide from themselves and from others the fact that they are unwilling not only to fulfil, but even to understand the useful admonishments of charity”; and again: “He wishes God’s servants to make a living by working with their bodies.” Now religious especially are called servants of God, because they give themselves entirely to the service of God, as Dionysius asserts (Eccl. Hier. vi). Therefore it would seem that they are bound to manual labor.

Objection 3. Further, Augustine says (De oper. Monach. xvii): “I would fain know how they would occupy themselves, who are unwilling to work with their body. We occupy our time, say they, with prayers, psalms, reading, and the word of God.” Yet these things are no excuse, and he proves this, as regards each in particular. For in the first place, as to prayer, he says: “One prayer of the obedient man is sooner granted than ten thousand prayers of the contemptuous”: meaning that those are contemptuous and unworthy to be heard who work not with their hands. Secondly, as to the divine praises he adds: “Even while working with their hands they can easily sing hymns to God.” Thirdly, with regard to reading, he goes on to say: “Those who say they are occupied in reading, do they not find there what the Apostle commanded? What sort of perverseness is this, to wish to read but not to obey what one reads?” Fourthly, he adds in reference to preaching[†]: “If one has to speak, and is so busy that he cannot spare time for manual work, can all in the monastery do this? And since all cannot do this, why should all make this a pretext for being exempt? And even if all were able, they should do so by turns, not only so that the others may be occupied in other works, but also because it suffices that one speak while many listen.” Therefore it would seem that religious should not desist from manual labor on ac-

count of such like spiritual works to which they devote themselves.

Objection 4. Further, a gloss on Lk. 12:33, “Sell what you possess,” says: “Not only give your clothes to the poor, but sell what you possess, that having once for all renounced all your possessions for the Lord’s sake, you may henceforth work with the labor of your hands, so as to have wherewith to live or to give alms.” Now it belongs properly to religious to renounce all they have. Therefore it would seem likewise to belong to them to live and give alms through the labor of their hands.

Objection 5. Further, religious especially would seem to be bound to imitate the life of the apostles, since they profess the state of perfection. Now the apostles worked with their own hands, according to 1 Cor. 4:12: “We labor, working with our own hands.” Therefore it would seem that religious are bound to manual labor.

On the contrary, Those precepts that are commonly enjoined upon all are equally binding on religious and seculars. But the precept of manual labor is enjoined upon all in common, as appears from 2 Thess. 3:6, “Withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly,” etc. (for by brother he signifies every Christian, according to 1 Cor. 7:12, “If any brother have a wife that believeth not”). Now it is written in the same passage (2 Thess. 3:10): “If any man will not work, neither let him eat.” Therefore religious are not bound to manual labor any more than seculars are.

I answer that, Manual labor is directed to four things. First and principally to obtain food; wherefore it was said to the first man (Gn. 3:19): “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” and it is written (Ps. 127:2): “For thou shalt eat the labors of thy hands.” Secondly, it is directed to the removal of idleness whence arise many evils; hence it is written (Ecclus. 33:28,29): “Send” thy slave “to work, that he be not idle, for idleness hath taught much evil.” Thirdly, it is directed to the curbing of concupiscence, inasmuch as it is a means of afflicting the body; hence it is written (2 Cor. 6:5,6): “In labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity.” Fourthly, it is directed to almsgiving, wherefore it is written (Eph. 4:28): “He that stole, let him now steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have something to give to him that suffereth need.” Accordingly, in so far as manual labor is directed to obtaining food, it comes under a necessity of precept in so far as it is necessary for that end: since that which is directed to an end derives its necessity from that end, being, in effect, so far necessary as the end cannot be obtained without it. Consequently he who has no other means of

* St. Augustine, (De oper. Monach. xxi) † Cap. xviii

livelihood is bound to work with his hands, whatever his condition may be. This is signified by the words of the Apostle: “If any man will not work, neither let him eat,” as though to say: “The necessity of manual labor is the necessity of meat.” So that if one could live without eating, one would not be bound to work with one’s hands. The same applies to those who have no other lawful means of livelihood: since a man is understood to be unable to do what he cannot do lawfully. Wherefore we find that the Apostle prescribed manual labor merely as a remedy for the sin of those who gained their livelihood by unlawful means. For the Apostle ordered manual labor first of all in order to avoid theft, as appears from Eph. 4:28, “He that stole, let him now steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands.” Secondly, to avoid the coveting of others’ property, wherefore it is written (1 Thess. 4:11): “Work with your own hands, as we commanded you, and that you walk honestly towards them that are without.” Thirdly, to avoid the discreditable pursuits whereby some seek a livelihood. Hence he says (2 Thess. 3:10-12): “When we were with you, this we declared to you: that if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For we have heard that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling” (namely, as a gloss explains it, “who make a living by meddling in unlawful things). Now we charge them that are such, and beseech them. . . that working with silence, they would eat their own bread.” Hence Jerome states (Super epist. ad Galat.[‡]) that the Apostle said this “not so much in his capacity of teacher as on account of the faults of the people.”

It must, however, be observed that under manual labor are comprised all those human occupations whereby man can lawfully gain a livelihood, whether by using his hands, his feet, or his tongue. For watchmen, couriers, and such like who live by their labor, are understood to live by their handiwork: because, since the hand is “the organ of organs”*, handiwork denotes all kinds of work, whereby a man may lawfully gain a livelihood.

In so far as manual labor is directed to the removal of idleness, or the affliction of the body, it does not come under a necessity of precept if we consider it in itself, since there are many other means besides manual labor of afflicting the body or of removing idleness: for the flesh is afflicted by fastings and watchings, and idleness is removed by meditation on the Holy Scriptures and by the divine praises. Hence a gloss on Ps. 118:82, “My eyes have failed for Thy word,” says: “He is not idle who meditates only on God’s word; nor is he who works abroad any better than he who devotes himself to the study of knowing the truth.” Consequently for these reasons religious are not bound to manual labor, as neither are seculars, except when they are so bound by the statutes of their

order. Thus Jerome says (Ep. cxxv ad Rustic Monach.): “The Egyptian monasteries are wont to admit none unless they work or labor, not so much for the necessities of life, as for the welfare of the soul, lest it be led astray by wicked thoughts.” But in so far as manual labor is directed to almsgiving, it does not come under the necessity of precept, save perchance in some particular case, when a man is under an obligation to give alms, and has no other means of having the wherewithal to assist the poor: for in such a case religious would be bound as well as seculars to do manual labor.

Reply to Objection 1. This command of the Apostle is of natural law: wherefore a gloss on 2 Thess. 3:6, “That you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly,” says, “otherwise than the natural order requires,” and he is speaking of those who abstained from manual labor. Hence nature has provided man with hands instead of arms and clothes, with which she has provided other animals, in order that with his hands he may obtain these and all other necessities. Hence it is clear that this precept, even as all the precepts of the natural law, is binding on both religious and seculars alike. Yet not everyone sins that works not with his hands, because those precepts of the natural law which regard the good of the many are not binding on each individual, but it suffices that one person apply himself to this business and another to that; for instance, that some be craftsmen, others husbandmen, others judges, and others teachers, and so forth, according to the words of the Apostle (1 Cor. 12:17), “If the whole body were the eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were the hearing, where would be the smelling?”

Reply to Objection 2. This gloss is taken from Augustine’s *De operibus Monachorum*, cap. 21, where he speaks against certain monks who declared it to be unlawful for the servants of God to work with their hands, on account of our Lord’s saying (Mat. 6:25): “Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat.” Nevertheless his words do not imply that religious are bound to work with their hands, if they have other means of livelihood. This is clear from his adding: “He wishes the servants of God to make a living by working with their bodies.” Now this does not apply to religious any more than to seculars, which is evident for two reasons. First, on account of the way in which the Apostle expresses himself, by saying: “That you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly.” For he calls all Christians brothers, since at that time religious orders were not as yet founded. Secondly, because religious have no other obligations than what seculars have, except as required by the rule they profess: wherefore if their rule contain nothing about manual labor, religious are not otherwise bound to manual labor than seculars are.

Reply to Objection 3. A man may devote himself in

[‡] Preface to Bk. ii of Commentary * De Anima iii, 8

two ways to all the spiritual works mentioned by Augustine in the passage quoted: in one way with a view to the common good, in another with a view to his private advantage. Accordingly those who devote themselves publicly to the aforesaid spiritual works are thereby exempt from manual labor for two reasons: first, because it behooves them to be occupied exclusively with such like works; secondly, because those who devote themselves to such works have a claim to be supported by those for whose advantage they work.

On the other hand, those who devote themselves to such works not publicly but privately as it were, ought not on that account to be exempt from manual labor, nor have they a claim to be supported by the offerings of the faithful, and it is of these that Augustine is speaking. For when he says: "They can sing hymns to God even while working with their hands; like the craftsmen who give tongue to fable telling without withdrawing their hands from their work," it is clear that he cannot refer to those who sing the canonical hours in the church, but to those who tell psalms or hymns as private prayers. Likewise what he says of reading and prayer is to be referred to the private prayer and reading which even lay people do at times, and not to those who perform public prayers in the church, or give public lectures in the schools. Hence he does not say: "Those who say they are occupied in teaching and instructing," but: "Those who say they are occupied in reading." Again he speaks of that preaching which is addressed, not publicly to the people, but to one or a few in particular by way of private admonishment. Hence he says expressly: "If one has to speak." For according to a gloss on 1 Cor. 2:4, "Speech is addressed privately, preaching to many."

Reply to Objection 4. Those who despise all for God's sake are bound to work with their hands, when they have no other means of livelihood, or of almsgiving (should the case occur where almsgiving were a matter of precept), but not otherwise, as stated in the Article. It is in this sense that the gloss quoted is to be understood.

Reply to Objection 5. That the apostles worked with their hands was sometimes a matter of necessity, sometimes a work of supererogation. It was of necessity when they failed to receive a livelihood from others. Hence a gloss on 1 Cor. 4:12, "We labor, working with our own hands," adds, "because no man giveth to us." It was supererogation, as appears from 1 Cor. 9:12, where the Apostle says that he did not use the power he had of living by the Gospel. The Apostle had recourse to this supererogation for three motives. First, in order to deprive the false apostles of the pretext for preaching, for they preached merely for a temporal advantage; hence he says (2 Cor. 11:12): "But what I do, that I will do that I may cut off the occasion from them," etc. Secondly, in order to avoid burdening those to whom he preached; hence he says (2 Cor. 12:13): "What is there that you have had less than the other churches, but that I myself was not burdensome to you?" Thirdly, in order to give an example of work to the idle; hence he says (2 Thess. 3:8,9): "We worked night and day... that we might give ourselves a pattern unto you, to imitate us." However, the Apostle did not do this in places like Athens where he had facilities for preaching daily, as Augustine observes (*De oper. Monach.* xviii). Yet religious are not for this reason bound to imitate the Apostle in this matter, since they are not bound to all works of supererogation: wherefore neither did the other apostles work with their hands.