

Luz (2007: 347)

work for their preachers.⁷⁶ Along with Gen 3:17–19, Matt 6:25–34 contributed a great deal in the Middle Ages to the negative view of work.⁷⁷

However, a positive view of work is characteristic of monasticism in general. Antony hears this text in church, gives away his possessions, and becomes an ascetic. In the same chapter of his influential biography, however, the manual labor of the young ascetic appears in connection with 2 Thess 3:10.⁷⁸ In keeping with Matt 6:34 Pachomius and his brother distribute the surplus of their manual labor to the poor.⁷⁹ An emphasis on work becomes an established part of all monastic regulations from Basil to Francis of Assisi. Then in Rupert of Deutz the interpretation of our text is connected for the first time with a reference to Matt 19:16–22 and is put under the sign of a “counsel of perfection” (*consilium . . . perfectionis*). He calls out pathetically: “These sparrows,” who have abandoned everything and who desire only to follow the Lord, are to build nests among you”; “build monasteries; establish churches” (*construite coenobia, fundate ecclesias*).⁸⁰ The church’s domestication of these radical birds under the sign of the counsel of the gospel (*consilium Evangelicum*) is obvious here.

b. The interpretation of our text in terms of *all Christians* reveals the discomfort it has caused in the churches. What the text does *not* say is repeatedly emphasized, and in the process its teeth become increasingly dull. It is claimed that of course our text permits work; indeed, it requires it. Jerome expresses it in a short, often repeated formula: “work is to be done, anxiety to be abolished” (*labor exercendus est, sollicitudo tollenda*).⁸¹ Even possessions are permitted; the issue is simply how they are used. Therefore, our text is used parenetically in support of the call to charity and almsgiving.⁸² Above all, however, worry is not something that can simply be forbidden. It is permissible to distinguish between care that is allowed, even commanded, and unevangelical and forbidden care. A great help here is v. 34, a verse that becomes so important that it often dominates the interpretation of our text. Examples: Worry about the present, and only about it, is permitted.⁸³ There is such a thing as “tomorrow” only in time. Temporal, earthly cares

are forbidden; we are to think of eternity.⁸⁴ Care as an expression of love is commanded.⁸⁵ God forbids exaggerated worry.⁸⁶ One must distinguish between active zeal (Spoudh) and anxious worry.⁸⁷ In the context of the two-kingdoms doctrine a distinction is made between the necessary concern of official persons and the forbidden worry about oneself: kings, fathers of families, subjects must care in the context of their office, and they must do so for tomorrow as well as for today.⁸⁸

Both types of interpretation briefly introduced here are adaptations, even domestications, of our text. The first type, which firmly, even positively, places Christian radicals, monks, and priests alongside and for the Christian populace, is specifically Catholic; the second basic type, which is much more widespread, is found in both Catholicism and Protestantism. The domestication becomes all the more visible the more the opposition

75 Matt 6:25–34 as a central Messalian text 1(2); 23 (27–30); “birds of the heaven” = 22 (25); freedom from work for the priests: 21 (24).

76 V. Vinay, “Waldenser,” *RGG* 6 (1962) 1531; Kurt-Victor Selge, *Die ersten Waldenser* (AKG 37/1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967) 50–51.

77 Jacques Le Goff, “Arbeit V: Mittelalter,” *TRE S* (1978) 627.

78 Athanasius *Ant.* 3 = ACW 10.20–21.

79 *Vita Pachomii* 6 = Apostolos A. Athanassakis, trans., *The Life of Pachomius* (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press, 1975) 9–11.

80 Rupert of Deutz, 1443–44.

81 Jerome on 6:25. Very pointed and thus worth quoting from the many interpretations of this kind is Søren Kierkegaard’s interpretation in *Consider the Lilies: Being the Second Part of “Edifying Discourses in a Different Vein”* (original 1847; trans. A. S. Aldworth and W. S. Ferrie; London: Daniel, 1940) 57: “In his distraction with the bird, [the troubled person receives] something altogether other to think about than his anxiety; he came to think rightly how splendid it is to work, how splendid it is to be a man. Should he again forget it as he labours, ah, then . . . the bird . . . will recall what he has forgotten.”

82 Already in Cyprian *Eleem.* 9 = ET by Edward V. Rebenack (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1962) 69–70; even better in John Chrysostom 21.4 = *PG* 57.299–300, expressly as a provisional stage.

83 “Dc praesentibus . . . concessit debere esse sollicitos” (Jerome on the passage).

84 Augustine *Serm. Dom.* 2.17 (56).

85 Luther 2.187.

86 Calvin in Stadtland-Neumann, *Radikalismen*, 39–41.

87 Lapede, 173–74.

88 Luther, “Wochenpredigten” (WA 32.459 = *LW* 21.194).