The Doctrine of Simony

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A Theological Retrieval and Appraisal

Conley Owens

Dorean Press

The Doctrine of Simony: A Theological Retrieval and Appraisal

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Published by Dorean Press

Cover, background: Gratian, *Decretum*, Hainaut, ca. 1280–90; Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, Ms. W.133, foll. 86v–87r—the historiated initial on 87r opening *Causa* 1, on simony.
Cover, foreground: Liberale da Verona (attributed), *Simon Magus offering St Peter money for the power of conferring the Holy Spirit*, ca. 1470–75, egg tempera on panel; Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, PD.21-1961.

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ISBN 979-8-1749-3028-5 (paperback)
ISBN 979-8-237-53534-1 (EPUB)
Online edition: https://simony.info

26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

For Andrew and Jon,
without whom my arms would have fallen long before the sun.

Þou þat sellest þe worde of God,
Be þou berfot, be þou schod,
Cum nomore here.
Inprincipio erat verbum
Is þe worde of God, all and sum,
Þat þou sellest, lewed frere.

Hit is cursed symonie
Eþer to selle or to bye
Ony gostly þinge;
Þerfore, frere, go as þou come,
And hold þe in þi hows at home
Til we þe almis brynge.

Goddis lawe ȝe reuerson,
And mennes howsis ȝe persen,
As Poul beriþ wittnes.
As mydday deuelis goynge abowte
For money lowle ȝe lowte,
Flatteringe boyþe more and lesse.

—*Anonymous, fifteenth century*

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Preface

> Providence carries our lives, liberties and concernments in its hand every moment. Your bread is in its cupboard, your money in its purse, your safety in its enfolding arms; and sure it is the least part of what you owe, to record the favours you receive at its hands.[1]
>
> —*John Flavel*

The providence that has brought this work into being is remarkable. I owe it to the Lord to recount his mercies, and perhaps in some measure I owe this to the reader as well.

I was born into a Christian family that emphasized generosity, and multiple sermons from my childhood on the topic of heavenly treasures left an indelible mark on me. In high school and college, a larger philosophy about the ownership of ideas reinforced this posture toward possessions when I encountered the free and open source software movement, where I interacted personally with some of the more notable thinkers in the field of free licensing, including Richard Stallman and Lawrence Lessig. Completing my higher education, I continued in that world professionally, working on the Android Open Source Project, on Chromium, and in Google's Open Source Programs Office.

I was introduced to Reformed theology during an internship in 2006 and came to affirm the doctrines of grace the following year. I did not immediately make a diligent study of the matter, but upon

[1] Flavel, *Divine Conduct*, pp. [210–11].

moving to California, I found a church—the same one I now pastor—that challenged me to grow in that tradition. Studying through the Log College and Seminary, I was required to write a thesis but given the freedom to take the time needed since the school operates without a semester schedule. This presented me with the opportunity to answer questions that had formed at the intersection of my interests in theology and intellectual property law. From this was born my thesis on *the dorean principle*,[2] which I rewrote as a book of the same name and published in 2021.[3]

Of the responses it received, the one that most resonated with me was the concern to see this principle echoed by theologians of former generations. I also wanted much more than the scattering of quotations I had managed to produce from the pages of historical writings. However, as I followed the trail of citations, it became evident that what I sought was largely inaccessible, hidden away in Latin theology under the title of *simonia* (simony). Technology soon bridged that gap. Not only have online archives of historical works grown immensely, but the recent availability of large language models to the public has enabled sourcing, transcribing, and translating worthwhile works on the subject at a scale previously unimaginable. What is more, this study has become possible at the very time that interest in retrieval is growing.

In all this, the hand of God is evident. I have neglected countless details in this brief chronology, but even the few recorded here show a discernibly divine influence that has prepared me for the present task. Calls to labor in untilled soil often come out of season so that another would enjoy the harvest, and so it may be in my own case. But in the unfathomable kindness of God, I sense that the church is ripe for this moment as well.

Sunnyvale, California
September 2026

[2] The dorean principle: *in the context of gospel proclamation, accepting support as anything other than an act of co-labor compromises the sincerity of ministry.*

[3] Owens, *Dorean Principle*.

Abbreviations

Sigla

2LBCF. *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith*, cited by chapter and section.

ACO. Eduard Schwartz and Johannes Straub, eds. *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1914–1974.

C. Gratian, *Decretum*, cited by causa, quaestio, and canon. Text in Friedberg, vol. 1.

Clem. *Clementinae*, cited by book, title, and chapter. Text in Friedberg, vol. 2.

CO. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss, eds. *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia.* 59 vols. Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke, 1863–1900. Volumes 29–87 of the *Corpus Reformatorum*.

CSEL. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum.* Vienna, 1866–.

Extravag. comm. *Extravagantes communes.* Text in Friedberg, vol. 2.

Friedberg. Emil Friedberg, ed. *Corpus iuris canonici.* 2 vols. Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1879–1881.

GCS. *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller.* Leipzig and Berlin, 1897–.

JL. Philipp Jaffé. *Regesta pontificum Romanorum.* 2nd ed., revised by S. Löwenfeld and others. Leipzig: Veit, 1885–1888.

Mansi. Giovanni Domenico Mansi, ed. *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio.* 31 vols. Florence and Venice: Antonio Zatta, 1759–1798.

MGH. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica.* Hanover, Berlin, and Munich, 1826–.

PG. J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologia Graeca.* 161 vols. Paris, 1857–1866.

PL. J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologia Latina.* 221 vols. Paris, 1844–1864.

PS. René Graffin, ed. *Patrologia Syriaca.* 3 vols. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894–1926.

SHC. *Second Helvetic Confession*, cited by chapter.

ST. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, cited by part, question, and article.

WA. *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe.* 127 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1883–2009. The *Tischreden* and *Briefwechsel*, cited as WA TR and WA Br.

WCF. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, cited by chapter and section.

WLC. *Westminster Larger Catechism*, cited by question.

X. *Liber extra* (*Decretalium Gregorii IX compilatio*), cited by book, title, and chapter. Text in Friedberg, vol. 2.

Locators

a. *Articulus*, the article of a question.

A, B, C… A segment the edition itself marks off: a band of a Migne or Mansi column, a section within a chapter in Hus. E.g., PL 76:1091B, 9.A–D.

ad. The reply to a numbered objection—ad 3 answers arg. 3. Before a decretal it points instead at the chapter a commentator is glossing. E.g., ad X 5.3.24.

arg. *Argumentum*, an objection standing at the head of a question.

c., cc. Canon, the chapter of a canonical collection.

can. Canon, of a council.

cap. *Caput*, a chapter.

col., cols. Column, in an edition that numbers columns rather than pages.

concl. *Conclusio*, the master's determination, or one of the numbered theses into which he divides it. E.g., concl. 2.

corp. The corpus, the body of an article, where the master answers in his own voice.

d., D. *Distinctio*.

d.a.c., d.p.c. *Dictum ante canonem*, *dictum post canonem*—Gratian's own comment, standing before or after the canon by which it is numbered.

disp. *Disputatio*, a disputed question.

dub. *Dubium*, a doubt appended to a question.

fol., foll. Folio, cited by leaf, side, and column. E.g., fol. 147rb is leaf 147, recto, second column; v is the verso.

hom. *Homilia*, a homily.

lect. *Lectio*.

lib. *Liber*, a book within a larger work.

Mand. *Mandatum*, a mandate of the *Shepherd* of Hermas.

n., nn. Following a coordinate, the edition's own note rather than its text. E.g., PL 76:1091n3, 8:24n.

no., nos. The number an edition gives its pieces: a letter in a register, an entry in the *Tischreden*. In a printed commentary, the numbered *nota* of the lecture. E.g., ad X 5.3.34, no. 5.

p., pp. Page.

P., Inq., Tract., S., Q., T., C., A., probl. The chain of divisions in the *Summa Halensis*—*pars*, *inquisitio*, *tractatus*, *sectio*, *quaestio*, *titulus*, *caput*, *articulus*, *problema*.

prol. *Prologus*, the prologue.

q. *Quaestio*.

qc. *Quaestiuncula*, a question within an article.

quaest. *Quaestio*, marked off by an edition as a division of its own.

rat. *Rationes*—the arguments of a question taken together: ad rat. replies to them as a set, where ad 3 answers one of them.

s.c. *Sed contra*, the argument set against the objections.

s.v. *Sub voce*, under the word—the entry or lemma being glossed.

serm. *Sermo*, a numbered sermon.

sess. *Sessio*, the session of a council.

sig., sigs. The printer's signature, by which a book with no foliation is cited. E.g., sig. q5vb.

sign. *Signum*, a numbered "Sign" of false apostles in William of Saint-Amour's *De periculis* and *Collectiones*.

sol. *Solutio*, the part of an article in a *Sentences* commentary where the master answers in his own voice.

tit. *Titulus*.

tr. *Tractatus*, a treatise within a summa.

un. *Unicus, -a, -um*—the sole member of a division, where there is only one. E.g., q. un. is the one question of that distinction.

§, §§ A numbered paragraph inside a canon or a chapter. E.g., C. 1, q. 1, d.p.c. 24, § 1.

Introduction

"There is hardly one sin in the world, whose nature is less known, and whose heinousness is less considered, than the sin of simony."[1] These words began the review of a work of retrieval similar to our own, and they are truer now than they were when they were composed over three and a quarter centuries ago. Simony once numbered among the most discussed sins in the Christian tradition. It featured prominently in canonical legislation from the patristic period through the Middle Ages, received ample treatment from nearly every major scholastic theologian, and entered the confessional standards of the Reformation. Yet today, it is virtually forgotten. Most Christians have never heard the word, and those who have tend to regard it as a relic of medieval corruption with no bearing on the modern church.

In the face of such ignorance, we must begin our study as have those before us, with the assumption that simony exists. Scripturally, this approach is warranted: though some may regard the transgression of Simon Magus (Acts 8:9–24), from whom the sin takes its name, as impossible to reproduce after the era of the apostles, biblical narrative is given as an example to instruct disciples against temptations that continue to ensnare men in every age (1 Cor. 10:6; 2 Tim. 3:16). Methodologically, this approach is necessary: the serious study of any topic presupposes a real object.[2] However, our starting assumption is

[1] "Review of The Anatomy of Simon Magus," 502.

[2] "On account of the contagion of this disease, the Church must guard against it all the more warily. In treating simony, then, one must presuppose that it exists." Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (2:1–4).

not an axiom; we will demonstrate both the existence and prevalence of simony in due course, once we have sufficiently mapped out its boundaries.[3]

Simony is *an earnest desire to buy or sell something spiritual or something annexed to a spiritual thing*.[4] This precise formulation is Thomas Aquinas's,[5] though the definition, in nearly these words, had been well established by his time.[6] Later schoolmen typically adopted it without modification. Even John Wycliffe, who quibbled with multiple features of the phrasing, granted that its sense must be defended.[7] Post-Reformation English treatises render it directly.[8] We will therefore proceed with this received definition.

The present work is an exercise in historical theology, which is to be distinguished from theological history. Several histories from the past century address the practice of simony,[9] but consideration of its attendant theology is typically incidental. A number of short articles summarize the doctrine, and some larger works explore narrow aspects of it, but none brings the matter together into a unified account.[10]

---

[3] Adopting the same strategy, the Puritan Henry Burton conceded that he "may seem to usurp the mathematician's privilege, in begging a *suppositum*, that such a thing there is, as simony." Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 1.

[4] "*studiosa voluntas emendi et vendendi aliquid spirituale vel spirituali annexum*."

[5] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1.

[6] E.g., Raymond of Peñafort, *Summa de poenitentia*, 1.1.1 (p. 2). Albert the Great, under whom Aquinas studied, had already recorded the jurists' common definition in much the same terms. Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 2 (p. 88a).

[7] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (2:13–16, 3:2–13); cap. 2 (14:13–15, 23–28). Translating Wycliffe's treatise, Terrence A. McVeigh reported that "throughout the second chapter Wyclif seems to have Aquinas' exposition of the subject before him." Wycliffe, *On Simony*, 61n1.

[8] E.g., "Simony is an earnest desire of buying or selling any spiritual thing, or that which is annexed to that which is spiritual." Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 2.

[9] The fullest narrative history remains Weber, *A History of Simony in the Christian Church*, though it reaches only to Charlemagne and treats the practice rather than the doctrine.

[10] The literature divides among studies of particular periods, e.g., Meier-Welcker, "Die Simonie im frühen Mittelalter"; canonistic analyses, e.g., Leinz, *Die Simonie*; and discrete questions. On the term *simoniaca haeresis*, see Leclercq, "Simoniaca heresis"; Rosé, "Simon le Magicien hérésiarque?". On the validity of simoniacal orders, see

Accordingly, we intend to supply what is lacking and present a historical theology of simony that is comprehensive in scope without pretending to be exhaustive in detail.

Though our method is historical, it will not be neutral, as we will proceed from decidedly Reformed convictions. This is necessary since true neutrality is impossible. But more importantly, commitment to a governing perspective is prerequisite for such a work to bear any real fruit. Retrieval should be conducted for the benefit of the church rather than for its own sake, and this requires a framework both sound enough to support an honest reading of the history and congenial to a people eager to take up what is recovered under its guidance. The Reformed tradition furnishes just that. This commitment will inform which sources we consider and in what measure. It will likewise shape our conclusions and subsequent analysis.

Our inquiry is divided into six parts. Part I addresses historical considerations, both the history of the doctrine of simony and our approach to historical theology and retrieval. Part II expounds the definition of simony, clause by clause: something spiritual, something annexed to a spiritual thing, to buy or sell, and an earnest desire. Part III turns to ministerial maintenance, setting the boundaries of licit exchanges in the gift, giving, and receiving. Part IV gathers and presents the biblical passages that earlier generations most frequently adduced to establish and reinforce the doctrine. Part V considers the censure of simony, both the nature of the sin in general and its ancient classification as a species of heresy. Part VI offers several focused analyses of the historical doctrine in light of present circumstances.

While the doctrine of simony may not be widely known or understood today, there is no need for it to remain so. Moreover, we have every reason to expect that its retrieval would bring substantial blessing. The Protestant Reformation itself began in a dispute over the sale of spiritual things. What new reformation awaits the church if she learns again to discern this sin in its present forms?

Gilchrist, "'Simoniaca haeresis'"; West, "The Simony Crisis". On simoniacal entry into religious life, see Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry*.

PART I

Historical Considerations

I

A Brief History of Simony

No comprehensive history of simony exists.[1] Published historical investigations are limited to particular periods and often focus on political controversies and sociological implications. Such an approach does little to trace how the doctrine itself took shape or to aid in our own theological development.

What follows is a brief survey of the history of simony, designed to cover the rough clusters of sources that we will consult in subsequent chapters. While other treatments may focus on the institutional dimensions of simony, our approach will de-emphasize these in favor of highlighting the most significant theological influences. We may divide these influences historically into four broad streams: the church fathers, the medieval canonists and schoolmen, the Reformers and their precursors, and the English divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Church Fathers

The early patristic era produced many affirmations of the principle that grace must be offered freely, but fewer treatments of simony as

[1] In 1952, Hans Meier-Welcker observed "The absence of a 'history of simony,' indeed of any monographic historical investigation comprehensively treating its nature and its significance in society and the Church." Meier-Welcker, "Die Simonie im frühen Mittelalter," 61. While this is a dated assessment, it still rings true in the twenty-first century.

a discrete problem. The fathers frequently referenced the behavior of Simon Magus in Acts 8 when addressing the spiritual dangers of avarice, but before the conciliar legislation of the fifth century, extended discussion of the buying and selling of holy things as such remains limited, though not altogether absent.

Regarding financial transactions in ordinations, a few examples may be cited. As early as the second century, Tertullian's description of the Christian assembly includes a pointed remark on the integrity of its leadership that suggests an awareness of such corruption elsewhere: "Approved elders preside, having obtained that honor not by purchase but by testimony; for no thing of God is obtained by price."[2] Basil of Caesarea confronted the problem more directly, rebuking those who took money from candidates for ordination, contending that those who sell the free gift of God are stripped of its grace, as though sold to Satan themselves.[3]

Church councils began to address simony early on. Even before the trinitarian debates of Nicaea (325), the Synod of Elvira (305) forbade any fee associated with baptism.[4] The second canon of the Council of Chalcedon (451) addressed commerce in ordinations and established specific penalties:

> If any bishop has performed an ordination for money and has sold a thing which is not acquired except by grace, and for money has ordained a bishop or provincial bishop or presbyter or deacon or any of those who are counted among the clergy, or for money received has appointed a steward or defender or doorkeeper or anyone of this kind for the sake of shameful gain—whoever is proved to have done this shall be in danger of losing his own rank; and he who is ordained shall derive no benefit from the ordination which proceeded through a commercial transaction, but shall be a stranger to the dignity or office which was entrusted to him for money.

[2] Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, cap. 39 (p. 200).
[3] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 53 (p. 339).
[4] *Synod of Elvira (ca. 305)*, can. 48 (PL 84:307B).

> And if anyone is seen to have acted as a go-between in such shameful and wicked dealings, he too, if he is a clergyman, shall be degraded; if a layman or monk, let him be anathematized.[5]

This would become the cornerstone of later canon law regarding the matter.

However, it is with Gregory the Great that the theological treatment of simony gathered force. Gregory was the first to apply the term *simoniacus* to the buying and selling of ecclesiastical offices, coining the expression *simoniaca haeresis* ("simoniacal heresy") that would dominate subsequent discourse.[6] He first used the term on March 11, 591, in a homily on the Gospels,[7] but he developed the moral consequences of this sin in a letter to the bishops of Gaul in 599.[8] For Gregory, simony is a corruption and heresy "condemned in its very origin by apostolic detestation."[9]

Without Gregory's influence on theology, in the words of one biographer, "the evolution of the form of mediaeval Christianity would be almost inexplicable."[10] Nor is his authority confined to the medieval period. The Reformers generally regarded Gregory as the last of the legitimate bishops of Rome.[11] John Calvin cited him extensively—and favorably—throughout his *Institutio*, more than any other save Augustine.[12] Yet for all the breadth of his influence, in hardly any area was Gregory's legacy more pronounced than in that of simony, where the vocabulary and conceptual framework he established would govern the discussion for over a millennium.

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[5] *Council of Chalcedon (451)*, can. 2 (ACO II.2.2, 125).

[6] Rosé, "Simon le Magicien hérésiarque?" 204–5.

[7] Ibid., 205; cf. Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 17.13 (pp. 109–10).

[8] Rosé, "Simon le Magicien hérésiarque?" 213; see Gregory I, *Ep.* 9.218.

[9] Ibid., 9.218 (2, 206).

[10] Dudden, *Gregory the Great*, 1.vi.

[11] E.g., Calvin, *Institutio*, 4.17.49; Turretin, *De Necessaria Secessione*, disp. 7, § 15 (p. 155).

[12] Little, "Calvin's Appreciation of Gregory," 146.

The Medievals

After the time of Gregory the Great, Christianity increasingly spread outward from the cities into the countryside. Whereas churches near urban centers were typically founded directly by the diocese and supported from its own resources, the rural churches that now multiplied across the West owed their existence to nobles who built them upon their estates.[13] This often entailed a proprietorship attended by a measured control over ecclesiastical functions, especially the selection of church officers, whether by direct appointment or privileged recommendation. Such recommendations would come to be known as *presentations*. The broader authority bound up with direct ownership and associated endowments would be called the *right of patronage*. By the eighth century, the vast majority of parish churches across Western Europe had come to be treated as the private property of the wealthy on whose estates they stood.[14] It was also in the eighth century that the seventh ecumenical council, the Second Council of Nicaea (787), decreed its own penalties on simony before quoting Chalcedon's canon 2 in full.[15]

The problem intensified in the ninth century with the dissolution of the Carolingian empire. As the protection of property devolved upon local magnates, even bishoprics and abbeys ceded the lordship of their estates to lay protectors in exchange for security. Though debated in modern scholarship, this has traditionally been described as the rise of "feudalism."[16] Regardless, the general regime of lay ownership over churches grew steadily, and along with it financial negotiations in ecclesiastical positions. By the end of the tenth century, simony was endemic. Offices were routinely bought and sold like any other asset,

[13] Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, 10–11.

[14] Ibid., 437. Wood's account revises the classic thesis of Stutz, *Die Eigenkirche*, which framed the *Eigenkirche* as a distinctively Germanic legal institution that displaced Roman ecclesiastical norms; cf. Wood, *The Proprietary Church*, 1–2.

[15] *Second Council of Nicaea (787)*, can. 5 (Mansi 13:421E).

[16] Saltet, *Les Réordinations*, 173–74.

and those who acquired them recouped the outlay by charging for blessings, ordinations, and sacraments.[17]

In the early eleventh century, there arose a number of concerted movements against simony.[18] As concerns grew, they reached the highest levels of imperial power, capturing the attention of Henry III. At the Council of Pavia in October 1046, en route to the synod of Sutri and his coronation in Rome,[19] Henry summoned the archbishops and bishops of his realm and addressed them:

> I begin to speak to you in mourning, you who have been set in the place of Christ in his Church, which he himself espoused and redeemed by the price of his own blood. For just as he, by his free goodness, deigned to come from the bosom of God the Father through the Virgin to redeem us, so he gave charge to his own, sending them into the whole world, and said: *Freely you have received, freely give*. For you, corrupted by avarice and cupidity, who ought to confer these things by the Lord's blessing, are cursed, according to the most sacred canon, for this kind of transgression in giving and receiving. For my own father, too, for the peril of whose soul I greatly fear, exercised this same damnable avarice excessively in his lifetime. Therefore, whoever among you knows himself contaminated by this stain ought, by the provision of the canons, to be barred from sacred ministry. It is therefore perfectly clear that, on account of this offense, various calamities have come upon the sons of men, namely famine and pestilence, and also the sword. For indeed every ecclesiastical order, from the highest pontiff down to the doorkeeper, is weighed down by the price of its

[17] See ibid., 174–76.

[18] See Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy*, 97–98.

[19] See ibid., 62–63; Meier-Welcker, "Die Simonie im frühen Mittelalter," 84. That the address was delivered at Pavia is Meier-Welcker's inference.

> own damnation; and, according to the Lord's own word,
> in all things spiritual robbery is rampant.[20]

This speech would set the trajectory of the church for centuries. In the near term, the threat of widespread calamity on humanity itself would furnish the imperial government with theological cover for intervention in ecclesiastical affairs. Beyond this, theologians, canonists, and church authorities would continue to engage the matter with a focus unparalleled by any other time in history.

The Simoniacal Orders Controversy (1046–1060)

By the autumn of 1046, the papacy itself was in disarray, with three rival claimants: Benedict IX, Sylvester III, and Gregory VI. In December Henry III presided at the Synod of Sutri, and on the twentieth of that month, Sylvester was condemned as an intruder into the Holy See and deposed. Gregory, the only one of the three to appear, was pronounced guilty of simony and deposed when it emerged that he had purchased the pontificate from Benedict. A Roman synod three days later declared Benedict deposed in turn, leaving the see vacant. On December 24, 1046, Suidger of Bamberg, who had accompanied Henry from Germany, was elected Pope Clement II. The following day, Christmas, he was consecrated, and he crowned Henry emperor.[21]

The following month, January 1047, the new pope convened a Lateran synod with Henry in attendance—a natural continuation of the reform program inaugurated at Sutri. There, a question was raised: what was to be done with the clergy whom a simoniac had ordained, though they were innocent of simony themselves? Clement concluded that those who had knowingly received orders from a simoniac were to perform forty days of penance and thereafter continue in the office they had received.[22] Clement died in October of that year, but the importance of his judgment would become apparent soon after.

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[20] Raoul Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, 5.5.25 (pp. 133–34).

[21] For the synod and the accession of Clement II, see Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy*, 62–63.

[22] Peter Damian, *Liber gratissimus*, p. 499.

In February 1049, Leo IX was elected pope. Generally regarded as laying the groundwork for the Gregorian reform, he immediately took up, at the Lateran synod of April 1049, the question of those whom simoniacs had ordained. Leo first declared all such ordinations null, but the priests of Rome and many bishops protested that simony was so prevalent that this would leave the basilicas devoid of ministry. After long debate, Clement's earlier judgment was recounted, at which point Leo relented and withdrew his sentence.[23]

Yet Leo did not let the matter rest. The question came up again in the next Lateran synod (1050).[24] After this, at the Synod of Vercelli (1050), the pope went so far as to re-ordain such priests, implying that their former ordination was invalid. Being rebuked there, he asked forgiveness, but then being reproached at Rome for yielding, he fell back into the same practice.[25] At the Lateran synod of 1051, he begged the assembly to pray for divine guidance on the matter.[26]

This appeal led Peter Damian to publish the letter known as *Liber gratissimus* (1052), arguing for the validity of orders for those ordained *gratis* by simoniacs. Five years later, Humbert of Silva Candida wrote against this view with *Libri tres adversus simoniacos* (1057), denying any legitimacy to the spiritual acts of simoniacs and requiring that any ordained by them be deposed or ordained anew.[27]

Although this question grew acute in the eleventh century, it was not entirely new. For one thing, Gregory the Great had already concluded that such ordinations were legitimate.[28] More famously, the debate was, in substance, a replay of the Donatist controversy of the fourth and early fifth centuries. Under persecution, some clergy had handed over their Scriptures, an act signifying the renunciation of

[23] Ibid., p. 499.

[24] Ibid., p. 390. Cf. ibid., pp. 390–92n9.

[25] Berengar of Tours, *De sacra coena*, 40–41. Cf. Peter Damian, *De privilegio Romanae ecclesiae*, p. 237; Michel, "Die folgenschweren Ideen des Kardinals Humbert," 80n73.

[26] Peter Damian, *Liber gratissimus*, p. 392.

[27] See Whitney, "Peter Damiani and Humbert" for an overview of literary debate.

[28] E.g., "just as one who has been baptized once ought not to be baptized again, so one who has been consecrated once in the same order cannot be consecrated again." Gregory I, *Ep.* 2.45 (1, 145).

the faith, and the Donatists insisted that sacraments administered by these *traditores* were void, and that those baptized or ordained by such men must receive the rites anew. This rigorist position may be labeled "Cyprianic," after Cyprian of Carthage, to whose writings the Donatists appealed. Augustine, whose view ultimately prevailed, argued the contrary, locating the efficacy of the sacraments in the work rather than the worker (*ex opere operato* vs. *ex opere operantis*, in the terminology of later schoolmen).

Though the debate did not subside immediately afterward, we may mark the Lateran synod of 1060 under Nicholas II as granting its ultimate resolution with its second canon, which permitted those ordained *gratis* by simoniacs to remain in the orders they had received.[29] This measure was granted as a temporary dispensation, and the canon forbade any successor to make a rule of it,[30] but its substance, restated in the synod's fifth canon, would be preserved by the primary authoritative compilation on simony written in the twelfth century.[31]

It is possible to overstate the level of controversy on this matter. While there was certainly debate over the practical handling of those ordained by simoniacs, evidence of thoroughgoing rigorism outside of Humbert is scant. No other canonist followed him explicitly in

[29] "But concerning those who were ordained by simoniacs not for money but gratis: since the question has long been debated at length, we loose every knot of doubt, so that we may allow no one to be in any further uncertainty on this head. Since, then, this poisoned plague has so far taken root by now that scarcely any church can be found which is not corrupted by the disease in some part, those who up to now have been consecrated gratis by simoniacs we permit to remain in the orders they have received, not so much by the strictness of justice as out of regard for mercy, unless perhaps some other fault arising from their life stands against them contrary to the canons." *Lateran Council (1060)*, can. 2 (p. 550).

[30] "For so great is the multitude of such men that, since we cannot maintain the rigor of canonical force over them, it is necessary that for the present we incline our minds, by way of dispensation, toward the pursuit of a merciful accommodation. Yet by the authority of the holy apostles Peter and Paul we forbid altogether that any of our successors should ever take or set up for himself or for anyone else a rule out of this our permission, since it was not the authority of the ancient fathers that promulgated this by way of command or concession, but the overwhelming necessity of the time that extorted it from us by way of permission." Ibid., can. 2 (p. 550).

[31] C. 1, q. 1, c. 107, § 2.

his conclusions.[32] Moreover, the evidence for a rigorist movement preceding Sutri has been substantially discredited by more recent scholarship.[33]

The Investiture Controversy (1076–1122)

Eventually, attention turned upstream, from simony itself to the lay influence at the root of its spread. The focal point became *lay investiture*: the authority of a civil ruler to appoint clergy, symbolized by his bestowal of the ring and staff that marked the conferral of office. The matter reached its crisis point under Gregory VII, who sought to reverse this claim to authority. Cataloguing the principles of what would come to be known as the Gregorian reform in his *Dictatus papae* (1075), he claimed that the pope alone held universal authority, with the power to depose not only bishops but even emperors.[34]

Concern over lay investiture had already surfaced before Gregory, even among several of the aforementioned parties. When Leo IX, then Bruno of Toul, was selected as pope by Henry III in 1048, he accepted only on the condition that his election be confirmed by the clergy and people of Rome.[35] Likewise, the third book of Humbert's *Adversus simoniacos* argued that lay investiture not only encouraged simony but was itself inherently simoniacal. To bestow the ring and the staff presupposes possession of the pastoral authority they symbolize; and the man on whom the civil ruler confers them by the power of the sword invades the clergy by violence.[36] Like Gregory, Humbert saw the true nature of authority reversed, and it was ultimately contention over papal supremacy that led him to excommunicate the patriarch

[32] Gilchrist, "'Simoniaca haeresis,'" 234.

[33] The *Epistola Widonis*—conventionally dated to around 1031—has often been adduced as evidence that anxiety over simoniacal ordinations ran deep, well before Sutri. It appears to have entered circulation only in 1074–1076 (Gilchrist, "The Epistola Widonis," 58), and the letter itself may only date to around 1060 (West, "The Simony Crisis," 252).

[34] Gregory VII, *Reg.* 2.55a.

[35] Gilchrist, "Canon Law Aspects," 21.

[36] Humbert of Silva Candida, *Libri tres adversus simoniacos*, 3.6; cf. Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy*, 89–92.

Michael Cerularius, triggering the Great Schism of 1054.[37] Whether his theology lay directly behind Gregory's campaign remains unproven,[38] but the two were associates before Gregory's papacy, and the parallels between the *Dictatus papae* and Humbert's work are pronounced.[39]

January 24, 1076, marks the formal beginning of the investiture controversy.[40] On that date, Henry IV convened a synod at Worms, at which a majority of the German episcopate renounced their obedience to the pope. From this assembly, Henry dispatched a letter to Rome calling on Gregory to resign.

Gregory responded at his own Lenten synod the following month, held between February 14 and 20. There he excommunicated Henry through a prayer to St. Peter, deposing him from the kingship of Germany and Italy and releasing all his subjects from any past or future oath of fidelity sworn to him. It was at this same synod that the word "simony" (*simonia*) itself may have made its first appearance, in the excommunication of one Hermann, bishop of Vienne.[41] Henry responded in kind on March 27, sending an expanded version of his letter that greeted its recipient as "now not pope but false monk" and concluded, "descend, descend, to be damned through the ages."[42]

Yet Gregory's offensive proved decisive. With German princes already moving to elect a successor in his place, Henry had little choice but to seek reconciliation. He secretly crossed the Alps—avoiding hostile German dukes who wanted to prevent his reinstatement—and, in late January 1077, presented himself as a penitent before Gregory at the castle of Canossa, where after three days he was absolved. The king who had set out to depose the pope now submitted to him and became,

[37] Gilchrist, "Canon Law Aspects," 27–28.

[38] Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy*, 92.

[39] Gilchrist, "Canon Law Aspects," 38.

[40] Some have concluded that Gregory instigated the controversy by a decree against lay investiture in 1075, but the evidence that investiture was addressed there is limited. See Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy*, 106–7; Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy*, 120–21.

[41] Rosé, "Simon le Magicien hérésiarque?" 203n9; cf. Gregory VII, *Reg.* 3.10a (p. 269), though the apparatus reports it as a correction from the adjective *simoniaca*.

[42] Henry IV, *Heinrici IV. epistola*, no. 62 (pp. 110–11).

in effect, a servant of the church.[43] With the political ground secured, Gregory issued additional decrees in 1078 and 1080 forbidding any cleric to receive investiture from a layman and any layman to confer it.[44]

Much more transpired before the controversy ran its course—Gregory excommunicated Henry a second time in 1080, Henry installed the antipope Clement III and marched on Rome, and Gregory himself died in exile at Salerno in 1085—but the details lie beyond our present concern. The dispute reached a more durable end at the Concordat of Worms (1122), where Henry V renounced investiture with ring and staff. From a Protestant perspective, exchanging civil authority over the church for papal supremacy hardly represents clear progress, yet by stripping the nobility of the power to appoint church officers, the end of lay investiture effectively mitigated the most explicit forms of simony.

The Classical Period of Canon Law (1140–1234)

Of course, as rights of patronage continued, so did simony through lay influence, along with its many other forms. However, these former controversies had whetted an appetite for institutional reform and likewise produced an expanding body of canon law addressing the matter. This ushered in the classical period of canon law.

The beginning of this period is marked by the completion of Gratian's *Decretum*, conventionally dated to ca. 1140.[45] This accomplishment has earned Gratian the accolade "father of canon law" for drawing conciliar legislation and traditional pronouncements into a single, dialectically arranged compendium. The very first *causa* of the work is a long body of judgments on simony, signaling the centrality of the topic.

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[43] Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy*, 123–24.

[44] Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy*, 107.

[45] More recent scholarship has shown that the *Decretum* circulated in at least two recensions, complicating older assumptions about its composition; the conventional date nonetheless remains the standard reference point. See Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum*, 3–4.

From this point, canon law as a discipline underwent a formalization, giving rise to guilds of its own and a regulated practice with educational requirements and oaths of admission.[46] This professionalization brought wider recognition of simony and stronger measures against it. Religious societies, which had previously been lax on the matter, began to enforce rules against payments for entry.[47] In the thirteenth century, even hospitals—themselves organized as religious societies—sometimes required of entrants an oath that they had not obtained their place by simony.[48]

Less than a century after the *Decretum*, Gregory IX commissioned a new compilation, the *Decretales*, undertaken by Raymond of Peñafort and promulgated in 1234. Designed to be the official compilation of papal decrees, it would remain in force among Roman Catholics until 1918. It came to be known as the *Liber extra* since its contents functioned as an addition to Gratian's *Decretum*. Only the third title of the fifth book is dedicated to simony,[49] but it attracted a substantial body of commentary, ensuring its formative influence on the subject.

By many accounts, the *Decretum* and the *Liber extra* form the bookends of the classical period of canon law. They became the foundational reference points for virtually all subsequent treatments on the subject of simony, whether scholastic, proto-Reformer, Roman Catholic, or Protestant. Even when citing earlier authorities on the topic—Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great, etc.—authors often did not quote them precisely as recorded directly in their works, but as transmitted by these two compendiums. Alternative end dates for the classical period have been proposed to accommodate later developments, as significant works of canon law continued to appear, most notably the *Liber sextus*, commissioned by Boniface VIII and named as the work following the five books of the *Liber extra*. None of these, however, treated simony with similar depth, and more importantly, none had comparable impact on the study of the topic.

[46] Brundage, "The Practice of Canon Law"; Brundage, *Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, 283–343.

[47] Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry*, 147–69.

[48] Ibid., 168.

[49] X 5.3.

The Rise of the Universities (1150–1215)

The schools that emerged in the Middle Ages were so diverse that the notion of the medieval university resists definition.[50] Under sufficiently broad parameters, there were dozens,[51] though only a handful—Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and a few others—dominate the historical literature. We might center the definition on the existence of a guild of masters, of students, or of both.[52] These exercised political influence over the university and were typically organized into "nations," subgroups reflecting the region of origin of their members.[53] The term that came closest to our modern concept of a university was *studium generale*, though it did not become a technical expression until the fourteenth century.[54] From the late thirteenth century, papal or imperial endorsement was required to achieve this status.[55]

The curriculum of medieval universities began with the seven liberal arts: the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). Upon mastering this preparatory foundation, students could advance to one of the three higher faculties: medicine, law (both canon and civil), or theology. Our interest lies with theology—the "queen of the sciences"—since this is where the doctrine of simony was most fully developed. This focus entails a geographic distinction as well. While canon law had its seat at Bologna, where both Gratian and Raymond of Peñafort had taught, much of the theological work that concerns us came out of Paris and its English offshoot, Oxford. At these centers in particular scholasticism thrived, and there flourished the greatest of the minds that would give simony its doctrinal articulation, such as Thomas Aquinas (Paris) and John Wycliffe (Oxford).

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[50] Verger, "Patterns," 45.

[51] Ibid., 62–65 provides a list.

[52] Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 32; Haskins, *The Rise of Universities*, 5.

[53] Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 84–90.

[54] Ibid., 23–24.

[55] Ibid., 32.

It was likewise at Paris that Peter Lombard completed his *Sententiae* (ca. 1155–57),[56] a work consisting principally of categorized pronouncements compiled from church fathers. It functioned as a systematic theology textbook, and through the rest of the Middle Ages, theological training in the universities consisted largely of lectures on the *Sentences*, with the most accomplished theologians producing their own commentaries on it. With approximately 1,400 known commentaries,[57] it stands as the most frequently analyzed work of Christian literature outside the Bible itself.[58] This concentration came at the expense of direct engagement with Scripture, drawing criticism early on[59] and more pointedly in the Reformation. Martin Luther, himself having lectured and commented on the *Sentences*, once affirmed the judgment that Peter Lombard was the greatest theologian, adding that he was likewise a great man and "had he found his way into the Bible, he would without doubt have been the greatest."[60] However, for our purposes, such reservations about Lombard's work are neither here nor there. His value to the development of the doctrine of simony lies less in his method than in the long tradition of commentary on it that he set in motion. By treating the topic in distinction twenty-five of the fourth book of his *Sentences*, he ensured that generation after generation of schoolmen would be obliged to address it in turn.

The organic development of the universities complicates attempts to date their origins,[61] but for any given institution, one can trace

[56] The *Sententiae* are variously dated. The range here follows the reconstruction in Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 55.

[57] Ghellinck, "Review of Stegmüller's Repertorium," 888; cf. Stegmüller, *Repertorium*.

[58] Rosemann, *The Story of a Great Medieval Book*, 14.

[59] Janin, *The University in Medieval Life*, 53.

[60] Luther, *Tischreden*, no. 192 (WA TR 1, 85:15–20). Calvin made a similar remark regarding the paradox of Lombard's wisdom and blindness, Calvin, *Institutio*, 3.15.7. Anthony N. S. Lane has catalogued forty-five explicit citations of Lombard in Calvin and thirty-four implicit—seventy-five and fifty-nine if each component of a multiple citation is counted separately, Lane, *John Calvin*, 159, 165, 175–87. Lane notes that most of these uses are negative, but includes some examples of positive citations as well, ibid., 160, 171.

[61] Rüegg, "Themes," 6–7; Verger, "Patterns," 45ff.

a series of formal benchmarks. For example, the University of Paris received its first royal charter from Philip Augustus in 1200, and its papal charter from Gregory IX in 1231. Perhaps 1215 gives us the most interesting markers to consider. In that year, Robert of Courson promulgated his statutes for Paris, the first regulations to designate the *studium* a *universitas*,[62] and the Fourth Lateran Council explicitly sided with Lombard on a trinitarian debate, thereby securing the *Sentences* as the standard for theological education.[63]

The Regulation of Academic Fees (1179–1215)

Medieval universities shaped the doctrine of simony not only in providing the academic arena for its formation, but also in supplying an illuminating case study in the economy of religion. At the leading schools, different mechanisms of support yielded correspondingly different institutional forms. The school at Bologna was largely student-run because the masters took their pay directly from the students.[64] The *commune*, the corporation of citizens that governed Bologna, eventually took over the burden by salarying the doctors out of civic funds.[65] The school at Paris, by contrast, evolved a magisterial governance because financial leverage centered on *inception*, that ceremony by which a newly licensed teacher was formally incorporated into the guild of masters.[66] These primary mechanisms, however, hardly exhausted the financial picture. Any medieval university relied on a variety of sources of revenue.[67]

The sale of teaching licenses was a primary point of contention. The *licentia docendi* certified an academic proficiency that permitted one to instruct others in the schools. Though contemporaries did

[62] Baldwin, *Paris, 1200*, 211.

[63] See Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 119.

[64] Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 65–66.

[65] Ibid., 66–67.

[66] Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe*, 1.284–87; cf. Post, "Alexander III, the Licentia Docendi," 266.

[67] See Gieysztor, "Management and Resources," 133–36 for a detailed overview.

not broadly label the sale of teaching licenses "simony,"[68] some have termed it *scholastic simony* on account of the similarity to simony in ordinations.[69] The shared appeal to Matthew 10:8 is also notable.[70] Alexander III repeatedly prohibited the sale of teaching licenses, most comprehensively in the Third Lateran Council (1179), canon 18.[71] *Liber extra*, 5.5, *De magistris*—two titles after 5.3, *De simonia*—would be dedicated to this topic. Alexander had first taken up the cause on March 16 of 1166 or 1167,[72] and almost three decades earlier, canon 17 of the Council of Westminster (1138) had condemned the similar practice of a master's letting out his school for another to teach in.[73]

Alexander connected the sale of teaching licenses to a broader principle that knowledge itself should not be sold.[74] His rule made fitness, not payment, the condition of the license. In the aforementioned canon 18 of Third Lateran, Alexander also required that cathedral schools staff a beneficed master in order that he might provide free education to the clergy and the poor.[75] The conviction behind this demand was already current and would soon harden into a common dictum: "Knowledge is a gift of God, therefore it cannot be sold" (*scientia donum Dei est, unde vendi non potest*).[76] By Alexander's decree,

[68] So Astesanus, citing Goffredus and Hostiensis: "I answer that it may not; yet there is no simony there [. . .] rather there is the crime of extortion." Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 8 (fol. 170r).

[69] Post, "Alexander III, the Licentia Docendi," passim.

[70] E.g., "what is acquired by the gift of heavenly grace ought not to be put up for sale, but ought to be made available freely to all, that what is written may be fulfilled: 'Freely you have received, freely give.'" Alexander III, *Ep.* JL 12096 (PL 200:840C).

[71] *Third Lateran Council (1179)*, can. 18 (Mansi 22:228A–B).

[72] Alexander III, *Ep.* JL 11329 (PL 200:440D); for the date and its identification as Alexander's first such letter, see Post, "Alexander III, the Licentia Docendi," 258n15.

[73] *Council of Westminster (1138)*, can. 17 (Mansi 21:514A).

[74] E.g., "Suitable and lettered men who wish to teach must be permitted to govern schools without any molestation or exaction whatsoever, lest knowledge should hereafter seem to be set out for a price, that knowledge which ought to be bestowed upon each man freely." Denifle and Chatelain, eds., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, pars intro., no. 4; cf. X 5.5.3.

[75] *Third Lateran Council (1179)*, can. 18 (Mansi 22:228A).

[76] See Post et al., "The Medieval Heritage" for an extensive survey of the tradition. Even in the early twelfth century, Peter Abelard, ashamed to beg, took up teaching

schools such as the one at Paris—then the cathedral school of Notre-Dame—were, at least ostensibly, free of charge.[77]

Alexander's mandate, however well provided for elsewhere, came up against the limits of available resources in Paris. Alexander was forced to make a special exception for the chancellor of Notre-Dame in 1174, and the problem was so persistent that Innocent III was still fighting the issue in 1212 and 1213.[78] Accordingly, the question fell to the Parisian scholars, who weighed not only which academic fees were morally unbecoming but, more pointedly, which crossed the line into simony. The most pronounced deliberations issued from Peter the Chanter and his circle, culminating in Robert of Courson.[79] Robert, as we have already seen, would go on to serve as the papal legate who gave the University of Paris its first statutes in 1215. While not all of his conclusions made their way into those rules of operation, it is reasonable to suspect that they would have been especially respected on this account.[80]

The Parisians conceded that knowledge itself could not be sold, but contended that the labor of teaching could be. This was further qualified, however, by the subject matter. While the labor of teaching the liberal arts could be sold lawfully, the labor of teaching theology could not, since theology is divine truth, and to sell such a spiritual thing is simony. The same restriction extended to moral philosophy, which they likewise classed as divine truth. In these cases, one who had no income was permitted to receive voluntary donations from his students, but any already beneficed by the church for the sake of instruction committed simony if he accepted any further donation from his students.[81] Though scholars of the civil law at Bologna showed

again and lived on what his students supplied of their own accord. Abelard, *Hist. calam.* 26–27.

[77] Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 81; Verger, "Teachers," 151.

[78] Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 1.122–23; cf. Baldwin, *Paris, 1200*, 183.

[79] See Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 1.124; cf. Baldwin, *Paris, 1200*, 184.

[80] See Kennedy, "Robert Courson on Penance," 292.

[81] See Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 1.124–27; cf. Baldwin, *Paris, 1200*, 184.

little corresponding interest in theology,[82] they reached comparable conclusions for their own discipline.[83] They maintained that law was itself a divine science, no less sacred than theology.[84]

Canon 11 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) recorded that Alexander's decree had been but little observed, and accordingly reiterated and extended it.[85] Even with this renewed insistence, the provision of benefices for free instruction continued to go unenforced well into the thirteenth century and beyond.[86] The fate of the decree, however, need not detain us. This episode concerns us because it accounts for what appears in the writings on simony of the centuries that followed: echoes of the doctrinal conclusions forged in the premier theological institution at the turn of the thirteenth century.

The Secular-Mendicant Controversy (1253–1300)

The opening of the thirteenth century saw the rise of a new form of religious life. Francis of Assisi, having renounced his family's wealth, first withdrew as a hermit but soon embraced what came to be called the "apostolic life" (*vita apostolica*), a life of itinerancy and evangelism modeled on Christ and the apostles. In 1209, he went with his small party to Rome and secured formal approval from Innocent III. Around the same time, Dominic of Caleruega gathered a band of preachers to confront the Cathars, also known as the Albigenses, a dualist sect in southern France. The communities that grew up around these founders styled themselves not as monks but as friars (that is, brothers). Francis's followers became the Order of Friars Minor, Dominic's the Order of Friars Preachers. To the Franciscans and Dominicans would be added the Augustinians and the Carmelites.[87]

These were similar to the monastic orders that preceded them, but differed on account of their mendicancy. Not merely swearing

[82] Post et al., "The Medieval Heritage," 207.
[83] Ibid., 206, 206n32.
[84] Ibid., 209n43.
[85] *Fourth Lateran Council (1215)*, can. 11 (Mansi 22:999B–C).
[86] Post, "Masters' Salaries and Student-Fees," 196–98.
[87] For a larger overview of the friars, see Lawrence, *The Friars*.

off personal property, they abandoned communal property as well. The poverty of these new orders could not square with the vow of stability in the Rule of Benedict of Nursia. Rather than keeping to themselves in a monastery, the friars took to the cities both on account of their mission to preach and their need to beg.[88] The friars received charity primarily through their religious activity. For example, one who gave alms to them might expect them to give prayers on account of the charity. Their preaching likewise was attended with calls for alms either before or after. Remarking on how this formalized mendicancy had normalized the practice of begging, one nineteenth-century scholar wrote, "Many a man who would have been ashamed to dig was not ashamed to beg."[89]

The friars quickly made their way into the universities. On August 15, 1217, Dominic sent seven of his followers to Paris, at least two of them to study.[90] The Franciscans followed, more gradually, in the years thereafter.[91] Within decades they had attracted some of the greatest minds of the age, such as Bonaventure among the Franciscans and Thomas Aquinas among the Dominicans. So successful was their recruitment that by the fourteenth century wealthy families had grown reluctant to send their sons to the schools at all, lest they be lost to the mendicant orders.[92] Their advance was reinforced by papal privilege. In 1231, Gregory IX required bishops to grant the friars an almost unlimited freedom of action for the sake of their pastoral mission, effectively erecting a parallel hierarchy alongside the secular clergy.[93] Because they were permitted to preach, hear confessions, and the like, they often even had their own churches that competed with the parish churches. Their gains in the university were so great that by

[88] Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 7–8.

[89] Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe*, 3.407.

[90] Bauerschmidt, *Thomas Aquinas*, 20.

[91] Lawrence, *The Friars*, 130.

[92] Ibid., 127.

[93] See ibid., 152. "Secular," in this context, refers to the parish priests and bishops who served in the world, as distinguished from those living under a religious rule.

1254, the secular masters at Paris would hold only three of the fifteen chairs in the faculty of theology.[94]

Such gains bred friction, as did the independence with which the friars operated within the university. Since their vows committed them to a life apart from the world, immersion in the secular arts was for them incompatible with their religious calling, and so they trained within their order, circumventing the arts faculty.[95] They likewise bypassed the inception by which the masters regulated admission into their own ranks and declined to swear the oaths that would bind them to the statutes of the university.[96] In 1252, the secular masters at Paris attempted a statute capping the number of mendicant chairs,[97] but matters boiled over in March of the next year, when a student was killed in a clash with the town watch. The secular masters called a strike to compel redress from the civil authorities, but the friars refused the oath and continued lecturing.[98] The dispute was carried to Rome in 1254, where Innocent IV sharply restricted the mendicants' pastoral privileges. However, he died sixteen days later, and his successor, Alexander IV, reversed this judgment within a fortnight of his election and decided the university dispute in the friars' favor the following April.[99] The Parisian conflict was reproduced, on a smaller scale, at Oxford and Cambridge.[100]

The antifraternal movement swiftly took on an apocalyptic framing. This owed partly to the contemporary anticipation of the year 1260,[101] but was also brought on in 1254 by a Franciscan who himself had claimed that his order heralded a third age of the Holy Spirit.[102] In 1256, William of Saint-Amour, a leading secular master of theology at Paris, gave the antifraternal cause its founding text in *De periculis*

[94] Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 92.

[95] Lawrence, *The Friars*, 133–35; cf. Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 93.

[96] Janin, *The University in Medieval Life*, 82.

[97] Lawrence, *The Friars*, 154.

[98] Ibid., 154; Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 11, 14; Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 92.

[99] Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 15–16.

[100] Cobban, *The Medieval Universities*, 93.

[101] See Rev. 11:3; 12:6.

[102] Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 26–28; Lawrence, *The Friars*, 154.

novissimorum temporum ("Concerning the Perils of the Last Days"). Its final and most influential chapter enumerated forty-one signs of false apostles,[103] and the twentieth joined his two primary contentions with the friars: their mendicancy and want of a proper office. He held begging from those to whom one preaches to be indicative of simony; a pastor may receive from his flock with authority, but the friars have no such claim.[104] The mendicants had appealed to the biblical principle that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:14).[105] Yet for William, the performance of labor did not by itself make a worker worthy; without formal standing none was granted the authority to make such a request. This consideration of church office represented a substantial development over previous approaches to the doctrine of simony.

William's work was met with considerable resistance. Aquinas responded that same year with *Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem* ("Against Those Who Attack the Worship of God and Religion"), devoting a whole chapter to defending the friars' reception of alms.[106] Alexander IV condemned *De periculis* in October, and because William posed an obstacle to the reconciliation of the warring parties at the university, he was forbidden in August of the next year to return to Paris.[107]

Though this dealt a blow to the movement, the vocabulary and framing of *De periculis* would furnish the controlling categories of antifraternal polemic for the remainder of the Middle Ages.[108] Beyond the many dedicated treatises against the friars, this rhetoric also worked its way into celebrated literature, such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.[109] John Foxe would later reproduce William's

[103] The precise count varies across editions; the numbering followed here is that of the 1632 *Opera omnia*.

[104] William of Saint-Amour, *De periculis*, cap. 14, sign. 20 (pp. 64–65). See Chapter 9, pp. 156–58.

[105] See, e.g., Bonaventure, *Apologia pauperum contra calumniatorem*, 7.39 (p. 285).

[106] Aquinas, *Contra impugnantes*, 2.39 (pp. 56b–58a).

[107] See Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 17.

[108] See ibid., 4–5. For the view that this influence has been overstated, see Geltner, "William of St. Amour's De periculis".

[109] For the extent of such literature, see Szittya, *The Antifraternal Tradition*.

signs of false apostles in his *Acts and Monuments*.[110] The movement spread across Europe, and popular sentiment soured to the point that the friars suffered a number of physical attacks.[111] The institutional dispute itself ended in a measured settlement, Boniface VIII's *Super cathedram* (1300), which regulated the friars' preaching, confession, and burial: it preserved free preaching in their own churches and public squares but required parish priests' consent in parish churches and mendicant confessors to be presented to local bishops for approval.[112]

But William's cause outlived the legal compromise. Late in the next century, it found a champion in John Wycliffe. Many of Wycliffe's works were explicitly titled as polemics against the friars, but even his other writings frequently mentioned their errors and identified their begging as simony. One famous anecdote records that four doctors—one from each of the mendicant orders—visited Wycliffe when he fell deathly ill in 1379. At his bedside, they urged him to retract his attacks while there was still time, but he raised himself up and answered, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the worst deeds of the friars."[113] In 1382, a council in London drew up charges of heresy and errors against the Oxford master, recording as a final point his identification of the friars' begging as simony.[114] When a major earthquake interrupted the proceedings, Wycliffe read this as the earth crying out where the faithful would not and took to calling it the "Earthquake Council" (*concilium terraemotus*).[115] He continued writing against them until his peaceful death on the eve of 1385,[116] and his followers, the Lollards, carried on his campaign against the simony of the friars.

[110] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 4.319–22.

[111] For a catalog of the various incidents, see Geltner, *The Making of Medieval Antifraternalism*, 48–50, 140–53.

[112] Clem. 3.7.2 (cols. 1161–64).

[113] Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Brytanniae*, 469.

[114] Specifically, the article charged Wycliffe with holding that both the giver of alms and the begging or preaching friar who received them were excommunicate, but this has been interpreted as a summary analysis of Wycliffe's condemnation of the friars' begging as simony, Shirley, ed., *Fasciculi zizaniorum*, 282; cf. Howard, *The Life and Reign of King Richard*, 43.

[115] Shirley, ed., *Fasciculi zizaniorum*, 272–73, 283–85.

[116] Howard, *The Life and Reign of King Richard*, 43.

The Sale of Indulgences (1184–1517)

The origins of indulgences are obscure, and several theories have been proposed.[117] What seems clearest is that indulgences grew out of the bishop's discretionary power to commute canonical penance, substituting another pious work for whatever confession prescribed. The Council of Clermont (1095) granted what is reckoned the first plenary indulgence, in which Urban II decreed that service in the First Crusade would be reckoned "in lieu of all penance."[118] If one form of service could substitute for another, a gift of money was no great leap, particularly since funding the crusade became a much-desired form of service. In 1184, that substitution took a concrete form. Henry II of England and Philip Augustus of France jointly assessed a graduated tax for the relief of the Holy Land,[119] and the bishops of Normandy granted an indulgence to those who paid.[120]

At the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) the practice was both centralized and formalized. Canon 60 barred abbots from issuing letters of indulgence, canon 62 limited what prelates might remit, and canon 71 gave money payments a recognized place in the system, admitting to a share in the crusade remission all who would contribute "suitably" from their goods.[121] By the middle of the thirteenth century, indulgences had become almost exclusively financial.[122]

In 1300, Boniface VIII instituted the Jubilee to be celebrated every hundred years, offering a plenary indulgence to pilgrims at Rome. The

[117] For a representative if dated overview, see Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 3–9.

[118] *Council of Clermont (1095)*, can. 2 (Mansi 20:816E).

[119] Rates ranged between one part in two hundred forty and one part in one hundred, varying by the kind and amount of one's wealth and paid over three years, Mitchell, *Taxation in Medieval England*, 118.

[120] For the text of the ordinance, see Lunt, "The Text of the Ordinance," 240–42. For a general overview, see Cazel, "The Tax of 1185", who argues that the ordinance belongs to 1185.

[121] *Fourth Lateran Council (1215)*, can. 60 (Mansi 22:1047); can. 62 (Mansi 22:1049–51); can. 71 (Mansi 22:1067C–D).

[122] Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 61, 179 makes this judgment by examining the financial assumptions of the scholastic theologians in their discourses on indulgences.

windfall was so great that successive popes repeatedly shortened the interval and, from 1390, dispatched commissioners to sell the jubilee indulgence at home for the price of the foregone pilgrimage, spreading the sale of indulgences across Europe.[123]

Several theological developments reinforced the growth of this practice. By this time, the notion of purgatory had shifted from a purification that takes place in this life to a distinct location in the next,[124] feeding demand for such a remission. Additionally, papal grants began omitting the condition of contrition,[125] implicitly reducing the transaction to a simple sale.[126] In 1343, Clement VI gave definitive papal sanction to the doctrine of the treasury of merit (*thesaurus meritorum*), lending legitimacy to the effectively limitless supply of indulgences.[127] Finally, in 1476, Sixtus IV extended indulgences to the dead for the first time, transforming such purchases into a matter of filial duty.[128]

The schoolmen generally defended this practice, employing a number of arguments for its validity and absolving it from charges of simony.[129] Their chief explanation distinguished the sense in which the money given by a parishioner was the cause of the granting of the indulgence. Indulgences, they held, were not granted in exchange for the money considered as a gift, but on account of the giver's good will.[130] On this reasoning, the money counted not as payment but as alms. Of course, these justifications did not impress everyone at the

[123] Ibid., 65, 199.

[124] For one commonly referenced accounting, see Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, 168, 173, 237, which places its emergence between 1170 and 1200.

[125] For example, in 1253, Innocent IV offered plenary indulgences to those who contributed to the seventh crusade without expressing any condition of contrition or confession, Innocent IV, *Planxit hactenus*.

[126] See Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 62–63.

[127] Extravag. comm. 5.9.2 (cols. 1304–6).

[128] Sixtus IV, *Salvator noster*, fol. 3v; cf. Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 345–46.

[129] See ibid., 96–97 for an overview of arguments. He remarked that the potential classification of indulgences as a species of simony "was a point which naturally troubled the pre-Reformation doctors not a little." Ibid., 97.

[130] E.g., Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Indulgentia, 5.

time. For example, Wycliffe and Jan Hus frequently identified the sale of indulgences as simony.[131]

The sale of indulgences reached its height when it was employed to fund the rebuilding of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Julius II issued the bull *Liquet omnibus* in 1510,[132] which Leo X inherited, ultimately granting its most notable commission, that of Albert of Mainz in North Germany. A 20,000-gulden fee had been imposed for the pallium of Mainz, and Albert secured his unanimous election to the archbishopric in 1514 by promising to pay the fee himself, which he did through borrowing from the Fuggers, the Augsburg banking house. They, in turn, had arranged with the pope to receive half the proceeds of the St. Peter's indulgence in Albert's territories. The bargain was concluded in 1515 and executed in 1517, when Albert engaged the Dominican Johann Tetzel as his commissioner. Tetzel operated with a notoriously bald mercantilism, and his campaign was later summarized in a rhyme: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, / The soul from purgatory springs."[133] In short order, this preaching would provoke the Protestant Reformation.[134]

The Reformers

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, an Augustinian friar and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, sent his letter of remonstrance to Albert of Mainz, enclosing his ninety-five theses. While we lack the space to rehearse the oft-repeated details of this momentous event and those that would follow, it suffices to say that Luther's challenge succeeded. The St. Peter's campaign collapsed in Germany, and the movement it occasioned would in time sever much of Northern Europe from Roman jurisdiction.

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[131] E.g., Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 2 (15:24–26); Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 4.G.

[132] Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 379–80.

[133] Bainton, *Here I Stand*, 78; cf. Luther, *Ninety-Five Theses*, th. 27 (WA 1, 234).

[134] For an overview of these events, especially as they relate to the details of indulgences, see Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 387–90.

The charge of simony left a lasting mark on Protestant confessional writing as well.[135] Even in the wake of the Reformation, Rome herself conceded that her practice had grown simoniacal. Pius V wrote in 1570 that among the other scandals of the indulgence trade "there also reeks the wickedness of simony."[136]

Many regard the Reformation as a battle over the nature of the gospel, and rightly so. Yet two details tether our present topic to the Reformation as more than an incidental thread of its narrative. The first is that—as we have seen—simony prompted the Reformation. Though ignorant of the three-way financial arrangement orchestrated by Albert and the Fuggers,[137] Luther aimed his objection at the sale of spiritual things, later identifying the sale of indulgences as "simony proper" (*simonia propria*) in comparison to other forms nominally labeled as simony by canon law.[138] The second is that the notion of simony cannot be cleanly separated from the matter of the gospel. For Luther, simony was a denial of the gospel, the root from which all false religion grew. He spelled this out most clearly in his lectures on Genesis:

> But one may see how wretched and how dangerous a thing it is to have fallen away from the chief doctrine of justification by faith apart from works. For once it is obscured and extinguished, the whole world becomes simoniacal. Thus even the Turks strive to appease God with their own works and to buy spiritual things for money and for merits. Therefore this simony exists in name only, like the simony described in canon law. For they redeem nothing and obtain nothing by price and by merits. But that zeal and will has driven its roots deep into the human heart by which every man is naturally a simoniac, by which he would wish God to be one

[135] E.g., SHC 14; Synod of Dort, *Church Order*, art. 80; WLC Q. 109.

[136] Pius V, *Quam plenum*, § 1 (p. 801).

[137] Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession*, 392.

[138] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 281:37–42); cf. ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 424:5–6).

> who would be appeased by human works and merits, to whom he could protest: "I have done many things; I have fasted much; look upon these things, and sell me salvation and eternal life." But God neither acknowledges nor hears such workers of iniquity. And he sets forth his will in the apostolic doctrine: "By grace and freely [*gratia et gratis*] you have been justified, apart from all works" [Eph. 2:8–9]. Once that grace is taken away, there is no longer any distinction between the Turk and the Pope, heathen and Jew; all are simoniacs and goat-milkers, Bockmelker.[139]

Beyond his dedicated treatments in his lectures on Genesis,[140] Luther made passing comments about simony throughout his works.

Ironically, writings on simony dwindled after the Reformation. The overwhelming victory over the outward, financial practices of simony entailed the decline of its associated doctrine. Theological inquiry rarely survives the abuses that summon it.

The English Divines

All the same, the waning of interest in the doctrine of simony was gradual. Luther's conclusions carried over into the English Reformation. The sale of indulgences was still regarded as simony,[141] and

[139] Ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 423:32–424:4). See also Luther, *Operationes in Psalmos*, 13 (WA 5, 397:10–39). The pejorative at the end comes from the legend that nightjars—a kind of nocturnal bird—suck milk from the udders of goats, withering the udder and blinding the goat (see Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia*, 10.56). While their Latin name (*caprimulgi*) literally means "goat-milkers," Luther repeated it with his own German translation in order to provide the gendered "buck-milkers." In other words, the simoniac is quixotically parasitic.

[140] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 277:31–283:28); 25:31–34 (WA 43, 419:30–430:18).

[141] For example, William Guild devoted an entire chapter to papal "spiritual merchandise or simony," cataloguing the sale of indulgences among the offenses. Guild, *Antichrist*, 137, 144.

the identification of works-righteousness as a form of simony was repeated frequently through the subsequent century.[142]

This relation between simony and the gospel was also stated conversely. As many have playfully remarked that we are saved by works, Christ's works, John Donne preached the same in the language of simony. Christ in our nature "merited the Holy Ghost, purchased the Holy Ghost, bought the Holy Ghost, which is a sanctified simony."[143] Elsewhere, meditating on the establishment of the church, Donne employed the same conceit: Christ "desired a church, and he purchased a church; but by a blessed way of simony."[144] Others used the term with reference to ministers who preached at their own expense. Francis Rous wrote of Paul that "he feeds his sheep sometimes at his own costs, and with an holy simony buys the work of his own ministry."[145] Thomas Cooke, defending the endowments of bishops, commended the ancient founders who gave their substance to the church, "with a holy kind of simony, to purchase for them the gifts of the Holy Ghost."[146]

The sale of spiritual things remained a live concern in England for some time. The fortieth canon of the Church of England (1604) required an oath against simony from every candidate for ecclesiastical office, declaring the buying and selling of spiritual functions "execrable before God."[147] But the considerations of simony among the English divines rarely approached the depth of the schoolmen's. These writers were the heirs of a doctrine sufficient for their purposes. The ecclesiastical controversies of their own day required more legal application than theological refinement.

Simony also entered English discourse from a different and less orthodox direction. Quakers, Anabaptists, and other radical dissenters

[142] E.g., Harsnett, *A Cordiall for the Afflicted*, 448. Works-righteousness is "the worst simony in the world," Joseph Caryl wrote. "Better offer literal money for those gifts of the Holy Ghost, than this figurative money for the favor of God in the pardon of sin." Caryl, *Exposition of Job*, 7:20 (2, pp. 666–67).

[143] Donne, *LXXX Sermons*, serm. 28 (p. 280).

[144] Ibid., serm. 37 (p. 369).

[145] Rous, *The Heavenly Academy*, 80–81.

[146] Cooke, *Episcopacy Asserted*, 24.

[147] Church of England, *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiasticall*, can. 40.

were willing to apply the label of simony to any regular ministerial stipend. When the more established figures addressed simony, they frequently did so in the course of refuting such radical derision—named or unnamed—rather than by way of a positive presentation.[148]

The issues themselves evolved substantially over time. With Rome removed, indulgences were no longer a concern, and the old preoccupation with commerce in ordinations gave way to disputes over the buying and selling of rights of patronage.[149] Later centuries would see the advent of different financial controversies in the church. But by then, the vocabulary of "simony" and its theological categories had largely fallen out of use, even when the underlying concerns remained the same. For example, in the Church of Scotland in the 1830s, James Begg wrote a treatise against pew rents, fees whereby congregants secured their seats in worship.[150] Though he constructed arguments similar to those of writers who had addressed simony before and appealed to many of the same verses, he completed his work without once employing the term.

Conclusion

The arc is one of rise and fall. The church fathers affirmed that grace must be given freely, and the medievals gave that principle its fullest theological and legal elaboration. But after the Reformation, at least among Protestants, the doctrine received progressively less systematic attention. The Reformers wielded it as a weapon against Rome, the English divines applied it to the controversies of their own parishes, and as the most egregious abuses were corrected, the urgency faded. By the time the early modern period came to a close, simony had ceased to be a subject of detailed theological reflection.

Yet the doctrine of simony addresses more than the gross corruptions that occasioned it; the commercialization of spiritual things

[148] E.g., Brown, *Quakerisme*, 407–8.
[149] See Willis, *Simony: In Two Parts*, 21–24.
[150] Begg, *Seat Rents*.

did not disappear with the Reformation but only changed shape—sometimes subtler, sometimes not. The chapters that follow attempt to recover what has been lost, drawing on the four streams surveyed above.

2

The Need for Retrieval

One might suppose that if the church has managed without a particular doctrine for centuries, perhaps it was never essential to begin with, but this line of reasoning confuses neglect with obsolescence. The doctrine of simony is a case in point. From the time of Gregory the Great through the scholastic era, it was one of the most discussed sins of the Christian tradition. It occupied entire sections of the great legal compilations and was treated at length by most major scholastic theologians. For over a millennium, the doctrine of simony was a standard feature of Christian moral theology.

The Reformers inherited the doctrine and applied it vigorously against Roman corruption. The Second Helvetic Confession condemns the pope's "simony and his simoniacal indulgences," employing Peter's malediction, "Thy money perish with thee."[1] The Church Order of Dort names it among the principal offenses warranting suspension or deposition from office.[2] The Westminster Larger Catechism lists simony among the sins forbidden by the second commandment.[3] The doctrine of simony was, in short, important enough to be codified into the confessional standards of the Reformed tradition.

Today it has passed out of memory. It receives the occasional historical or sociological treatment but little doctrinal consideration. It is

[1] SHC 14.
[2] Synod of Dort, *Church Order*, art. 80.
[3] WLC Q. 109.

studied as one might study the dodo—with academic interest in how it lived, but no practical expectation of encounter. The legal historian John T. Noonan observed that "neither bribery nor its subspecies simony have today the consistency, the stability, the exigency of a true moral concept."[4] This is not because all the problems have been resolved; it is because the framework for discerning them has lapsed. Now is the time to retrieve the doctrine of simony.

Yet several questions naturally arise before such an undertaking. What confidence can we have in our sources? How do we approach a retrieval of such breadth? And what does the doctrine, once retrieved, have to offer the present age?

The Value of Retrieval

Some object that works of retrieval prioritize the words of men over the word of God by exalting historical theology over systematic theology, doctrine drawn from Scripture itself. Yet such concerns are misguided. To listen to the words of men is not to prioritize them, and the two disciplines cannot be neatly ranked since each feeds into and refines the other.

Two works we will return to throughout serve as examples for us: Henry Burton's *A Censure of Simonie* (1624) and *The Anatomy of Simon Magus* (1700), an anonymous treatise.[5] In some respects, these works differ substantially. The former was written by a notable Puritan, the latter by an unknown conformist. The former is an attempt at direct application of the doctrine from ancient sources. The latter, on account of being authored at a later time when the doctrine had fallen into further decline, goes about the task by way of a more thorough reconstruction. Both are exercises in retrieval in their own right and demonstrate a willingness to dig deeply into neglected patristic and medieval sources to make application in their own time.

[4] Noonan, *Bribes*, 690.

[5] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*. *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*.

Embracing Wisdom

Many suppose that the words of men necessarily corrupt what would otherwise be a pure reception of Scripture. But we are no tabula rasa; we come to Scripture already shaped by traditions and assumptions, whether we recognize them or not. God has intended that we be people who are shaped not only by the word directly, but also by elders—both in office and age—those who have blazed the trail ahead of us and are able to share what they have seen (Heb. 13:7). For example, who would advise that those who have not read the Bible for themselves should absent themselves from the preaching of the word? The Bereans first heard Paul, then searched the Scriptures to test what he taught (Acts 17:11).

Scripture itself commends the practice of looking backward. Moses instructed Israel: "Remember the days of old; consider the generations past. Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders, and they will inform you" (Deut. 32:7). Bildad repeats the charge to Job, "Please inquire of past generations and consider the discoveries of their fathers. For we were born yesterday and know nothing; our days on earth are but a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you, and speak from their understanding?" (Job 8:8–10).

John Owen captured this conviction in an ordination sermon: "Let us take heed in ourselves of any inclination to novel opinions, especially in, or about, or against such points of faith as those wherein they who are gone before us and are fallen asleep found life, comfort, and power."[6] From there, he proceeded to explain that its danger is not merely error but "indifferency,"[7] a loss of zeal and watchfulness. Indeed, when we encounter questions to which we do not know the answer, our first instinct should be to ask whether those who came before us have already answered them. But perhaps more importantly, when we find saints of old addressing questions we have not thought

[6] Owen, "The Duty of a Pastor," 459.

[7] "Who would have thought that we should have come to an indifferency as to the doctrine of justification [. . .] when these were the soul and life of them who are gone before us, who found the power and comfort of them?" Ibid., 459.

to ask, we should consider why they thought them worth asking rather than immediately dismissing them as dated concerns.

Burton and the Anatomist exemplified this disposition. The Anatomist diagnosed the loss of the doctrine itself as a symptom of cooled affection: "when that primitive fervor began to decay, and the spirit of the world to take hold of the lukewarm clergy, then began Simon Magus again to set up the head."[8] Burton made the same diagnosis, that too many "have chosen the place of the ministry, but not the zeal."[9] Decay in doctrine is mutually linked to a decay in devotion; to recover the one is to recover the other.

Rejecting Error

A book that draws so heavily on medieval sources will naturally raise questions for Protestant readers. If the doctrine of simony was developed primarily by theologians operating within the Roman system such readers reject, what confidence can we have in their conclusions? The concern is understandable but overstated. An examination of the proto-Reformers demonstrates that their theology on the topic was nearly identical; their main difference was that they were willing to apply it to the Roman institution. Likewise, we will see that inasmuch as the Puritans addressed the topic, they echoed scholastic distinctions.

The Reformers themselves did not regard medieval theology as uniformly corrupt. Likening it to Christ's acceptance of Jewish theology in the midst of Pharisaical corruption, Martin Luther conceded, "under the papacy there is much that is Christian and good—indeed, all Christian good exists there and has come down to us from there."[10] John Calvin rejected accusations of novelty, claiming that Reformed doctrine is ancient, belonging to Christians by a "right of recovery" (*postliminii iure*).[11] Francis Turretin defended the same principle

[8] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 7.
[9] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 76, quoting Bernard of Clairvaux; cf. ibid., 79.
[10] Luther, *Von der Wiedertaufe*, WA 26, 147:13–15.
[11] Calvin, *Institutio*, Praefatio.

when he distinguished "the substance of the faith" from "the accidents of corruption."[12] William Perkins popularized the notion of being a *Reformed Catholic*, one who "holds the same necessary heads of religion with the Roman Church, yet so, as he pares off and rejects all errors in doctrine."[13]

The purpose of retrieval is not to accept every ancient conclusion uncritically or to permit the cultural pressures of a former age to set our agenda today. Some points of general consensus among ancient writers are in error; the defenses of indulgences as anything other than simony are a conspicuous example. But even where the answers fail, the lines of inquiry remain valuable. Those who have gone before identified problems, drew distinctions, and worked out implications that we have simply ceased to consider. We should be more concerned that we might remain ignorant of the questions they were asking than that we might be misled by their answers.

We must also distinguish what we are retrieving from medieval sources. We are not after the premises of their deliberations, their assumptions about the nature of sacraments and orders, etc. We are interested in the application of their doctrine of simony to those premises. For example, that they restricted the sale of consecrated vessels is informative to us not because we should conclude that plates and cups can be made holy but because granting that premise for the sake of argument reveals principles about commerce in things that truly are holy.

Our chosen exponents embodied this discriminating posture. Burton grounded his definition in "the testimony of the whole church from the primitive age thereof till this present."[14] The Anatomist similarly sought to demonstrate the heinousness of the crime of simony "by the judgment of the Catholic Church, and joint suffrages of many fathers together."[15] Neither author approached these sources uncritically, but they repeatedly appealed to canonists, schoolmen, and papal pronouncements. Burton justified his approach: "the church

[12] Turretin, *Institutio*, 18.10.10.
[13] Perkins, *A Reformed Catholike*, ¶3v.
[14] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 2.
[15] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 114.

of Rome itself (though now the mother and nurse of abominations) hath cried out against this sin. For we must put a great difference between the now church of Rome and that which it hath been formerly, and that even within these three or four hundred years."[16] The pre-Reformation tradition is a heritage to be sifted, not quarantined.

This same principle holds further afield. Medievalists and other historians have produced valuable work on simony as a matter of historical curiosity, or even with Romish sympathies, yet their labors prove serviceable to ends they did not envision. As Solomon observed, God gives the sinner the labor of gathering and heaping up, only for it to pass to one who pleases him (Eccles. 2:26). Egypt lies open to plunder.[17]

Our Approach

Many historical works accumulate detail without a definite end. They fall short of being exhaustive yet are beyond exhausting. A work of retrieval requires more discipline. To that end, we must decide where to focus our attention and acknowledge the constraints on our scope, whether of our own choosing or imposed by circumstance.

Areas of Emphasis

The topic of simony is vast, branching into a great number of subtopics, each with its own tangle of distinctions and disputed cases. To treat each of these with equal care would either swell the work into monstrous volumes or, kept to a readable length, neglect the concerns that matter most. Therefore, we cannot let the historical literature itself dictate where the weight of our study falls. The subjects that claimed the most ink are not necessarily the ones that most require our present attention. Our aim is to be comprehensive in scope but

[16] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 48.

[17] See Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 2.40.60. Augustine's accounting for the use of pagan philosophy applies at least equally to secular history.

not proportional in emphasis. Several priorities will govern what we address and what we leave aside.

First, our priorities will be informed by Reformed and Protestant convictions. While engaging the medieval sources critically, we will take our cue from the Reformers and proto-Reformers when they differ from others on substantial matters. We will not waste time entertaining positions that run counter to our own tradition, such as the legitimacy of indulgences or mendicancy. Those who object to retrievalist programs on the grounds that they take their marching orders from thinkers laboring within a corrupted system will find no reason to object here.

Second, our priorities will be informed by present circumstances within the Reformed tradition. Luther voiced frustration that the question of the legitimacy of a simoniac's ordinations had amassed "wagonloads—indeed, seas of books," while weightier simoniacal abuses drew no comparable scrutiny.[18] The same instinct must guide us. Some simoniacal practices of the past have no living counterpart in the Reformed tradition: the indulgence trade, the sale of the pallium, or the purchase of masses for the dead. Others appear extinct yet persist by modern analogy; payments for entry into religious societies and monastic approaches to sustenance relate to the associations and parachurches of our day. Still others persist in near-identical form, even growing in weight, especially that which relates directly to payments for instruction in the word of God. Our aim, then, is to render the doctrine of simony in the shape best suited to present use, not to reproduce its premodern contours.

Sources

Many efforts in theological retrieval focus on a single historical theologian—recovering the thought of a single thinker on a single topic. The task before us is different. The doctrine of simony has received so little attention that we do not have the luxury of drilling down into any one author; we must first establish a baseline by assembling the counsel of

[18] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 280:22–32).

many voices. To proceed with such a broad scope carries the danger of selective bias, but it has the corresponding advantage of seeing past any misleading, idiosyncratic perspectives. Where a broad consensus emerges across diverse sources, we can have greater confidence in our conclusions. Yet, as with areas of emphasis, the quantity of sources requires a prioritization.

First, we will take a special interest in the church fathers. As the closest witnesses to the apostolic age and a shared inheritance on which the Reformers themselves relied, they carry distinctive weight. The vocabulary of *simony* came into common use after their time, but to require explicit use of the term would be to silence the very sources from which the doctrine was later distilled. We will therefore apply a lower bar for inclusion to patristic sources than to those who came afterward, expecting from later writers more explicit engagement with the doctrine.

Second, among the medieval sources, we will prioritize the schoolmen over the canonists. The distinction has been described as arbitrary,[19] but the canonists were chiefly concerned with what could be adjudicated, whereas our concern does not revolve around human courts. Since this is a work of theological retrieval and not of historical sociology, our ultimate concern is with what constitutes simony before God rather than under established church order. We will bring in the canonists where their conclusions are frequently taken up by the theologians, but the theological tradition, not the legal, will govern our discourse.

Third, we will prioritize proto-Reformers over other medieval sources. Though less dialectical in nature, Wycliffe and Hus produced some of the longest treatments of simony ever written, and we will engage them accordingly. Because Hus used Wycliffe's treatise as a starting point for his own, translating portions totaling roughly one-eighth of it into Czech,[20] we will be especially interested where he departed from his English predecessor. Whether William of Saint-

[19] So Gilchrist, "'Simoniaca haeresis,'" 210.

[20] Spinka, *John Hus: A Biography*, 172.

Amour counts as a proto-Reformer is debated, but we will prioritize his contributions on the topic as well.

Fourth, we will disproportionately feature Reformation and post-Reformation authors as we have opportunity, for we should value our own tradition. That said, because they were not confronting the same institutional abuses that had prompted the medieval treatments, Puritans and other Protestant divines wrote comparatively little on simony. Where such voices can be found, we will foreground them.

This prioritization of our own tradition extends to the exclusion of Counter-Reformation sources. Not that they diverge from other sources we will be examining; on the contrary, the Council of Trent and the works of Leonardus Lessius, Francisco Suárez, and the like only further corroborate our findings. But our goal is to recover a doctrine from within our own theological stream. Post-Reformation authors occasionally appealed to Counter-Reformation sources on the topic, but these instances are limited and most often function as *syncrisis*, suggesting the rhetorical question "if even Rome understands these things, why don't we?"

Within this Protestant emphasis, we will give particular attention to English sources. In both language and digital availability, these are the most accessible resources to us today. But more importantly, the English-speaking Reformed tradition is the immediate lineage to which we are most directly accountable.

Limitations

Even with these priorities in place, an account of the sources requires acknowledging several limitations. The body of writing on simony has reached us unevenly, shaped by both the vicissitudes of history and the realities of our own time.

Genre shaped how much was written on simony and what form it took. The confessors' manuals (*summae confessorum*) and kindred penitential handbooks gathered the doctrine into compact treatments. Outside them, medieval theology was conducted largely through commentary, which accounts both for the wealth of writing on simony in some forms and its scarcity in others. That is, many of these writings

are preserved in commentaries on standard texts: the *Decretum*, the *Liber extra*, and the *Sentences*. The doctrine therefore comes down to us not as it might have been organized in a freestanding treatise but as it was distributed across the questions those compilations happened to raise. When the *loci communes* model later unseated the *Sentences* tradition, simony had no place among the standard heads of doctrine. The shape of our evidence is thus partly an accident of pedagogical convention.

Furthermore, not everyone who defended the doctrine of simony did so in a capacity that has survived well in print. Reputations of zealous reformers reach us through chroniclers and biographers even when their own words do not. Those whose writings survive are not necessarily those who were most eager to address institutional corruption.

Even where the works survive, accessibility varies. Some works have not been scanned or reprinted. Some manuscripts have been scanned and published, but never transcribed out of medieval shorthand or put into print. This is the case for many of the writings of the early masters at Paris. While we will consult these in some measure, we will lean on secondary-source reports of their contents for fuller use. More is available each year, but several important witnesses still survive primarily in manuscript.

Similarly, copyright restricts access to materials that would otherwise be prime for retrieval. Much of the Lollard corpus, for example, has been well edited in modern critical editions but remains too recently published to be freely available in a digital form that would permit broad consultation. We will make use of Wycliffe and Hus, whose major works were published in their standard editions many years ago, but the broader proto-Reformer tradition of vernacular preaching and polemics against simony will likely prove a fruitful area of research at a later time.

Taking note of these constraints appropriately tempers our confidence in the emerging patterns. The absence of treatment on a given question may say more about the medium of transmission than about its historical relevance. We will draw our conclusions from what is available, while remembering that much remains in the archives.

Application for Today

Many who read Acts 8 suppose that Simon's sin is one few others—if any others at all—will ever commit. Both Burton[21] and the Anatomist[22] began their works with the observation that those nominally aware of the historic doctrine frequently regard themselves as free of such dangers. This may be especially true in our own times, when the corruption that exists takes subtler forms than in former days. Many evangelicals consider themselves protected from temptation to the sin since they operate in an environment relatively clear of institutional bribery. However, the corruption known as "simony" reaches further than these shallow notions allow, and where sin is poorly understood, it will be poorly avoided. As the Anglican divine Jeremy Taylor observed, "Most men choose the sin, if it be once disputable whether it be a sin or no."[23]

Therefore, our study will begin with definition and exploration, and only afterward attempt to address any modern concern directly. The ultimate goal is to develop practical applications for our own time, but considerable exposure to the doctrine must come first in order to establish the expertise by which any diagnosis can be made. This is, of course, the ordinary way of retrieval studies—to understand

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[21] "For in the opinion of many, simony hath lost its being, *in rerum natura*, as being long ago antiquated, and out of date, dead and buried with Simon himself. And if (as Chrysostom saith) the gift of giving the Holy Ghost was peculiar to the apostles, so that not even Philip baptizing gave the Holy Ghost withal; for this gift was proper only to the twelve: and if simony be surnamed of Simon the sire, and Simon's sin was about the buying of the Holy Ghost: then that gift ceasing, and Simon being deceased, where is there left so much as the name of simony, to lend a title to our intended treatise?" Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 1.

[22] "Many who have read these words [of Acts 8], think it an easy matter to wipe off the guilt of simony from themselves, supposing that there is no simony, but the offering to buy the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, which they deem to have been the peculiar fact of Simon Magus, which none, or few else, can ever stumble upon. But how superficially they pass over the text, and that they either do not, or are not willing to understand the same, may easily appear to any who looks more narrowly into, and more seriously considereth the matter contained therein." *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 11–12.

[23] Taylor, "The Flesh and the Spirit," fol. 136.

a historical doctrine in its own right before bringing it to bear on the present—but the same need was felt by those who handled the doctrine in past generations. Burton observed it with an analogy to civil law: charges do little to convict until the offense is defined.[24] Likewise with divine law, clarity of conscience requires clarity of definition.

Making contemporary application will then entail following the implications of this doctrine beyond their traditional limits to logical conclusions that have not been previously articulated. This is the task of a truly reformational theology. Wycliffe and Hus were among the first to turn the doctrine of simony against the sale of indulgences. Luther spoke of "true simony" to express dissatisfaction with Rome's limited conception of the sin and apply the doctrine to its whole system of works righteousness.[25] Burton produced a catalog of commonplace ecclesiastical arrangements, labeling them simoniacal though they were not then admitted as such.[26] As each of these expanded the doctrine's reach in his own day, we intend to do the same in ours.

Such endeavors have a tendency to stir up more than a little resistance. Peter Damian reported that when the eleventh-century monk Romuald introduced this doctrine to those who had been ordained for money, they plotted to kill him because up until that time scarcely anyone in those parts knew it was a sin.[27] In 1494, a Carmelite friar was found murdered in his bed with twenty wounds after preaching against simony.[28] Jan Hus was burned at the stake on a number of charges, but in his own assessment as well as in popular opinion, it was

[24] "The Germans have very good laws to punish drunkenness, but they find it very hard to define what drunkenness is. So in England, we have good laws to punish adultery, but we find a great difficulty in convincing any of committing the act of adultery. So it may be said of simony. First therefore let us see what simony is." Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 1.

[25] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 419:30–430:18).

[26] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*.

[27] Peter Damian, *Vita beati Romualdi*, cap. 35 (PL 144:986C–D).

[28] The friar was Adam of Genoa, who had preached at Rome against the simony of Alexander VI. Malipiero, *Annali veneti*, 318; cf. Burckhardt, *Civilisation of the Renaissance*, 155.

primarily for his preaching against accepted practices that he identified as simony.[29]

It may seem melodramatic to recount these events as though we do not live in a time of bountiful brotherhood and exceptional liberty, but it would be naïve to suppose that a modern application of the doctrine of simony would be met with universal gratitude. Faithful theology is not measured by its reception; truth remains truth whether it is welcomed or resented. *Magna est veritas et praevalet*—truth is great and prevails.

Conclusion

If the foregoing has dwelt on what has been lost, let us close by considering what stands to be gained. The goal here is not to add one more item to the list of sins to avoid. The law, in its third use, is given to guide the redeemed in grateful obedience. To retrieve a neglected doctrine is to recover a rule of life.[30] A recovered doctrine of simony supplies a framework for thinking clearly about the relationship between money and ministry, commerce and the things of God. Where these distinctions have been lost, confusion reigns; but where they are restored, we are taught and equipped to glorify God in the things he has freely given.

[29] "Everywhere there are enemies in plenty, both Czech and German, who seek my death: [. . .] For it touches both the pope and the cardinals when one preaches against pride, against avarice, and especially against simony." Hus, *Postilla*, 114.G; cf. Spinka, *John Hus and the Czech Reform*, 38–40n62. See also Spinka, *John Hus: A Biography*, 87. Maurice of Prague warned the Council of Constance that "the common opinion of the people, although false and heretical, cries out that Jan Hus was sentenced by the council as though it had judged him as severely as the Savior judged the simoniacs, against whom he, though condemned, had preached most vehemently." Maurice of Prague, *Consilium de Ecclesiastico Statu*, 870.

[30] WCF 19.6; 2LBCF 19.6.

PART II

The Definition of Simony

3

Something Spiritual

Many modern readers know "simony" as a term for the purchase of church office and so may be surprised to learn its classic definition is much broader. Rather than eclipsing every other category, commerce in ordinations falls under the same heading as the sale of sacraments, of prayer, of preaching, and of teaching, which together receive comparable attention.

Pre-Reformation works supply many definitions to this effect, but we may make an initial demonstration from an early Protestant work. In his *Loci*, the Lutheran scholar Johann Gerhard contended against the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine on the nature of ordinations. Bellarmine argued that ordination must be a sacrament since selling ordination would be simony, but according to Gerhard, this is an insufficient proof since simony is constituted not merely in the sale of sacraments but in the sale of *any spiritual thing whatsoever*.[1] In the words of one Lollard preacher, if one sells "any ghostly [spiritual] thing, he errs and doth simony."[2]

If simony pertains to any spiritual thing, what exactly constitutes a "spiritual thing"? To answer this, we will first lay the necessary foundations by examining the distinctions theologians developed to identify a spiritual thing, and then put those foundations to work by surveying the concrete categories to which they have been applied.

[1] "*cujusvis rei spiritualis*" Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, 23.3.12.150.

[2] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 5.468.

Distinctions

We must now proceed according to the scholastic maxim *qui bene distinguit, bene docet*—he who distinguishes well teaches well. These distinctions mark the boundaries of definition for spiritual things.

Created vs. Uncreated

First, the term "spiritual" is not a synonym for "immaterial." Even ideas themselves are spiritual in the broader sense of being immaterial, and yet if there is any sin in trafficking in such things, it belongs to a different category of concern. For example, it is sinful to provide a civil judgment for a bribe, though such an activity is not strictly sacrilegious.

Rather, in the definition of simony, a thing is "spiritual" insofar as it is a supernatural grace of the Holy Spirit. Parallel vocabulary from soteriology is instructive: we speak of our union with Christ as being "legal" and "spiritual." The former most immediately effects our justification as our identity with Christ is forensically declared by the Father, and the latter most immediately effects our sanctification as our ingrafting into him is organically wrought by the Holy Spirit. Both these unions are spiritual as regards their immateriality, but only the latter is termed "spiritual" on account of the Spirit's agency.[3]

The schoolmen distinguished that which is of the Holy Spirit (*a spiritu increato*) from those things of men and angels (*a spiritu creato*).[4] The former includes saving graces, while the latter encompasses the natural endowments and products of the rational soul. For this reason, in the passage mentioned earlier, Gerhard observed that when any spiritual thing is sold, the Holy Spirit himself is regarded as sold.[5]

Right vs. Fact

Speaking carefully of the ability to engage in commerce requires a distinction between authority and power. In saying that spiritual

[3] See Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, 482–84.

[4] See Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 318b).

[5] Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*, 23.3.12.150.

things "cannot" be sold, theologians often intended to repudiate the moral permissibility of buying or selling them. However, they sometimes intended a denial of even the possibility of the transaction. Such a thing cannot be sold by right (*de jure*) or in fact (*de facto*).[6]

This is the case with all spiritual things, most properly speaking. Whether things of the uncreated Spirit or things of created spirits, they cannot be transferred from one person to another. They are not subject to mechanisms of manipulation, physical or otherwise, that would enable such an exchange. Neither virtues, nor knowledge, nor any kind of grace actually transmits from one to another when money changes hands. As Martin Luther remarked, "in reality simony is impossible, but in pretense it is most common."[7]

This requires us to expand our definition of "spiritual things" beyond those things which are properly spiritual in themselves. Otherwise, Simon Magus himself escapes the charge of simony. Not only did the sorcerer fail to purchase the gift of the Spirit because of Peter's obstruction, he also failed because nothing of the Spirit, strictly speaking, may be bought in any sense, either ethically or metaphysically. When Peter denied that Simon could buy the Spirit with money (Acts 8:20), he did not merely rebuke his activity but declared it futile: such an exchange is impossible.

Essence vs. Cause

Something may be spiritual either by essence (*per essentiam*) or by cause (*per causam*). Things like grace and virtues are themselves spiritual things and cannot be properly sold. However, other things like the sacraments are identified as "spiritual" on account of their spiritual effects. These, having an outward physical presence, can be sold.[8]

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[6] E.g., Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 318b).

[7] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 282:8).

[8] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 3; Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 1; Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 318b); cf. Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, sol. (p. 93a). John Major dismissed these categories in his earlier edition but set them out as the common account in his later one. Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145va); Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 1 (fol. 183ra).

For example, someone who sells an ordinance such as baptism is not capable of selling the grace of baptism itself but, by selling the act of baptizing, commits simony. While Peter accused Simon of desiring to traffic in the Holy Spirit, Simon specifically sought to buy—and presumably sell—the physical act of laying on hands.

To Protestant ears, the notion of causing a spiritual thing may suggest the conferring of grace *ex opere operato*, on account of the work itself, but this is not intended by the distinction. Rather, it speaks of causes in a more abstract sense as those things which are instrumental in bringing about an effect. The Reformed followed the schoolmen in affirming this distinction between essence and cause in its application to simony.[9]

No simoniacal purchaser buys something that is spiritual in itself. Rather, he intends to buy some outward operation of a minister as a "sacramental cause of a spiritual reality."[10] The point in describing the cause as "sacramental" is not to imply that the only thing that could be sold would be a sacrament, properly speaking. The point is that the purchase occurs in order to receive some grace of the Spirit.

Some might regard the sale of things that are spiritual by cause to be either a lesser form of simony or not simony at all because corporeal signs are not themselves spiritual but one step removed from spiritual things. On the contrary, because outward signs, unlike grace itself, can actually be sold, it is the worst form of simony.[11]

Principle vs. End

A related distinction applies to spiritual *actions*. An act may be called spiritual either as to its principle (*ex parte principii*, its source), when it belongs to someone from a spiritual gift or office, or as to its end (*ex parte finis*, its purpose), when something spiritual is attained by means of it. For example, a minister's work of administering the sacraments or reading the Gospel is spiritual as to its principle since it proceeds

[9] Ames, *Conscience*, 5.229.

[10] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 3, ad 3.

[11] "Indeed this is the worst kind of simony." Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166a).

from a spiritual office. However, the teaching of the liberal arts is spiritual only as to its end in the transmission of truth.[12] Aquinas, whose distinction this is, held truth itself to be of the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the nature by which any man knows anything at all,[13] but even without adopting this position, we might recognize a spiritual end of such teaching in the increase of virtue it may work in the learner.

These two categories carry different consequences for commerce. In acts that are spiritual as to their principle, no one may contract to receive anything for performing them without simony. In acts spiritual only as to their end, one may buy and sell the acts themselves because they are not inherently spiritual. For example, one may guiltlessly sell the act of teaching the liberal arts for a price, but it would be simony for one holding ministerial office to sell his service by charging for the act of reading Scripture or arranging for the administration of a sacrament by contract.[14]

Applications

The foregoing distinctions may risk leaving an overly abstract impression of "spiritual things." To give the category concrete shape, we will survey principal examples of those things to which the label has been applied.

Sacraments

As already observed, sacraments are spiritual things. The prohibition against charging for the sacraments is among the oldest and most frequently repeated injunctions in the history of the church. As early as the Synod of Elvira (ca. 305), clergy were formally forbidden from

[12] See Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2; Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

[13] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 172, a. 6, arg. 1 & ad 1.

[14] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 4; Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

accepting a fee for baptism.[15] In the fifth century, Gelasius I prohibited requesting compensation for baptism or confirmation.[16] The Eleventh Council of Toledo (675) affirmed this ban and extended its prohibition against such solicitations to ordinations and the conferring of chrism.[17]

Thomas Aquinas devoted an article to the question of "whether it is always unlawful to give money for the sacraments," handling a number of objections to the thesis.[18] The early Protestant Thomas Becon drove the point home by contrasting the sale of the Lord's supper with the nature of its institution: "Whereas Christ at his supper gave the sacrament of his body and blood freely to his disciples, ye sell your masses, and make merchandise of the sacrament, as the costardmonger doth of his costards and of his other fruits."[19]

Ordinations

The sale of ordinations was the most prominent form of simony in patristic and medieval writings. This focus should hardly be surprising given that such activity carries great potential for corruption. If one is willing to sell an ordination, he has no reason to withhold it from unqualified men. If one is willing to purchase his ordination, he cares not for true honor and would as readily corrupt the word and sell the sacraments.

The Apostolic Canons—a fourth-century work of Syrian origin—declares, speaking in the voice of the apostles, "If any bishop obtains possession of that dignity by money, or a presbyter or deacon, let him be deposed, both he and the one who ordained him, and let him be cut off entirely from communion as well, as Simon Magus was by me, Peter."[20] Similarly, the Council of Chalcedon (451) stipulated that

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[15] *Synod of Elvira (ca. 305)*, can. 48 (PL 84:307B).

[16] Gelasius I, *Ep.* 14.5; cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 99.

[17] *Eleventh Council of Toledo (675)*, c. 8 (PL 84:461D–462B); cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 101. Chrism frequently appears in canonical lists of things forbidden to sell. X 5.3.8; X 5.3.16; X 5.3.21; X 5.3.36; C. 1, q. 1, cc. 101–2; C. 1, q. 1, cc. 105–6.

[18] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 2.

[19] Becon, *Displaying of the Popish Mass*, 283. A "costard" is a type of apple.

[20] *Canones apostolorum*, can. 29 (p. 572).

when money changes hands for an ordination, the ordained must forfeit the purchased rank and the ordainer stands to lose his own.[21]

Gregory the Great persistently fought against purchased ordinations, and in a homily delivered at the Lateran on March 11, 591, he made his first known use of the term "simoniacal heresy": "I speak in grief to you who are bishops, because we have learned that some of you make ordinations for payment, sell spiritual grace, and heap up temporal gains from others' iniquities at the cost of sin."[22] At the beginning of the classical period of canon law, Gratian devoted eight consecutive canons to simoniacal ordination, appealing primarily to Gregory the Great's letters and homilies.[23] At the end of that period, the *Liber extra* opened its *De simonia* with Gregory's synodical prohibition and returned to the question of ordinations repeatedly throughout its forty-six chapters.[24]

Canon law also addressed the religious orders that paralleled formal offices of the church. Entry into religious life—profession in a monastery, in a mendicant order, or in a house of canons—was deemed simony if it was granted for a price.[25] For universities, similar laws governed admission into the ranks of masters. Because authority to teach in a university should be granted on merit alone, the sale of teaching licenses (*licentia docendi*) was banned,[26] but in the case of theological teaching licenses, imposed fees were additionally labeled simoniacal.[27]

These concerns extend to the resignation of an office. The medieval canonists addressed this in some measure, concluding that those who

[21] *Council of Chalcedon (451)*, can. 2 (ACO II.2.2, 125); cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 113.

[22] Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 17.13 (p. 109).

[23] C. 1, q. 1, cc. 113–20.

[24] X 5.3.1; X 5.3.5; X 5.3.18; X 5.3.20; X 5.3.22; X 5.3.35; X 5.3.37; X 5.3.39; X 5.3.45.

[25] C. 1, q. 2. Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry* provided an exhaustive history of the question.

[26] See X 5.5.3.

[27] E.g., Huguccio of Pisa, *Summa decretorum*, D. 37, c. 12 (fol. 48rb); cf. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 2.83n50. Peter the Chanter took the charge further, applying it to licenses in the liberal arts as well on the ground that the arts prepare for theology. Ibid., 1.123; 2.83n51.

would renounce their title for a sum are guilty of simony.[28] The seventeenth-century clergyman James Metford summarized the position: a resignation is only lawful provided one makes "no corrupt bargain, nor reserve no pension; for that would make the resignation unlawful both in law and conscience; as the canonists generally conclude."[29] Early in English Protestantism, William Tyndale observed hypocrisy in the matter, lamenting those who would claim that "it is simony to sell a benefice (as they call it) but to resign upon a pension and then to redeem the same, is no simony at all."[30] In his estimation, those who would make such arguments were "crafty jugglers and mockers with the word of God."[31]

Later literature more frequently addresses the notion of a *bond of resignation*, which established financial penalties for clergymen who would not resign when requested by their patron.[32] Simon Degge observed that the difference between such a bond and outright payment is negligible: "for what difference is there between a bond expressly to pay money, and a bond to resign, which is to pay money, if the patron say, either pay me so much or resign, when all the world knows in such a case the parson must pay the money, or resign and be undone?"[33]

Marriage and Burials

Both marriage and burials frequently featured in lists of things for which charging would constitute simony.[34] But it is not enough to know that medieval writings forbade selling such things; we must also know why they did so. The common pre-Reformation view of marriage and burials was sacramental; matrimony itself was regarded as a sacrament, and last rites were a series of sacraments administered to the dying. If these proscriptions were motivated by their sacramental

[28] E.g., "if a pact goes before [. . .] that resignation is simoniacal." Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.8 (fol. 70rb).

[29] Metford, *A General Discourse of Simony*, 79.

[30] Tyndale, *Obedience of a Christian Man*, fol. 27r.

[31] Ibid., fol. 27r.

[32] See Willis, *Simony: In Two Parts*, 123–25.

[33] Degge, *The Parson's Counsellor*, 50.

[34] E.g., X 5.3.8; X 5.3.9; X 5.3.29; X 5.3.42; Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 7.H.

nature, then we do not observe anything more than we have already with baptism and communion. However, if they were motivated by something more, then the nature of spiritual things may be further elucidated.

Scholastic theologians acknowledged that marriage is established in nature itself, and therefore reciprocal transactions made in the formation of that union—whether for a dowry, a civil officiant's fee, or the like—may be perfectly licit.[35] However, in the ceremony of Christian marriage, there is something spiritual that is given. While the literature addresses the sacramental nature of marriage, almost always the remarks turn to the distinct notion of the blessing of nuptials. On account of selling that spiritual blessing, the priest who would officiate for a price commits simony.[36] For example, Bonaventure, defending the practice of a dowry as being non-simoniacal, explained, "the spiritual character consists principally in the priestly blessing."[37]

Regarding burials, concerns often centered on the sale of the plot rather than the sale of funeral proceedings,[38] but canonists consistently asserted that any religious service associated with an interment should be performed freely.[39] Those religious burial services forbidden from sale include more than that which might be considered sacramental, extending even to activities like reading a psalter.[40]

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[35] E.g., "Marriage is not only a sacrament but also an office of nature. […] on the side on which it is an office of nature, nothing prevents accepting a price for marriage." Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 2.

[36] E.g., "on the side on which it is a sacrament, […] he commits simony who exacts money for the blessing of those marrying." Ibid., IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 2.

[37] Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 26, a. 2, q. 2 (p. 669). Later, he wrote, "grace is not given in the same manner as in the other sacraments, […] unless perhaps by reason of the added blessing, which would make the seller simoniacal." Ibid., IV, d. 30, a. un., q. 3, ad 3 (p. 711).

[38] This will be addressed in the next chapter, pp. 75–76.

[39] Among others Hostiensis made the distinction of the use of the term "burial" (*sepultura*) to refer to the plot of land and the services performed in the process; the latter may not be sold. Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, ad X 3.28 (fol. 387rb). The English antiquary Henry Spelman invoked Hostiensis in the seventeenth century to argue that burial services must be given freely. Spelman, *De Sepultura*, 18–20.

[40] Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, ad X 5.3 (fol. 535ra).

Those who would refuse to perform burial services without payment, essentially holding a body hostage (*funus arrestare*), were plainly labeled simoniacs.[41] One instance of this, recounted repeatedly in later literature, is the story of Giovanni Maria Visconti, the fifteenth-century Duke of Milan. While riding recreationally, he overheard a great weeping and lamentation inside the house of a poor woman. Upon inquiry, he discovered that she was a widow and the primary source of her distress was that the corpse of her husband still lay before her eyes because the priest had refused to perform the burial service apart from payment. The duke commanded that the avaricious clergyman dig a deep pit and, upon its completion, had him tossed in ahead of the body of the deceased, burying the living along with the dead.[42]

Excommunication and Absolution

The church's power to bind and loose—to discipline and restore—is spiritual. To sell the exercise or suspension of that power is therefore simoniacal. Activities wrongly exchanged for a fee may include concealing sin, restoring without due penance, or even restoring with due penance.[43] John Wycliffe observed that imposing an annual fine to punish sinners is an especially damnable simony.[44] Likewise, it is simoniacal to pay for an offense to be punished less severely.[45]

This prohibition extends to the domain of ecclesiastical visitation, the formal process by which a bishop inspected a parish or diocese for needed corrections. To require or give money for this process was regarded as simony, although theologians and canonists had some allowance for fees to be required for the visitor's board and lodging.[46]

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[41] E.g., Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 321a); cf. C. 13, q. 2, c. 12; Gregory I, *Ep.* 8.35.

[42] See Castiglione, *Ricordi*, 119. This appears to be the earliest telling in print.

[43] X 5.3.14; X 5.3.24.

[44] Wycliffe, *De blasphemia*, cap. 10 (153:21–30).

[45] E.g., Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320b).

[46] Ibid., IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320b); Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 3.

Prayer

Given our established distinctions, prayer is spiritual on a number of counts: principle and end,[47] essence and cause.[48] Its efficacy derives from spiritual devotion, and its aim is a spiritual effect. Therefore, "prayer must not be made for money, but for God and on account of good affection."[49] Wycliffe described those who trade in prayers as "dull-witted merchants trading in their shadows, as the sun is sinking toward evening."[50]

The practice of giving alms to the poor so that they will pray for the giver was common in the Middle Ages. The schoolmen occasionally provided justifications for this in their writing, similar to those given for indulgences: the money is not a payment in exchange for prayer, but a gratuitous benefaction intended to move them to pray freely out of charity.[51]

However, this line of logic was rejected by the proto-Reformers and Reformers. Wycliffe described such pretexts as a mockery of God.[52] In his *Decades*, Heinrich Bullinger spoke of the monks and priests who would defend taking a fee to pray as "word-jugglers."[53] If one has faith and charity, Bullinger reasoned, he will pray freely, and if he does not, his prayers are empty.[54] Such men "with a false show deceive the stupid crowd," which pays for just prayers and receives unjust ones, and even if the prayers were just, "they were nonetheless neither to be sold nor to be bought."[55]

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[47] See Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 2.

[48] See Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 3, q. 2, ad 8 (p. 387).

[49] Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320b).

[50] Wycliffe, *De oracione*, cap. 3 (347:13–14).

[51] E.g., Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 2; Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 2.

[52] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 7 (86:12–28).

[53] Bullinger, *Decades*, 5.5 (fol. 311v).

[54] Ibid., 5.5 (foll. 311v–312r).

[55] Ibid., 5.5 (fol. 312r).

Preaching

Preaching is a spiritual thing. Therefore, the sale of sermons or the activity of preaching as such is forbidden. This has been the judgment of theologians from the early church to the Reformers. The literature raises fewer grievances against the sale of preaching than against other forms of simony, but still does so in abundant measure. And with minimal variation, the response has been that ministers must not charge for the proclamation of the word.

The early church spoke on the matter directly on a few occasions. The *Didache* warns of prophets who would expect payment for their message,[56] and the *Shepherd of Hermas* warns that one who charges for his prophecy has an earthly spirit rather than the divine Spirit.[57] The schoolmen arrived at similar judgments. John Major, a Scottish master at Paris, appealed to Matthew 10:8 in his assertion that "it is simoniacal to take anything for preaching."[58]

The proto-Reformers concurred on this point.[59] Jan Hus numbered preaching among the spiritual gifts the devil counsels priests to sell, casting the trade as a satanic inversion of Matthew 10:8.[60] Attributed to Wycliffe, a sermon on the same text reads, "For Christ saith thus: Ye took of God freely, and therefore give freely your travail to the people; and then shall it be meedful [meritorious], and else it is simony. And here is begging of preachers forbidden by God, sith it is a hid selling of preaching of God's word."[61]

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[56] *Didache (Doctrina duodecim apostolorum)*, 11.4–6, 12.

[57] "He takes payment for his prophesying, and if he does not receive it, he does not prophesy. Can a divine spirit, then, take payment and prophesy? A prophet of God cannot possibly do this; the spirit of such prophets is earthly." Hermas, *The Shepherd*, Mand. 11.12.

[58] Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 148ra). The word he used for "take" (*capere*) might suggest a demand rather than a passive reception, but in context, he was constructing an *argumentum a fortiori* to forbid selling a church office. The argument from the lesser to the greater against all reception in exchange for church office only works if he forbade all reception in exchange for preaching.

[59] E.g., William Swinderby, Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 5.468.

[60] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 7.H.

[61] Wycliffe, *Sermons*, serm. 64 (1, p. 200). Elsewhere, another work attributed to Wycliffe speaks similarly: "he bade not only preach to men that gave to them, but to

This prohibition was maintained by the Reformers. Luther argued that "true simony, therefore, is commerce exercised in the word of God, in the sacraments, in the church, and in the saints."[62] He commented to this effect often throughout his works, and in surprising places. On Psalm 104:12 ("they sing among the branches"), he remarked that preachers ought to preach without charging because "even the little birds sing for free."[63]

The English heirs of the Reformation likewise identified the sale of preaching with the sin of Simon. As Thomas Manton said, "the true simony" is "to huck out the gospel, and sell our holy things."[64] Ralph Cudworth made a similar point in completing William Perkins's commentary on Galatians. Appealing to Proverbs 3:15 ("she is more precious than rubies") and Acts 8 (Peter's admonition of Simon Magus), he wrote that the sale of the preaching of the word is condemned by virtue of its pricelessness.[65] Other seventeenth-century English divines identified the sale of the word of God as simony, often with explicit mention of the context of preaching.[66] Some spoke even of a simony that occurs when someone preaches with exceptional effort for the sake of praise or preferment, their spiritual labor being exchanged for human approval.[67]

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all manner of men, without respect of persons. And so, in a quiet manner, Christ forbade simony and begging and covetousness to all his preachers. For as they freely took their knowledge from God, so should they freely deal it to the people." Wycliffe, *Of the Seven Deadly Sins*, cap. 9 (p. 130).

[62] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 422:10–11).

[63] Luther, *Dictata super Psalterium*, 103 (WA 4, 182:28–30).

[64] Manton, *Sermons upon the Eleventh Chapter*, 13.456.

[65] "the graces of God exhibited unto us in the preaching of the word are so precious that they cannot be valued at any price, all earthly things a man can desire, are not to be compared to them, as the wise man saith; therefore Peter said to Simon Magus, 'Thy money perish with thee, because thou thinkest that the gift of God may be obtained by money.'" Cudworth, *The Supplement*, 537.

[66] E.g., Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 4.19.2.34 (p. 119).

[67] E.g., Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 42; Boston, *A Soliloquy on Man-Fishing*, 48–49.

Teaching

How far the foregoing proscriptions reach depends on how we interpret the vocabulary of "preaching" and "the word of God." Taken narrowly, they govern only the formal activity which takes place in a worship service or distinctly evangelistic encounters, but many authors seemed to apply these terms to doctrinal instruction more generally. Regardless, some authors were explicit in their condemnation of the sale of teaching.

As early as the third century, Clement of Alexandria counted "the distributing of both teachings [*δογμάτων*] and money to those in need" among the sacrifices the true Christian offers.[68] In the following century, Aphrahat the Persian opened his *Demonstrations* by committing himself to freely teach the one who requests it.[69]

Medieval writings directly identified the sale of doctrinal instruction as simony.[70] According to Geoffrey of Poitiers, the one who teaches theology for a price sells the word of God and falls under the curse of Jeremiah 48:10 ("Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord fraudulently").[71] As was noted in Chapter 1,[72] this was first

[68] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 7.7.49.5 (GCS 17, 37:7–9).

[69] "For the things you have asked of me were given freely, and freely they are received as well; and if anyone who has them wishes to withhold them from one who asks, whatever he refuses to give is taken away from him. Whoever receives freely ought to give freely." Aphrahat, *Demonstrationes*, 1.1 (PS 1.1:6); cf. ibid., 10.8 (PS 1.1:460–64).

[70] A minority, William of Auxerre among them, identified the sale of any teaching as simony on the claim that knowledge is immediately a gift from God and that the Holy Spirit teaches all truth (John 16:13), William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, III, tr. 21 (foll. 229vb–230ra).

[71] "It is asked concerning the master who teaches for pence, whether he incurs this curse [the malediction of Jeremiah 48:10, under discussion in the surrounding questions]. We say that he does not, if he does not do it out of avarice or vainglory. But of theologians it is said otherwise, since they are public persons [*publice persone*], whose lecturing bears witness to the truth. Therefore, since they are teachers of the word of God, it is not lawful for them to teach for a reward, lest they be found sellers of the word of God. […] Whence the Lord in Micah [3:11], recounting other sins, says: 'Their priests taught for hire.'" Geoffrey of Poitiers, *Summa*, fol. 39va; cf. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 2.86n69.

[72] See p. 23.

fully expressed by Robert of Courson in his *Summa*.[73] There, he contended that not only theology, but all moral philosophy proceeds from the Spirit of wisdom, and therefore constitutes simony just as selling Scripture itself.[74] A century later, Peter Paludanus relayed this as the received opinion, distinguishing between that which comes from man's spirit and that which comes from the Holy Spirit. Though one cannot sell knowledge itself, one can charge for the *act* of teaching. However, when it comes to matters of theology—revelation that arises only from the Spirit—one cannot charge.[75] Peter Auriol explained this distinction:

> But if we take a freely given grace [*gratia gratis data*; i.e., a spiritual gift]—for example preaching, teaching, and the like—either it will be taken with respect to the intrinsic act, and here no sale takes place, for I cannot sell you the habit of my knowledge; or it is taken with respect to the extrinsic act—for example the projection of the voice, the movement of the body, and the like—and thus in such things a sale does indeed fall out and have its place; and in this way teaching, counsel, testimony, and the like are sold, and all of these turn out to be sinful.[76]

[73] "As to what Solomon says, 'Do not sell wisdom, doctrine, understanding,' we say that he is speaking of the understanding, doctrine, and wisdom of spiritual or moral things, which proceed from the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge; and these cannot be sold, as we have said before, by right." Robert of Courson, *Summa*, 10.3 (fol. 47va); cf. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 2.86n70.

[74] "Just as there is simony in the sale of the manna, which signifies sacred Scripture, so by the sale of the little measure of flour carried in their cloaks out of the land of Egypt [Exod. 12:34], which signifies the moral teachings of the philosophers, simony is committed." Robert of Courson, *Summa*, 10.4 (fol. 47va); cf. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 2.86–87n71.

[75] "But there are other acts for which it is lawful to receive [payment] for labor, such as for teaching and other spiritual things from a created spirit. But for teaching itself, some say that it is not simony, because it is not by relation to the Holy Spirit, but to the human spirit; others say that it is. But regarding theology, it seems to be simony." Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320b).

[76] Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166a).

While this prohibition on the sale of doctrinal instruction was only occasionally stated so directly, it is intimated frequently by others who specifically excepted instruction in the liberal arts from those things which must not be sold, for "even the heathen may lawfully teach such arts."[77] In each of these cases, the prohibition of merchandising theology, the queen of the sciences, is simply presumed by the explicit permission to engage in commerce with her handmaidens.[78]

In the fifth book of the *Liber extra*, titles three and five contain the bulk of the detail on this topic. As one seventeenth-century treatise summarizes, the *Liber extra* forbids as simony "masters and preachers to teach for money."[79] A number of commentators who took up these titles addressed requests for voluntary gifts in the context of teaching. A master already provided for by the church could accept a voluntary gift but not request it, especially not of the clergy of his own church or the poor; a master without sufficient support might ask the rich to contribute, and some extended even that allowance to the master already provided for.[80] However, even these concessions were not universally accepted.[81]

For Wycliffe, not only did proper imitation of Christ require teaching freely,[82] but the sale of teaching was a "nearer and more hateful simony" than the sale of church office.[83] In a vernacular treatise on the seven deadly sins that has been attributed to him, we see this same contention:

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[77] Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

[78] E.g., Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 8; Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

[79] Ridley, *A View of the Civile and Ecclesiasticall Law*, 76.

[80] E.g., Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 3, q. 2 (p. 386b); Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, ad X 5.5 (fol. 542v); Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 8 (fol. 169v). For the extension and the gloss as Middleton and Astesanus report it, Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320b).

[81] E.g., William of Saint-Amour, *De valido mendicante*, 85; 87. See Chapter 1, pp. 27–28, for the historical setting. The further qualifications are treated in Chapter 9, pp. 156–58.

[82] "The faithful ought to be mindful that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and in imitation of Christ to give freely and generously spiritual teaching." Wycliffe, *De fundacione sectarum*, cap. 2 (p. 21).

[83] Ibid., cap. 11 (p. 56).

> But men that should be professors of the science [knowledge] of God sin many ways about this science. As some men hide this treasure and deal it not about; and yet, the more that it is dealt, the more it increases. And this is much more sin than to hide gold. [...] And so, with begging, and pride of their speech, they sell God's word, as one would sell an ox. Nevertheless, Christ teaches that, since his science is freely given to him, it should be freely dealt. And because the telling of God's law would most profit his Church, the fiend is full busy to hinder this ghostly [spiritual] profit.[84]

The Reformers were consistent with the proto-Reformers on this point. For Luther, teaching freely was the necessary antithesis to the "Satanic audacity" of offering forgiveness of sins at a price.[85]

Conclusion

The term "simony" embraces far more than commerce in ordinations. While the several scholastic distinctions keep it from applying too broadly to anything immaterial, they do not prevent it from applying to manifold ordinances and activities: sacraments, the blessing of marriages, funeral services, absolution, prayer, preaching, and teaching. Wherever the Holy Spirit works or his instruments of grace are administered, there stands a spiritual thing that cannot be exchanged for money.

[84] Wycliffe, *Of the Seven Deadly Sins*, cap. 3 (p. 123).

[85] In the context of simony, Luther wrote, "But this is not lawful, and the Pope with Satanic audacity established this trade. We are commanded to teach, console, [and] absolve all who receive and believe; and they all receive from us freely, according to the saying: 'Freely you have received, freely give.'" Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 282:23–26).

4

Something Annexed to a Spiritual Thing

The definition of simony forbids the buying or selling of anything "annexed" to a spiritual thing. A couple of notes on our translation of the phrase "*spirituali annexum*" may be helpful.

First, the more literal rendering of the Latin is not "something annexed to a spiritual thing," but simply "a spiritual annex," a phrase we will occasionally use throughout this chapter. The "annex" in this context refers to the object to which the spiritual thing has been joined. The fact that this annex is "spiritual" identifies it as having been joined with a spiritual thing.

Second, a number of translations use the word "connected," but more traditional ones—as ours here—render it "annexed." This is to be preferred not only because it is the etymological cognate of the Latin term (*annexum*) but also because it better captures the sense. To be connected might suggest some kind of loose association or juxtaposition, but to be annexed describes a joining together of two into that which becomes functionally one.

For example, many nations are connected to other lands in various geographical and political senses, but when a nation annexes a territory, that region joins with the nation in such a way that one cannot attack it without attacking the nation itself. It is similar with spiritual annexes. One cannot sell something annexed to a spiritual thing without selling the spiritual thing itself. Thus, both are regarded as simony.

Distinctions

Once again, several distinctions will help us understand the notion of a spiritual annex.

Annex vs. Cause

In the preceding chapter, we distinguished between the essence of spiritual things and that which functions as its cause. In some ways, this may seem to be identical to the notion of an annex. Indeed, Wycliffe found the term "spiritual things" to be sufficient, preferring not to add the term "spiritual annexes" partly because it is subsumed under the notion of a spiritual thing.[1] However, he appears to be unique in this regard.

The vast majority of theologians who addressed the topic considered the notion of spiritual annexes to be a helpful category, an assessment that carried over into the Reformation.[2] These are distinguished from causes of spiritual things in that an annex is one step removed from the notion of a cause. In the words of Aquinas, "certain things are spiritual in themselves, such as the sacraments and other things of this kind; while certain others are called spiritual from the fact that they adhere to such things."[3]

For example, consider a minister who would provide and officiate baptism freely but only upon purchase of a baptism certificate. The baptism itself is the cause of a spiritual benefit, but the certificate has been joined to baptism, its purpose and value being determined thereby. Baptism is therefore a spiritual thing while the certificate is a spiritual annex.

Dependent vs. Directed

It may appear that there are many things annexed to spiritual things that may be sold without charge of simony. For example, church

[1] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (3:8–13).
[2] E.g., Ames, *Conscience*, 5.229.
[3] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 6.

property—whether the land, or the building, or furniture, etc.—is all connected to the worship of God. However, we must distinguish two modes of annexation, one being of more consequence for charges of simony.

Something can be annexed to a spiritual thing by being "dependent" (*dependens*) on that thing or by being "directed" (*ordinatum*) to that thing.[4] For example, land intended for a church and the physical material of sacred vessels are merely directed to spiritual things. They may be bought and sold as temporal things so long as the sale is not for reason of their consecration.[5]

Other things are annexed as dependent on a spiritual thing, such as the work of shutting the temple doors (Mal. 1:10).[6] While this activity is itself merely physical, its importance and value are entirely dependent on sacred activity inside, making it forbidden to charge for the act of shutting them. In support, many appealed to a decretal ostensibly of Paschal I:[7] "just as the soul does not subsist temporally without the body, whoever sells one of the two, without which the other cannot be had, leaves neither of them unsold."[8]

Presupposing vs. Preceding

Aquinas offered an additional way to distinguish annexation by dependence from annexation by direction, specifying that the second form features a temporal ordering. Those things which are directed toward a spiritual thing precede it. For example, the land a church is built on precedes its use for the congregation.[9] A pastoral salary, on the other

[4] Ibid., II-II, q. 100, a. 4.

[5] See Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 5, q. 3 (pp. 91–92).

[6] C. 1, q. 3, d.a.c. 1.

[7] The passage is in fact excerpted from the *Epistola Widonis*, an anti-simony polemic of the eleventh century. Canonists transmitted it as a decretal of Paschal I; see Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, 1:357n24. The true identity of its author remains uncertain; see West, "The Simony Crisis".

[8] Wido, *Widonis monachi epistola*, 6:1–6; cf. C. 1, q. 3, c. 7; Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 25, c. 4 (p. 910); Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4; Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25.

[9] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4, ad 3.

hand—inasmuch as it truly is for the honor of the clergy—presupposes the spiritual office. It is conceptually dependent on the office because a benefice belongs only to the holder of a clerical office.[10]

The Puritan William Ames described annexes as things so adjoined to a spiritual function or office that they "go before, accompany, or follow after it, that they can no ways be separated from it."[11] However, his description of variable ordering does not undermine this distinction. In speaking of things which might go before a spiritual thing, he is best read as referring not to an independent existence, but to that which might be received before the performance of a spiritual service.

Applications

Several examples recur in the literature to illustrate the nature and boundaries of annexation. While some of the assumed premises may not be agreeable to a Protestant audience, what matters is the application of the principles of annexation to them rather than their validity.

Consecrated Things

Among the most frequently discussed applications of annexation was the case of consecrated things: vessels, buildings, and land that had been blessed and set apart for sacred use. In being directed toward holy purposes, they were annexed to spiritual things, constraining the terms under which they could appropriately be sold.

Church vessels that were consecrated (for example, chalices and trays for the Eucharist) could not be sold. However, the material that composed them could be sold for a proper cause.[12] Breaking them first, in order to desecrate them, was typically recommended

[10] Ibid., II-II, q. 100, a. 4.

[11] Ames, *Conscience*, 5.229.

[12] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4, ad 2; Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 315r); John of Freiburg, *Summa confessorum*, I, tit. 1, q. 16 (fol. 2vb).

to guarantee that they were sold as merely material things.[13] On this point, many appealed to Ambrose, who practiced the same.[14] He enumerated several purposes—relieving the poor, redeeming captives, building churches, and enlarging burial grounds—for which "it is lawful to break, melt down, and sell even the consecrated vessels of the church."[15]

Church buildings and land functioned similarly to consecrated vessels. They were directed toward holy purposes such that upon consecration, they could not be sold. However, properly desecrated, they could be sold. Aquinas explained, "It is also lawful now to sell or buy the land where a church formerly stood, in a case of necessity: just as was said concerning the material of sacred vessels."[16] The implication seems to be that just as with vessels, the church would need to be destroyed in order for the material and land to be sold. English writings maintained a concern over the sale of church property, but the debate came to be framed in terms of sacrilege rather than simony.[17]

Burial grounds—a cemetery or tomb—were likewise directed toward a sacred use. If unconsecrated land was sold for the purpose of being put to holy use, it was permitted. If the land was sold at a certain value on account of its being holy, it was simony.[18] Abraham's purchase of the tomb of the patriarchs from Ephron the Hittite (Gen. 23) provided a common example for consideration among the schoolmen. Because Abraham bought the land as an ordinary piece of ground, he committed no simony; Ephron, who may have priced the right of burial, was judged less kindly.[19] The site temporally precedes its use

[13] Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 5 (fol. 150v); Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, sol. (p. 93a).

[14] Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum*, 2.28.136 (pp. 167–68).

[15] Ibid., 2.28.142 (p. 170); cf. ibid., 2.28.143 (p. 170).

[16] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4, ad 3.

[17] E.g., Warner, *Church-Lands Not to Be Sold*, ch. 5 (pp. 15ff.).

[18] See Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 3, ad 2.

[19] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4; Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 147ra); C. 13, q. 2, c. 12–13.

for burial, having its own value apart from any interment. Protestants who addressed the matter concurred with this judgment.[20]

Benefices and Tithes

Two closely related applications of annexation are benefices and tithes. A benefice is an income attached to a spiritual office: the salary of a minister, potentially attended by other benefits. Tithes are the funds given by the people that are dedicated to the good of the church. These notions overlap since a benefice is typically constituted of tithes. Each is annexed to something spiritual, but on different grounds and in different ways.

A benefice is annexed to an ecclesiastical position, and it is annexed by dependence: one cannot buy the rights to the income without buying the office.[21] In such an exchange, the spiritual office and the material sustenance have been so joined together that to trade in the one is to trade in the other. Commerce in benefices was condemned as simoniacal by both the medievals and later theologians.[22]

Tithes, on the other hand, are annexed to spiritual things on account of being dedicated to God and set apart for sacred purposes.[23] Theologians and canonists frequently objected to selling tithes,[24] a sale that redirects them from their proper purpose for the sake of money. Since they are annexed by direction rather than dependence,

[20] E.g., "Is Abraham on that account to be called a simoniac, since burial is among sacred things, and the buying or selling of sacred things is called simony? But we heard that the field he bought was a secular thing, subject to a temporal lord. And the sale of a field is an entirely civil transaction. Abraham therefore did not sin when he bought the field and built a tomb there; otherwise everything Christians buy for their necessary uses would be simoniacal—bread, meat, wine, all of which are turned to the use of the saints—which is absurd." Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 420:26–34). See also Spelman, *De Sepultura*, 2–4.

[21] See Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145v).

[22] Quoting Gratian, Burton wrote, "Simony is committed both in respect of orders, and in respect of the benefice itself." Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 2; cf. C. 1, q. 3, d.a.c. 1.

[23] See Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4, ad 3; William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 114); *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 21.

[24] E.g., Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4; cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 3.

it may seem that there would be a way to dissolve that annexation, but the sources do not appear to entertain one, perhaps because tithes are not merely dedicated to a particular use but have actually been given to God.

The authors at issue here wrote under an established church, where the term "tithes" refers to funds compelled by civil law rather than given voluntarily. In other words, they are functionally a tax imposed by the civil magistrate. Since the agency in such dedication of resources is thereby complicated, this matter was debated extensively, at least in the English system. John Milton was arguably the loudest opponent of all such compulsory support for ministry, denouncing it as simony.[25] Wycliffe had similarly maintained that tithes ought to be voluntary and withheld from unworthy clergy.[26] Ironically, in his defense of an imposed tithe, Thomas Hall observed that independent churches were more prudent in ensuring their own ministers were sufficiently provided for than those who relied on public funds.[27]

The Right of Patronage

When land carrying a right of patronage was sold, that right naturally transferred to the new owner. In other words, by purchasing the property, the buyer also acquired the power to nominate the cleric who would hold the associated office or benefice. On this question, the schoolmen typically concluded that such land sales were not necessarily simony. The right of patronage was seen as passing incidentally with the property such that one who purchased land without paying a premium on account of the associated right should not be considered to have bought it.[28] However, many only arrived at that conclusion after substantial deliberation and hesitation.[29]

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[25] Milton, *Hirelings*, 66–67.

[26] Wycliffe, *The Seven Werkys of Mercy Bodyly*, 175–77; cf. Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 5 (56:1–19).

[27] Hall, *Sal Terrae*, 107–8.

[28] E.g., Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4; Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 4 (fol. 150v); William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, III, tr. 21 (fol. 230ra–230rb).

[29] See esp. Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146vb).

On this point, the proto-Reformers differed. The right of patronage, they held, is itself a spiritual power, not to be bought and sold "like oxen."[30] Wycliffe went further, urging that the primitive church's practice of election by the people be kept today. On his proposal patrons would still govern the endowments they had given, but men would be appointed to church office by an election among the laity.[31]

Regardless, this practice continued into the English Reformation, only to be opposed by some later English writers.[32] In English ecclesiastical law, the operative right flowing from patronage, that of presenting a clerk to a vacant benefice, was termed an *advowson*. Part of the concern was that the complexities of this mechanism permitted the Puritans to advance their influence considerably.[33] At John Preston's prompting, the Feoffees for Impropriations raised funds to purchase advowsons and install Puritan lecturers, ministers who preached outside the primary services of the church.[34] The saleable advowson entered its sunset in 1898 as a series of restrictions curtailed the transfer and use of the right of patronage.[35]

Certificates

Ceremonies of spiritual significance, such as ordinations or baptisms, often came with a certificate or letter of confirmation. These documents are annexed to the spiritual act they serve by dependence. The certificate only has meaning in light of the ceremony, and acquiring the certificate is necessary in order for the ceremony to be recognized as actually inducting someone into church membership or church office. Therefore, it is simony to charge for such certificates or anything pertaining to their production, such as ink, paper, or the labor involved.

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[30] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 3 (36:5–16); Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 8.F.

[31] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 3 (36:19–30).

[32] "Simony," 286; *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 29, 34.

[33] Willis, *Simony: In Two Parts*, 127–46. See also Kirby, "The Lay Feoffees".

[34] Ibid., 1, 4–5, 8, 10–11.

[35] *Benefices Act 1898*. This process was completed only when the sale of advowsons was abolished altogether by the *Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986*.

In a synodal address in July 595, Gregory the Great provided this foundational prohibition:

> Following the ancient rule of the fathers, I decree that nothing is ever to be received for ordinations, neither from the giving of the pallium, nor from the delivery of the documents, nor from that which a new pretense born of ambition has devised under the name of the *pastellum* [writing-tablet]. For in ordaining a bishop the pontiff lays on his hand, the minister reads the Gospel lesson, and the notary writes the letter of confirmation; and just as it is not fitting for the pontiff to sell the hand he lays on, so neither ought the minister or the notary to sell his voice or his pen in his ordination. Therefore, for the ordination, or for the pallium, or for the documents and the *pastellum*, I entirely forbid the man who is to be ordained, or who has been ordained, to give anything. And if anyone should presume to exact or seek anything from the aforesaid things under the name of profit, he shall be liable to guilt at the strict examination of Almighty God.[36]

This passage became the standard authority on the subject.[37] Many subsequent authors who addressed fees associated with ordination made reference to this decree. This prohibition was nonetheless widely flouted. Wycliffe tallied the fees exacted at an ordination—by the clerk who inscribes the candidate's name, by the barber "even if he has not shaved the candidate," by the presenter of letters dimissory—and found that "in the bishop's annual ordination there accumulates a great heap of simony amounting to many pounds."[38] After appealing to the passage from Gregory, he explained that "infinite excuses could

[36] Gregory I, *Ep.* 5.57a.5 (1, 364:23–365:8); cf. X 5.3.1; C. 1, q. 2, c. 4.

[37] Its reach was disputed: one view allowed a notary to accept an unsolicited gift if he had formed no prior intent to receive it. See Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 9 (fol. 170v).

[38] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 6 (78:10–17).

be feigned," such as that one does not purchase the spiritual thing at all, but that "an exchange is made concerning the temporal thing annexed."[39]

Books

Books are likewise annexed to spiritual things. Often, the schoolmen spoke of them as similar to consecrated things, subject to the same rules.[40] Other times, they were described as annexed merely to things of the human spirit.[41] Rarely was the distinction between natural science and theology discussed in the context of concerns around the sale of books, but occasionally it was addressed indirectly.

Richard of Middleton was representative in his approach. Books on natural philosophy are spiritual annexes "by relation to the human spirit" and may be sold, unless they were supplied by the church for the instruction of clergy, in which case, they may not be sold.[42] Richard did not expressly categorize books on theology, but his framework nevertheless suggests that a book as a material object could be sold if no price was exacted for the spiritual teaching itself, whereas material devoted by the church for holy purposes could not be sold.

Several of the English Reformers commented on the sale of books as well, albeit not frequently in the context of simony.[43] The Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs compared man-appointed holidays to Bibles: the human act of dedication makes neither the day nor the paper holy, though there may be holiness in their use.[44] Benjamin Needler, another Puritan, made a similar analogy between Bibles and ministers. The one who puts a Bible to sale does not sell the truth, but only the

[39] Ibid., cap. 6 (79:19–24).

[40] E.g., Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, sol. (p. 93a).

[41] E.g., Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146ra); Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 1 (fol. 183rb).

[42] Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 3, q. 3 (p. 388a).

[43] The historian Thomas Fuller explicitly rejected that selling books constituted simony, giving examples of several famous theologians who profited by the sale of their copies. Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain*, 8.27 (p. 36).

[44] Burroughs, *Hosea 4–7*, 661.

cover, paper, and binding. When one supports a minister, he does not buy the gospel, nor does the minister sell it.[45]

The foregoing addresses the sale of physical books as annexed to the doctrine contained therein rather than the sale of their contents or of the labor involved in their authorship. Such concerns over the sale of theological training itself were implicitly addressed in the previous chapter under the heading of "Teaching," but by way of demonstration, consider one historian's summary evaluation of the ethos of authors through the time of the Reformation:

> Until the middle of the eighteenth century it was considered bad manners to write for remuneration instead of for reputation. Up to that time only a few writers had ever received a fee from their publishers; and if they received it they were anxious to hide the fact. Erasmus, for instance, was deeply hurt when some Italian colleagues hinted that Aldus Manutius had paid him for a book; and he violently defended himself against similar insinuations on the part of Hutten and others. Luther never received so much as a farthing for his hundreds of books and pamphlets. Thomas Murner, the Roman Catholic pamphleteer, seems to have been the first to receive a fee for his *Geuchmatt* in 1514.[46]

Perhaps the most notable example is Luther himself. In 1539, the printers of Wittenberg offered him a supplemental salary that would have tripled his own, all merely for the guarantee of first access to his new works. Luther rejected the offer; he would not, he said, sell his grace. Remarking on how God had amply provided so that he never needed to resort to such measures, he continued, "I have all my life never sold a single copy [of my writings] nor held a lecture for a fee; and I mean to take that boast with me into the grave, God willing. Having food and clothing, I shall be content."[47]

[45] Needler, *Genesis*, 136–37.

[46] Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 145.

[47] Luther, *Tischreden*, no. 4690 (WA TR 4, 431:27–432:11); cf. Pettegree, *Brand Luther*, 279.

Price as a Discernment Mechanism

Frequently, the price of a thing was used either to discern annexation or to remove doubts about it. While true annexation is fundamentally a matter of dependence, whether one can be had without the other, the price often makes the nature of the relationship evident. For the lesser form of annexation—temporal objects directed to spiritual uses—costs beyond the value of the material thing indicate that the spiritual thing is intended in the sale. In the words of Thomas of Strasbourg, "the sale of that which is annexed to a spiritual thing does not constitute simony unless it is sold insofar as it is annexed—that is, if in the sale regard is had to the spiritual thing, and on account of such annexation the temporal thing is sold more dearly."[48]

This heuristic applies to the cost of consecrated vessels matching the cost of the material that composes them,[49] consecrated water being sold at the same price as regular water,[50] land with the right of patronage being sold at the same rate as any other land,[51] etc. For example, Wycliffe took this approach to discernment in opposing fees ostensibly for a bishop's physical labor associated with the blessing of churches. He judged the exorbitant prices to indicate it was indeed the spiritual blessing itself that was being sold.[52] Hus observed the same regarding steep and widely varying prices for letters confirming a priest's charge.[53]

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[48] Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 5 (fol. 150v); cf. ibid., IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 4 (fol. 150v); Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, sol. (p. 93a).

[49] Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 315r).

[50] Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 5, q. 3 (p. 91a).

[51] Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 315r); Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 4 (p. 317a).

[52] "Nor is it valid to say that the bishop's bodily labor in this is more valuable than so much labor of a layman, because this would have no color [plausibility] except on account of the spiritual thing annexed; and consequently, since so excessive a price is taken on account of it, it seems that principally it is the spiritual thing that is being sold so dearly." Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 6 (74:32–75:4).

[53] "But if one were to insist that the document must be paid for, then I say: a letter costs two pennies; why then must one pay two kopy [a kopa is sixty groschen], another five, another four? No one can truly say that the paper, or the wax, or the

Positive Law Simony

The notion of positive law (*ius positivum*) raises the possibility of an alternative category of annexation. That is, can temporal things be annexed to spiritual things merely by human regulations?[54] We might restate the question using several distinctions, such as the difference between something intrinsically wrong (*malum in se*) and something extrinsically wrong (*malum prohibitum*). However, the typical scholastic approach on this topic was to contrast things prohibited because they are simoniacal (*prohibita quia simoniaca*) with things simoniacal because they are prohibited (*simoniaca quia prohibita*).[55]

The general consensus was that the laws of the church do not have the power to make something simony. Several discussions of this distinction go back to Durandus of Saint-Pourçain. Within a larger discourse on the matter, he observed that the law has no power to make a temporal thing spiritual or a spiritual thing temporal. Therefore, "where there is no simony from the nature of the thing, there cannot be simony from a prohibition of law."[56]

A minority acknowledged a second species of simony arising merely from church law.[57] For example, the confessors' manuals determined that positive law simony required a pact to incur guilt, rather than being established by the will alone.[58]

The most comprehensive English-language treatment of this question appears to be a tract written by John Cawley, archdeacon of

writing costs so much; and they give nothing beyond those things except spiritual power. How then can it truly be said that they do not sell that power for money? And that the letter is not so costly is proved by the fact that when he receives it, he afterward throws it in a corner or in the mud." Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 7.B.

[54] Some historians have framed the term annexation as chiefly addressing this category of human regulation. E.g., Leinz, *Die Simonie*, 11–12, 39.

[55] E.g., Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 185vb).

[56] Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 5 (fol. 318r).

[57] E.g., "another is simony from the prohibition of the church [...] such as the exchange of some temporal thing annexed to a spiritual." Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibeta*, VI, q. 26 (fol. 247v); "this chapter [ruling that penance suffices without restitution] is to be restricted to simony prohibited by the constitution of the church." Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.46 (fol. 83rb).

[58] E.g., John of Freiburg, *Summa confessorum*, I, tit. 1, q. 5 (fol. 1va).

Lincoln, after the Court of Arches gave sentence against him for letting out his archidiaconal jurisdiction to a layman under a yearly pension. Cawley marshaled Durandus and others to defend himself, arguing that his offense was wrong only because it was prohibited (*malum prohibitum*), not prohibited because it was wrong (*prohibitum quia malum*).[59] Further, he saw his penalty as a continuing tyranny of Rome that managed to work its way into the thinking of the English Church.[60]

Luther decried the expansion of the definition of simony merely on the basis of human law: "And now among the papists 'spiritual goods' means revenues, rents, estates, towns, and territories, things that are political in the highest degree."[61] He warned that "in the canon law there is a most perverse abuse and a horrible blindness in the disputations about simony."[62] He further gibed that while the Pope was guilty of violating his own laws in seizing physical properties, "our doctrine frees him from his own books and decrees, and absolves him of the crime of simony."[63] On this count, Luther offered mock consolation: "We therefore absolve the pope of this crime according to the true definition, the crime in which he has entangled himself by his very own law: because he does not sell spiritual things, those which are truly so called (for he does not have them)."[64]

Conclusion

The category of spiritual annexes extends the prohibition of simony beyond the sale of spiritual things themselves to include temporal things whose sale necessarily entails the sale of a spiritual thing. As we have seen, the two principal and mutually exclusive modes of annexation are dependence and direction, although some argued for a third category in positive law simony. Standard examples of spiritual

[59] Cawley, *Nature and Kinds of Simony*, 3.
[60] Ibid., 3.
[61] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 280:11–12).
[62] Ibid., 23:3–4 (WA 43, 280:16–17).
[63] Ibid., 23:3–4 (WA 43, 280:42–281:2).
[64] Ibid., 23:3–4 (WA 43, 281:6–8).

annexes include consecrated things, benefices, tithes, land with rights of patronage, certificates, and books. In each case, the central question is whether the temporal thing was so bound with a spiritual thing that the latter could not be acquired apart from the former.

5

To Buy or Sell

Because Simon Magus sought to purchase the gift of the Spirit, one might be inclined to associate simony particularly with the sin of *buying* the Holy Spirit.[1] However, serious treatments of the matter affirm that simony is committed in both selling and buying. On this point, many referred back to the fifth-century pope Gelasius I and his epistle to the bishops of Lucania, Bruttium, and Sicily, whose twenty-fourth chapter declares, "both giver and receiver alike are caught in the damnation of Simon."[2] Peter Lombard likewise stated, "all givers and receivers are called simoniacs, and both are struck by the same sentence."[3]

Referring to older sources, perhaps going back to Chalcedon, canon 3 of the Second Council of Braga (572) describes "the ancient determination of the fathers" as decreeing, "Let the giver and receiver be accursed."[4] Henry Burton cited this canon favorably[5] and elsewhere wrote that sellers "are as deep in simony, as buyers."[6]

In this chapter, we will first examine the symmetry and asymmetry between buying and selling, considering the relative gravity of each.

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[1] See Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, arg. 1 (fol. 150r).

[2] Gelasius I, *Ep.* 14.24 (p. 375); cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 6.

[3] Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 25, c. 2 (p. 909).

[4] *Second Council of Braga (572)*, c. 3 (PL 84:571C–D).

[5] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 52.

[6] Ibid., 31. In support, he cited Ecclesiasticus 27:2 ("As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones; so doth sin stick close between buying and selling.").

We will then turn to cases where the buyer may be entirely innocent even while the seller is guilty. From there, we will consider the simoniacal nature of withholding spiritual things, whether by silence, false teaching, or refusal to minister. Finally, we will survey the broader circle of guilt, tracing the ways one may participate indirectly in the sin.

Relative Gravity

Wycliffe identified selling and buying as two sides of one coin. Referring to them as "gehazia" (*gesia*) for selling and "simony" (*symonia*) for buying,[7] he refused to grant primacy to either: "And these two poisons, the new and the old, follow one another as correlatives, and each embraces the name of the other."[8] After naming Gehazi the master of sellers and Simon the author of buyers, the twelfth-century theologian Hugh of St. Victor observed that their followers were "not diverse in error." Neither, he continued, were they "distinguished in damnation."[9]

Further, Wycliffe took issue with Aquinas's definition of simony since it speaks of "buying and selling" rather than "buying or selling." Applied too literally, a guilty man might be cleared of charges because he had only bought or only sold. As Wycliffe acknowledged, the art of Latin definitions is not to speak disjunctively; that is, they tend to use "and" (*et*) in listing matters rather than "or" (*vel*).[10] His solution was simply to use the word "exchange" (*commutacio*) to remove ambiguity.[11]

On the one hand, these statements affirming a symmetry of action are unobjectionable; no simoniacal transaction can occur without both seller and buyer. However, if they are to be taken as statements

[7] See Chapter 10, pp. 165–67 for more on this label for selling.

[8] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (2:9–13).

[9] Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis*, II, pars 10, c. 2 (PL 176:477C–D).

[10] Because the English language does not suffer from the same idiomatic expectation, we have taken the liberty to render Aquinas's definition disjunctively as "buying or selling."

[11] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (3:2–8).

of gravity, as though each mode of transaction were equally heinous, there are reasons to object. The sale of spiritual things was typically regarded as worse than the purchase of spiritual things. Weighing the rank of the persons as well as the act, Bonaventure allowed that "a bishop who sells sins more gravely than a subject who buys."[12] In an influential homily on the gospels, Gregory the Great observed that Simon sought to "sell more wickedly what he had wickedly bought."[13] Similarly, Basil of Caesarea wrote in an epistle, "He who through ignorance wants to buy is less guilty than he who sells the gift of God."[14] While the focus of this statement is on the culpability associated with one's understanding, it likewise demonstrates an association between culpability and sale. The seller of a spiritual thing is more likely to be aware that the sale is illicit than the purchaser. Further, as the schoolmen argued, the seller uniquely mismanages a stewardship, giving what he does not own and what he has been commanded to give freely (Matt. 10:8; 1 Cor. 4:1).[15] The purchaser does not labor under the same obligations as the minister.

Licit Purchases

The buyer may incur less guilt than the seller, sometimes even none at all. This occurs specifically when a spiritual good is being wrongly withheld from a purchaser. In this case, the purchaser essentially pays a ransom. In scholastic writings, such a purchaser is said to "redeem vexation" (*redimere vexationem*). In more idiomatic English, we might say that he buys off the harassment.

A number of discussions on this notion point back to Innocent IV's *Commentaria* on the decretals.[16] Admitting the seller's guilt in a simoniacal exchange, he entertained the question of whether the buyer must be guilty:

[12] Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, dub. 3 (p. 657).

[13] Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 4.4 (p. 25).

[14] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 53 (p. 339).

[15] See Chapter 11, p. 184.

[16] See, e.g., the later discussion in Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.24 (fol. 75ra).

> To a layman who plainly has no jurisdiction—whether he despoils a man of a church or has him shunned in fact as though excommunicate—or even to a cleric who does not claim to have acted by right but by force, one may give; for he gives nothing for a spiritual thing, but only for vexation, which one may redeem.[17]

The source text that precedes this quotation deals with an oppressor who holds jurisdiction, but here, the seller is a layman with no jurisdiction at all, only the power to despoil a man of his church or have him shunned as though excommunicate. Innocent framed this scenario because there it is clear that nothing spiritual is being bought, since the culprit has nothing spiritual to sell. The one who pays him only redeems his vexation.

Aquinas described a similar dynamic. Before one acquires a right to a bishopric, "it would be simoniacal to buy off the obstacles of adversaries with money."[18] However, if he has already acquired the right, "it is lawful to remove unjust impediments by means of money."[19] In summary, it would be wrong for someone with no right to a spiritual office to purchase it. However, for someone who holds a right to that office and is unjustly kept from it, it is not necessarily wrong to remove that injustice by means of payment. We might make an analogy in terms of human trafficking. While it would be wrong to buy humans as chattel, it is no crime to ransom one who has been kidnapped. The kidnapper is guilty in the sale, but the ransomer is innocent.

In his gloss on Matthew 10:8, John Major argued that this principle can be applied not only when the purchaser himself is being kept from something to which he has a right, but any time it would keep the seller from some evil action: "It is licit to give money to a man that he may abandon his vice or accommodate himself to virtue."[20] If it may be permissible to pay an elector not to elect an unsuitable candidate, then it may be permissible to pay him to elect a suitable

[17] Innocent IV, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.24 (fol. 500r).
[18] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 2, ad 5.
[19] Ibid., II-II, q. 100, a. 2, ad 5; cf. Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 7.
[20] Major, *In Matthaeum ad Literam Expositio*, 10:8 (fol. 41rb).

one.[21] Redeeming vexation differs from bribery in that it uses money to turn the wicked away from injustice.

This exemption for "redeeming vexation" continued with Protestant authors. William Ames concurred that it is not properly simony for one to give "for the avoiding of unjust troubles" if that man "hath a certain and undoubted right to the spiritual function."[22] Luther himself defended the concept,[23] going so far as to encourage ruling Protestant authorities to pay the pope some thousands of crowns yearly, "that the shedding of blood and the other scandals might cease, and the Gospel might be spread abroad in peace."[24] He added, "This is not simony, but the redemption of vexation."[25]

Theologians of the past repeatedly offered two case studies for this dynamic: Jacob's birthright and baptisms unjustly withheld. Following the exemption through both, we will also examine how prudence must govern its use.

Jacob's Birthright

In Genesis 25:29–34, Esau sells his birthright to Jacob. While the birthright itself may be composed of physical inheritances, there is a spiritual quality associated with primogeniture, the right of the

[21] "I may licitly give money to Sortes [the elector] so that he does not elect an unsuitable man; to this I have an acquired right. And then, to be consistent, it seems one must concede that I may give money to an elector so that he elects a suitable man; and given two candidates, one more suitable and one less, I may give money that he not elect the less suitable, on the view that he sins in electing the less suitable, since I can keep him from sin; and where one man alone is suitable, I may give money that he elect this suitable man, since as soon as the benefice goes to another the collator or elector sins, and in giving it to this most suitable man he does not sin. Therefore I may buy him the benefice." Ibid., 10:8 (fol. 41rb).

[22] Ames, *Conscience*, 5.230.

[23] "Now suppose I wished to strike a bargain with the pope like this: 'I will give you so many thousand gold pieces yearly, and you let me freely and sincerely preach the Gospel.' Would that be simony? No. Because I am not buying what I already have […] I only seek, by offering a thousand gold pieces, to redeem that vexation." Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 425:12–19).

[24] Ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 425:21–24).

[25] Ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 425:24).

firstborn, which included priestly service until the days of Aaron.[26] If Jacob is to be regarded as innocent in his purchase, it seems that there may be nothing wrong in selling or buying spiritual things.

The common response at this point was that Jacob was free to purchase the birthright because it was owed to him.[27] Some argued that Jacob is not to be understood as purchasing at all, speaking of a sale only because his brother reckoned it one.[28]

Luther scorned these discussions, describing the idea of simony in Genesis 25 as the "fantasies" of "sophists,"[29] but his solution differed little. Where the medievals spoke of Jacob being due the birthright by divine election, Luther contended that it was forfeit on account of Esau's contempt.[30] Lecturing on the same passage years later, he added that there was no transaction of a spiritual thing at all, the birthright being on this account already transferred into Jacob's hands.[31] Though dismissing the label of "simony," Luther still spoke of Jacob's

[26] See Exod. 13:2; Num. 3:11–13. This is most commonly discussed among the medievals, but for a Puritan example that addresses Jacob and Esau, see Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 57.

[27] E.g., "The right of the firstborn was due to Jacob by divine election, according to that of Malachi 1[:2–3], 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' And therefore Esau sinned in selling the birthright; Jacob, however, did not sin in buying, because he is understood to have redeemed his own vexation." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 4, ad 3; cf. Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 3, ad 5.

[28] E.g., "Although he said to his brother, 'Sell me your birthright,' he understood: 'Give me the birthright, which by your own judgment is [conveyed] through a sale.'" Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 147rb).

[29] "That the sophists say this sale is simony, we do not care. They say Jacob did not sin, but Esau did because he sold spiritual goods; but these are fantasies." Luther, *Predigten über das erste Buch Mose*, 45 (WA 14, 330:1–3).

[30] "Esau would have sinned even if he had given it away for free, who ought rather to have laid down his life for the dignity of the birthright given by God. Therefore the despiser is despised; trifling with the gift of God, he loses it. Rightly does Jacob claim for himself what the brother despises, whether by stratagem, by price, or for free." Ibid., 45 (WA 14, 330:25–28).

[31] "It is not a real transaction, because the birthright is already in Jacob's hands, and Esau has been stripped of it. Jacob has the possession without the name; Esau has the name without the possession." Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 425:25–28).

stew as belonging to "the redeeming of a vexation."[32] In describing a hypothetical bargain with the pope, he claimed, "I do not buy, but merely throw the adversary a sop and a red lentil."[33]

Baptisms Held to Ransom

Though Lombard does not raise the question himself, the schoolmen often addressed simoniacal baptisms on the fifth distinction of book four of the *Sentences*. In arguing that heretics are indeed able to administer legitimate baptisms, the schoolmen then turned to answer the same question for simoniacs. If the wicked administrator of the sacrament is not just any kind of heretic but a simoniac charging for the service, would one be able to legitimately receive his baptism? It seems that if the recipient of baptism were to pay the administrator, he might engage in simony himself, invalidating the work since wicked men cannot receive a legitimate baptism.

Often, authors appealed to the redemption of vexation: one who pays to be rid of the priest's harassment does not engage in simony, even though the seller does.[34] Additional caveats arise from the conclusions about the *ex opere operato* efficacy of the work reached in the simoniacal orders controversy.[35] If baptism can be administered by so many, it should be easy enough to find someone else to do the work. In the case of a parent for a child, even the parent could perform the baptism himself.[36]

Others insisted that because simony is so great a sin, the baptism of the Spirit—or a baptism of true desire—suffices for an adult in such a condition,[37] so that no one should pay a simoniac for baptism.[38] However, it also appears that works coming to this conclusion do

[32] Ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 420:13–16).

[33] Ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 425:19–20). Shortly thereafter, he added that Jacob "throws Cerberus a sop." Ibid., 25:31–34 (WA 43, 425:30–31).

[34] See Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 5, a. 1, ad quaest. 2 (p. 106a); William de Vaurouillon, *In Sent.* IV, d. 5 (fol. 228r).

[35] See Chapter 1, pp. 13–14.

[36] E.g., ibid., IV, d. 5 (fol. 228r); Biel, *Collectorium*, IV, d. 5, q. un. (sig. g2va).

[37] See ibid., IV, d. 5, q. un. (sig. g2va).

[38] See Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 3, q. 1, ad 8 (p. 385b).

not consider the category of a payment designed to redeem vexation. John Duns Scotus had perhaps the most thorough discussion of this problem. His discourse considers both sides but ultimately decides that baptism itself could not be purchased.[39] One early modern commentator noted that Scotus did not speak in "the mode of the ancients" by employing the phrase "redeeming from vexation," suspecting that the category ran into a special difficulty in this case.[40]

The same principle of removing impediments was extended from the case of one's own baptism to the case of another's coming to the faith at all. The canonist Panormitanus perhaps gave the fullest summary. He acknowledged that authorities had divided but ultimately concluded that one may financially assist in the process if the potential convert already has sufficient motivation to convert. He illustrated it with the observation that "many Jews have amassed great wealth out of the depravity of usury, and they fear to come to the faith, because they would have to restore everything wrongfully taken." One may licitly help such a convert make restitution since the payment clears an obstacle to embracing the faith rather than making a simoniacal appeal to cupidity.[41]

The Rule of Prudence

The category for redeeming vexation is genuine, but as we have seen with baptism, it is narrower than it may at first appear. It is not a blanket license. Its use requires prudential judgment to weigh the good the payment secures against the harm it entails: complicity in another's sin, perpetuation of an evil custom, and scandal to the church. Hence, as we observed, Scotus declined to appeal to the category of redeeming vexation.

Perhaps it is for this reason that Wycliffe spoke of buying and selling as so certainly symmetric. Hus followed after him. Both were concerned not so much with how to live in spite of corruption as with how to confront it directly. Surveying the practice of his own day,

[39] Scotus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 5, q. 2 (16, p. 517).

[40] Ibid., IV, d. 5, q. 2 (16, p. 518).

[41] Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.9, no. 7 (fol. 70vb).

Hus judged that one who qualified to hold office should never pay a fee to enter and continued proleptically:

> But immediately you will object to this: "If this is how it ought to be, then no one should give money, and the officials will not allow it; if everyone did this, no one would be a parish priest." To this I say that if everyone did so, the officials would have to admit them whether they liked it or not.
>
> But you say again: "If I do not give money, another will." To this I say that if you wish to excuse yourself by that argument, then even the executioner, the bailiff, and the harlot will excuse themselves; for each of them says: "If I am not the executioner or the bailiff, another will be; if I am not a harlot, another will be."
>
> You may yet say: "But others commonly give money." And I answer that others commonly sin, yet that does not mean you should sin.
>
> You may yet say: "But it is an ancient custom." And I say that an evil custom, the longer it endures, the greater punishment it incurs from God, as I shall demonstrate later. And I marvel why we do not keep the older and good custom of the holy apostles, which they received from Christ, when he said to them: "Freely you have received, freely give." And why do they not fear the blessing of St. Peter, which he gave to Simon, saying: "Your money perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money."[42]

Hus's rhetoric admits no degrees: he called the purchase a sin without pausing to qualify, and his treatise does not affirm the category of redeeming vexation. Yet neither should we presume he meant to deny it altogether. Each answer to each objection is, in effect, a step in

[42] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 7.B.

this exercise of prudence. That Luther, a self-declared Hussite,[43] later commended such purchases need not imply a theological divergence from his forerunner. Rather, life on different sides of the Reformation required different strategies for faithfulness.

Withholding Spiritual Things

Beyond the strict categories of buying and selling where something spiritual is exchanged, what about those times when a spiritual thing is withheld? If a minister refuses to give freely what he has freely received (Matt. 10:8), he violates this command no less than if he had sold it.[44] The withholding of spiritual things for material gain is therefore itself a species of simony.

No pressure should be brought to bear on those unwilling to give "by the withholding of spiritual things that ought to be furnished, for that would have a certain appearance of selling."[45] Or more directly, "If a minister or pastor of the church were unwilling to teach you about the remission of sins and the benefits of the Gospel, and were to deny you absolution unless you redeemed it from him for a hundred gold pieces—that would be simoniacal."[46] This is true even in extreme conditions. William Vorilong presented the question: "If a curate has nothing in the parish to live on, may he withhold divine [services]?"[47] Appealing to canon law, he answered, "It is said that he cannot; otherwise he would be reckoned a simoniac."[48]

First, we will demonstrate this prohibition by way of the particular example of false teaching. Afterward, we will qualify the nature of the

[43] Writing to Georg Spalatin in 1520, Luther confessed, "we are all Hussites without knowing it." Luther, *Briefwechsel*, no. 254 (WA Br 2, 42:22–25).

[44] "Were he to receive anything for the use of his spiritual power, he would not be understood to be letting out his labor, which he is bound to expend as a debt of the office he has undertaken, but to be selling the very use of spiritual grace." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 3.

[45] Ibid., II-II, q. 100, a. 3, corp..

[46] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 281:27–29).

[47] William de Vaurouillon, *In Sent.* III, d. 3, q. 2 (fol. 164r).

[48] Ibid., III, d. 3, q. 2 (fol. 164r).

obligation to give rather than withhold, which does not apply equally to all outside the office of minister.

The Example of False Teaching

A clear case in point for this is the nature of false teaching. Selling false spiritual things is simony as surely as selling true ones. Both early and later theologians admitted this, although often indirectly. For example, Protestants, while identifying indulgences as false, regarded their sale as simony.[49] Among the medievals, the frequent appeal to the simoniacally distributed false priesthood of Jeroboam demonstrates the same.[50] Hus used 2 Peter 2:3 ("in covetousness will they with false words make merchandise of you") in his description of a distinct class of simoniacs characterized by lies.[51] Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 2:17 supplied a familiar image for the simoniacal conjunction of falsehood and gain.[52]

The Anatomy of Simon Magus puts it precisely, dividing simony into two kinds. One kind sets to sale what is true, making the true ordinances vendible. The other is the speaking of lies: "either for their advantage and gain, they obtrude falsehood and error for truth, and minister to people corrupt, instead of wholesome food; so selling for upright, what is but sophisticate and counterfeit."[53] Such men are bribed "to smother the truth and counsel of God."[54]

The minister who "obtrudes" falsehood necessarily withholds truth. The one who "smothers" it does likewise. Though he has received the truth freely and ought to give it freely, he necessarily hides it when he dispenses lies.

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[49] See Chapter 1, pp. 29–31.

[50] See Chapter 10, pp. 174–75.

[51] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 3.B.

[52] Luther, *Die 6. post Margarethae*, 656; Hall, *Commentary on 2 Timothy*, 225; *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 81.

[53] Ibid., 76.

[54] Ibid., 77.

The Qualification of Obligation

Of course, not *every* act of withholding a spiritual good is simoniacal; for one to be guilty on this front, there must be the obligation to "freely give," which is typically established through spiritual office. In the words of John Major, "it holds generally, and by the law of nature, that a man does not acquire ownership of money by an act which he is bound to do freely."[55] Frequently, this was the reason given against withholding the word or sacraments.

The schoolmen gave the example of a judge to demonstrate this,[56] following Augustine, who denied "that a judge ought to sell a just judgment, or a witness true testimony, on the ground that an advocate sells his just advocacy and a jurist his true counsel."[57] This conclusion was deemed sound because the judge and witness must perform their roles, but the advocate and jurist are not so bound.[58] Accordingly, in matters of spiritual judgment, as in the ecclesiastical courts, such a sale of judgment is simony.[59] Outside of ecclesiastical courts, such judgments are spiritual only by attribution, so the civil judge who sells one commits an injustice rather than simony strictly speaking.[60]

The application to the pastoral office is not that someone outside of it would be permitted to charge for the same activities a minister might perform, but that those outside are certainly not obligated to give freely in the sense of positively giving. The literature also discusses whether a judge could charge for the expenses of traveling to and from

[55] Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 5 (fol. 187va).

[56] E.g., Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 319b).

[57] Augustine, *Ep.* 153.6.23 (CSEL 44, 423:5–7); cf. Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 9.

[58] E.g., "A judge is bound by his office to render judgment; and likewise anyone is bound, from the fact that he is subject to a court, to render true testimony. But an advocate is not bound to lend his advocacy to a case, nor a jurist to give counsel." Ibid., IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 9.

[59] E.g., "For the advocate, in selling just advocacy, does not sell justice, which is spiritual, but his own act; and the same is to be said of the jurist's counsel. But a judge, by selling a true judgment, commits simony, if he is a spiritual judge; otherwise he does not commit simony, but sins gravely." Ibid., IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 9.

[60] See Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 315r).

the place of judgment. Some answered "yes"[61] and others "no."[62] These questions bear on the pastor's office as well.

Indirect Participation

The tradition of moral theology recognized that one could be guilty not only as the principal agent of any sin but also as an accessory. The schoolmen enumerated nine ways of being complicit in another's sin, summarized in a widely known mnemonic couplet:

Iussio, consilium, consensus, palpo, recursus,
Participans, mutus, non obstans, non manifestans.[63]

The nine are command, counsel, consent, flattery, harboring, partaking, silence, not hindering, and not disclosing. These were understood to apply to any sin whatever. English authors likewise treated this catalog as a general framework.[64]

Therefore, while the principal agents of any simoniacal exchange are the buyer and the seller, any mediator is likewise implicated.[65] None of the works surveyed here applies all nine modes of indirect participation systematically to simony, but two abbreviated catalogs are worth considering. One is provided by Wycliffe and Hus, and the other is found in *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*.

[61] E.g., ibid., IV, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 315r).

[62] E.g., Peter the Chanter, Noonan, *Bribes*, 176.

[63] E.g., Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 62, a. 7; Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 15, q. 26 (fol. 96ra).

[64] E.g., Adams, *Commentary on 2 Peter*, 437–40; Ames, *Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 305. "Men may be accessory many ways, by commandment, by counsel, by consent, by partnership, by receiving, by silence when a man ought to speak […]." Perkins, *Galatians*, 99.

[65] See Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.8, no. 3 (fol. 70rb).

Wycliffe and Hus's Six Ways

While Wycliffe introduced these categories more generally elsewhere,[66] he applied six modes of consent to the sin of simony, presenting them in a couplet similar to the one above.

Consentit operans, defendens, consilium dans
Ac auctorisans, non iuvans nec reprehendens.[67]

That is, one consents by cooperating, defending, counseling, authorizing, not helping, and not reproving. He went on to give some description of these in the subsequent paragraph.[68]

Hus took this application of the framework and expanded it in the ninth chapter of his own treatise. While the critical edition does not typeset it accordingly, he seems to have intended a similar couplet in Czech:

pomocí, obranú, radú, potvrzením,
nepomocí a netresktáním.[69]

"So that people may guard against simony on every side," Hus wrote, "we must further know that everyone who consents to simony sins thereby and shares in simony."[70] He then considered each of the six in turn.

By aid: One is guilty of simony "by interceding, brokering among simoniacs, or otherwise providing occasion, whether by letters, by messages, by lending money, by holding their case in court, or by other means."[71]

By defense: Many incur the guilt of simony by defending it, either excusing all who have not been condemned by human courts or at other times obfuscating the nature of the payment, claiming that

[66] Wycliffe, *De officio regis*, cap. 4 (68:2–5).
[67] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 8 (98:19–20).
[68] Ibid., cap. 8 (98:21–99:8).
[69] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 9.A.
[70] Ibid., 9.A.
[71] Ibid., 9.A.

it is made for labor rather than any spiritual thing. However, those who mount such defenses typically participate in the sin directly as well, the defenses being offered "because they themselves run the same course."[72] From there, Hus gave a running commentary on Matthew 23:2–8 along with other comments on passages in the gospels, describing the pride, hypocrisy, and love of honor among the masters of his day, extending his exposition of this mode of participation longer than the other five combined.[73]

By counsel: One partakes of simony by devising ways for the buyer or seller to accomplish a simoniacal exchange. Hus described a great company of such advisors at the papal court, who devise "all manner of wondrous tricks, and all so that the pope and they may gather more money and the buyers may give more."[74] He added, "to describe all these devices, even just those I know of, would take far too long."[75]

By confirmation: All are partakers who assent to simony. Hus placed particular blame on "the powerful kings, princes, and lords, bishops and other dignitaries, who ought to suppress it."[76] He rejected the excuse of one in a position of power who would claim disinterest in the affairs of clergy. A prince who was slandered, robbed, or cuckolded would take vengeance at once, yet simony is a far greater offense since it is against the Holy Spirit himself.[77]

By not helping: Following the preceding concerns, one who has power to prevent his neighbor from sinking in sin toward damnation should act to prevent it. Hus illustrated the point with an analogy: "anyone who sees a person drowning in water and, being able to help, does not help, would be guilty of that person's death."[78]

By not reproving: When one is silent regarding simony, he participates in the sin. On this point, Hus appealed to Romans 1:32 ("those who do such things are worthy of death, not only those who commit

[72] Ibid., 9.A.
[73] Ibid., 9.A–D.
[74] Ibid., 9.E.
[75] Ibid., 9.E.
[76] Ibid., 9.F.
[77] Ibid., 9.F.
[78] Ibid., 9.G.

sins, but those who consent to those who commit them") and Isidore as cited by Gratian: "Whoever consents to those who sin and defends another who is sinning shall be accursed both before God and before men, and shall be punished with the most cruel punishment."[79]

Hus concluded his treatment with an adaptation of a parable originating in Wycliffe's introduction of these six categories in *De officio regis*.[80] Substantially elaborating on Wycliffe's analogy, Hus described a city that a certain king had established and recaptured from enemies at the cost of his own life. If someone then handed that city over for money against the king's will, the guilt would extend not only to the one who surrendered it and the one who received it, but also to the broker, the scribes of both parties, the messengers, the sureties, the negotiators, the moneylender, the one who supplied the paper for the documents, the community that submitted willingly, and the watchman who did not raise the alarm—in short, everyone who participated, by action or inaction. "So it is with simony" because the city that falls victim is that people "whom the Savior himself created, and, fighting at the cost of his own life unto death on the cross, liberated from the devil."[81]

The Anatomist's Four Ways

Asserting that one may commit simony as a principal agent or an abettor,[82] the Anatomist provided four categories of indirect participation: advice, approbation, connivance, and patronizing.[83]

By advice: One incurs the guilt of simony "by promoting of a simoniacal design, in becoming a mediator, or secret agent; either by advice and counsel, or by transacting betwixt the parties, or in behalf of either of them, in any condition, compact, or payment of money; or by using any sinister devices for that effect."[84] On this count,

[79] Ibid., 9.H; cf. C. 11, q. 3, c. 100. See Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, 1:671n1050 for parallel transmissions.

[80] Wycliffe, *De officio regis*, cap. 4 (67:28–68:2).

[81] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 9.H.

[82] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 38.

[83] See ibid., 64–72.

[84] Ibid., 64.

Ezekiel was instructed to prophesy against those who devise mischief and give wicked counsel (Ezek. 11:2–4).[85] Likewise, Jezebel's secret transactions to deliver Naboth's vineyard to Ahab brought down the same judgment upon her as upon Ahab himself (1 Kings 21:23).[86] It is on this ground that Chalcedon decreed so severely against mediators in simoniacal bargains[87] and canon law voided a simoniacal election even when the one elected was ignorant of the promises of money made on his behalf.[88]

By approbation: "Consent or approbation renders a man guilty of the sin to which he consents."[89] On this point, the Anatomist appealed to Psalm 50:18 ("When you saw a thief, you consented with him")[90] and Paul's own confession in Acts 22:20, that "he was *consenting* to the shedding of the blood of that proto-martyr Stephen."[91] "And, is not he then guilty before God," asked the Anatomist, "who, seeing one as a thief and a robber, climbing up into the sheepfold of Christ by simoniacal means, yields his consent thereto?"[92]

By connivance: One incurs the guilt of simony "when, being privy thereto, he winks thereat, or forbeareth, according to his place and calling, either to oppose himself thereto, or to censure the same."[93] As God threatened those who hide their eyes from child sacrifice (Lev. 20:4), punished Eli for conniving at his sons' wickedness (1 Sam. 2; 3:13–14), and rebuked Thyatira for suffering Jezebel (Rev. 2:20), so he does to those who wink at simony.[94] As Solomon said, "Whoso is partner with a thief, hateth his own soul" (Prov. 29:24).[95]

By patronizing: Patronizing occurs when one "takes part with simoniacal persons, and bears them out, either by countenancing

[85] See ibid., 65.
[86] See ibid., 65.
[87] Ibid., 66; cf. *Council of Chalcedon (451)*, can. 2 (ACO II.2.2, 125).
[88] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 66–67; cf. X 5.3.27.
[89] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 67.
[90] Ibid., 67.
[91] Ibid., 67–68.
[92] Ibid., 68.
[93] Ibid., 68–69.
[94] See ibid., 69.
[95] Ibid., 70.

them in their sin, or by pleading for them, or by setting himself out to justify and defend them therein."[96] One who does so, the Anatomist said, espouses the interest of Satan as well as of Simon and "stands upon his side against God."[97] In demonstration, he brought to bear a number of Scripture proofs: adapting the words of Jerubbaal's father to the men of his city (Judg. 6:31), the Anatomist asked, "Will ye plead for Simon Magus? Will ye defend him?"[98] Such a thing is also like helping Ahab (2 Chron. 19:2)[99] or siding with the poor for an evil cause (Exod. 23:3).[100] One should expect severe wrath if he strengthens the hands of evildoers (Jer. 23:14–15).[101]

Conclusion

The sin of simony attaches to both sides of the transaction, but not symmetrically. Both buyer and seller stand condemned, though the seller often bears the greater guilt. The buyer—who may act from ignorance or even from genuine need—may in some cases bear no guilt at all. When he merely "redeems vexation," he does not technically buy a spiritual thing, only a temporal thing.

Yet the symmetry of the sin should not be lost in these qualifications. The transaction requires two parties, and each willingly shares in its corruption. Hus's insistence that the office-seeker should always decline to pay underscores how narrow the exemption for redeeming vexation truly is. Even when offering a sum to obtain what is rightfully his, the buyer may become complicit in perpetuating an injustice. Sometimes, prudence requires refusing to participate at all.

The case of withholding extends the logic still further. By virtue of his office, the minister is obligated to give freely. When he is called to offer truth, he may neither be silent nor offer lies. When other spiritual service is required of him, he must give.

[96] Ibid., 71.
[97] Ibid., 71.
[98] Ibid., 71.
[99] Ibid., 71–72.
[100] Ibid., 72.
[101] Ibid., 72.

Nor does the circle of guilt end with the principal parties. The tradition recognized that one could be complicit in simony through indirect participation, whether by counseling, defending, brokering, conniving at, or simply failing to oppose a simoniacal transaction. Both Hus and the Anatomist cataloged these modes of complicity at length, and both arrived at the same conclusion: silence and inaction in the face of simony are themselves forms of consent. The sin radiates outward from buyer and seller to implicate all who had power to prevent it and did otherwise.

6

An Earnest Desire

Simony is an "earnest desire" (*studiosa voluntas*) to commercialize spiritual things, but the English rendering of this phrase varies across sources. Some have rendered it as a "deliberate will" or "express will."[1] Thomas Aquinas explained that *voluntas* indicates simony as a matter of the will rather than the intellect and *studiosa* implies choice (*electio*).[2] That is, there must be a willful desire for the exchange, not just a rational appetite for spiritual things exceeding that of temporal things. For this reason, the medieval works on simony routinely responded to Daniel 4:27[3] ("redeem your sins with alms") as a stock objection.[4] Gregory the Great's gloss on Matthew 4:18–22 ("Immediately they left their nets and followed him") that "the kingdom of God is worth as much as you have"[5] often attends this consideration as well.[6] These works treated Daniel's "redeem" and Gregory's valuation alike as metaphors for merit, not as authorization for commerce in spiritual

[1] For "deliberate will," see Jone, *Moral Theology*, 104; for "express will," see Prümmer, *Handbook of Moral Theology*, 207.

[2] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 2.

[3] Vulgate, Dan. 4:24.

[4] E.g., Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 3, ad 1 (fol. 315r); Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 1; Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146rb).

[5] Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 5.2 (p. 28).

[6] All three works just cited quote it alongside the Daniel text. It is also quoted apart from that text, as at Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4, s.c. 5 (pp. 647–48) and Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, arg. 3.

things.[7] Both texts nevertheless show that it is proper to recognize how far spiritual things surpass temporal ones and, in that sense, to desire such an exchange.[8]

In other words, the qualifier of "earnest" (*studiosa*) indicates that in order for this "desire" (*voluntas*) to be sinful, it must proceed from the will as a choice. There is no sin in recognizing that the things of God are to be valued more than money and that such an exchange, if it were lawful, would be to one's benefit (Prov. 23:23). The sin is in a desire that discounts those matters which undermine its lawfulness. Lust, likewise, is not in recognizing female beauty or even in the desire for sexual intercourse upon lawful conditions, but in the earnest desire (*ἐπιθυμῆσαι*) that does not fully appreciate such qualifications (Matt. 5:28).

On both of these counts, Wycliffe preferred the phrase "inordinate willing" (*inordinata volicio*).[9] First, "inordinate" (*inordinata*) indicates a disordered will in contrast to a rightly ordered will that makes licit exchanges for spiritual things. He gave several examples: we are to "buy without silver" (Isa. 55:1), teachers are to receive a temporal stipend in the context of their instruction (1 Cor. 9:11), and transactions involving tithes, offerings, and other sacred things may in some cases be lawful.[10] Second, "willing" (*volicio*) indicates that there must be an act of the will but does not require any extrinsic act (*actus extrinsecus*). While he acknowledged that this is all almost certainly intended by *studiosa voluntas*, he believed that *inordinata volicio* disambiguated the matter.[11]

At least Wycliffe's second concern—if not his first—is justified in light of some alternative definitions that have been offered. Some medievals proposed that *studiosa voluntas* be taken to mean "an act

[7] E.g., "those expressions are metaphorical, speaking of buying by way of a likeness, and calling merit itself a purchase." Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 1; cf. Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4, ad 5 (p. 648).

[8] E.g., Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 3; Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 2 (14:31–15:4, 15:11–12).

[9] Ibid., cap. 1 (2:13–16).

[10] Ibid., cap. 1 (2:16–30).

[11] Ibid., cap. 1, 2 (2:36–3:2, 14:26–32).

of will carried through to effect."[12] However, such proposals seem to belong more to canonical jurisprudence than to moral theology. For example, Richard of Middleton offered this definition because although the desire to buy or sell spiritual things is itself a sin, "it nevertheless does not oblige one to renounce or restore the thing acquired."[13] He set this reading alongside the alternative of a desire that is "not one that comes over him unawares [*subreptoria*], but one he chooses [*eligens*]."[14]

Yet this is not the most common understanding of the phrase, nor does it seem to be Aquinas's. This may be seen in his response to the objection that his definition was unenforceable on account of its being based on an internal movement of the heart. He acknowledged that a man is not punished as a simoniac in the church's external forum, but insisted, "as regards God, the will alone makes a man a simoniac."[15]

Our own English rendering of *studiosa voluntas* as "earnest desire" has been adopted on two counts. First, it reflects Wycliffe's concern to choose words that describe an activity of the will without requiring an extrinsic activity. To the modern English reader, "deliberate" may exclude the first motions of sinful desires, and "express" may go even further in altogether excluding that which is inward (*actus interior*). The sin with which we concern ourselves is not one that is only committed when it has been "expressed" in some outward deed. One who earnestly desires to buy or sell spiritual things is one who truly would prefer to make such an exchange over and against considerations to the contrary. Second, this rendering is the one chosen by both Henry Burton[16] and the Anatomist,[17] whose model for retrieval we have

[12] Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 2, q. 1, ad 1 (p. 382b); cf. Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 1, ad 1; Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 2 (foll. 150r–v).

[13] Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 2, q. 1, ad 1 (p. 383a); cf. Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 1, ad 1.

[14] E.g., Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 2, q. 1, ad 1 (p. 383a); Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 1, ad 1.

[15] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 6, ad 6.

[16] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 2.

[17] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 25, 39.

followed thus far. Apart from any reason to the contrary, it seems right to continue in their pattern.

The frameworks in which theologians understood "earnest desire" were varied. However, as we have seen with Wycliffe and Aquinas, this diversity lay primarily in terminology rather than substance. Later writers increasingly consolidated these distinctions into a common framework, so while our survey will include earlier sources, we will rely largely on later ones to present a unified account of the earnest desire of simony in its various degrees of expression. We will also consider several justifications from motive that have been offered in defense of simoniacal exchanges and the answers given by the schoolmen and canonists. Finally, we will consider the earnest desire in hating simony that must stand against the earnest desire of simony itself.

Taxonomies of Expression

Two taxonomies of the earnest desire developed, and they overlap considerably. Their distinction lies in their emphasis. The first describes how far the desire has been carried out—from internal desire, through attempt, to completed deed. The second describes what form the transaction has taken—whether it remains hidden, takes shape in an agreement, or actually results in an exchange.

A Taxonomy of Stages

Simoniacal desire is expressed in several stages. One taxonomy enumerates these stages relative to the individual himself, as he expresses his simoniacal will. While not specific to the topic of simony, writers often discussed this feature of human behavior by pairing "affection" (*in affectu*) with "effect" (*in effectu*). For example, John Major concluded the first redaction of his treatment of simony with the observation that "simony stands in the affection [*in affectu*] and in the effect [*in effectu*]."[18]

[18] Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 149ra).

One need not be capable of executing the deed for his desire to be simoniacal. Major also spoke of a "conditional simony" (*simonia conditionalis*), in which one would like to commit simony if certain conditions, such as having enough money, were met.[19] Furthermore, a simoniacal desire need not be an active desire to sell; it could instead consist in resistance to giving freely. In other words, it may be a matter of nolition (*nolitio*) rather than volition (*volitio*).[20]

The Anatomist added a middle stage of endeavor (*in conatu*). While the notion of an effect would technically include all such outward actions, the threefold division makes explicit that guilt attaches not only to desire and completed deed but also to the attempt itself, even an unsuccessful one. One may therefore be guilty of simony *in affectu*, *in conatu*, or *in effectu*.[21]

Latin	English	Meaning
in affectu	In Affection	Desire
in conatu	In Endeavor	Attempt
in effectu	In Effect	Execution

After explaining each category, the Anatomist went on to describe the various mechanisms by which simony may come to full fruition.[22]

A Taxonomy of Modes

More often, though, simoniacal expression is subdivided according to the character of the attempted or completed exchange. These modes of simony are *simonia mentalis*, *simonia conventionalis*, and *simonia realis*.

[19] Ibid., d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb).

[20] "There is some simony that is not a volition nor a habit of one. This is clear: if someone were to have this resolution, 'I do not wish to give a benefice without money,' such simony is a nolition, but it is equivalent to a volition." Ibid., d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb).

[21] See *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 38.

[22] Ibid., 45ff. We will take this up in Chapter 7.

Latin	English	Meaning
simonia mentalis	Mental Simony	Desire
simonia conventionalis	Conventional Simony	Agreement
simonia realis	Real Simony	Execution

This threefold taxonomy was a relatively late formulation. Panormitanus, writing in the first half of the fifteenth century, was among the earliest to set it out in his commentary on the decretals. He divided simony into three kinds, defining mental and conventional simony but leaving the third category unnamed.[23] These categories were not more fully developed until later, by the canonists and theologians of the Counter-Reformation.[24] Regardless, later Protestant authors adopted this terminology.[25]

Additionally, earlier authors tended to use these terms as mutually compatible or even as cumulative. When used in the latter sense, they functioned similarly to the aforementioned categories of *in affectu*/*in effectu*. That is, simony begins as *simonia mentalis* and continues by possibly being attached to a pact or ending in a successfully executed exchange. For example, John Major affirmed of simony that "all of it is mental."[26] In the broadest, mutually compatible sense, something labeled "simony" could be any combination of these. Mental simony is anything that is not done in ignorance but carries a simoniacal intent, conventional simony could be any simoniacal exchange involving a pact,[27] and real simony is simply any simoniacal exchange that is actually carried out.

But later usage of the terminology converged on a mutually exclusive sense.[28] Mental simony referred specifically to those completed

[23] Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.14 (fol. 72rb); cf. Suárez, *De Religione*, cap. 41, n. 2 (p. 565).

[24] See ibid., cap. 41 (p. 565).

[25] E.g., Ames, *Conscience*, 5.230; *An Essay Against Simony*, 23.

[26] Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145va).

[27] E.g., Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.14 (fol. 72rb).

[28] E.g., Ames, *Conscience*, 5.230; *An Essay Against Simony*, 23; Stillingfleet, *Bonds of Resignation*, 29. Francisco Suárez gave some account of the evolution here. Suárez, *De Religione*, cap. 41, nn. 2–4 (pp. 565–66).

exchanges which were outwardly licit and could not be certainly discerned as simoniacal by external actions.[29] Conventional simony referred to simoniacal pacts that had not been completed. Real simony referred to outwardly simoniacal exchanges that had been completed.

The point of these categories was primarily to demonstrate guilt beyond outwardly simoniacal exchanges, so the category of "real" simony was employed the least[30] and "mental" the most. Acts of mental simony are simoniacal only in the internal forum (*in foro interiori*), by intent. So it is said, "intention makes a man a simoniac."[31] For example, one who purchases a property with an attached right of patronage may or may not do so for the sake of the advowson, but the one who does is guilty before God.

"Conventional" simony fell between the two in frequency of use. Such agreements need not be verbal; they may be established by mutual understanding alone.[32] Nor need the pact even be concluded; Simon Magus failed to make any agreement with Peter, yet was condemned for the attempt.[33] As the Fourth Council of Toledo (633) declared, even those who so much as endeavor to secure an ecclesiastical office with money are unfit for the priesthood.[34]

Beyond mere instruction and exhortation, this taxonomy was employed to distinguish corresponding penalties. Mental simony required penance alone, the ecclesiastical forum being unable to judge hidden intentions.[35] Conventional simony and real simony could re-

[29] Ibid., cap. 41, n. 3 (pp. 565–66).

[30] As already seen with Panormitanus.

[31] *Intentio facit hominem simoniacum*; Glossa ordinaria ad X 5.3.34 (pp. 1159–60). The Anatomist attributed this quotation to Bernardus Compostellanus, though the ordinary gloss is Bernard of Parma's. *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 39.

[32] See Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146ra).

[33] See ibid., d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb).

[34] *Fourth Council of Toledo (633)*, can. 19 (pp. 278–79).

[35] See Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (foll. 145va, 149ra); Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.20 (fol. 74ra); ad X 5.3.29, no. 2 (fol. 76ra); ad X 5.3.34, no. 5 (fol. 80ra); ad X 5.3.38 (fol. 81ra).

sult in deposition,[36] and any completed simoniacal exchange required restitution.[37]

Insufficient Motivations

Since simony resides fundamentally in the will, it would seem to follow that one may be able to excuse a simoniacal transaction so long as the underlying motivation is innocent. Medieval theologians therefore found it necessary to counter a number of justifications in which one pointed to pure motivations that contained no malice. However, one need not have malicious intent for his desire to be simoniacal. An earnest desire to buy or sell spiritual things is simoniacal even if it forms out of ignorance or weakness.[38] Objections to the contrary reduce to a plea of expedience, which the schoolmen and canonists rejected.

To Raise Sufficient Resources

While many exchanges of spiritual things were for private gain, some had the purpose of maintaining a spiritual work. In particular, monasteries and collegiate churches often had limited resources, and the admission of new members placed real financial burdens on the community. Many therefore justified charging for entrance into the society, claiming that if financial impartiality in admissions were maintained, "all religious houses would perish, because so many would be placed there that their goods would not suffice; and this seems unfitting."[39] Such practices were common. In part, their extent may be gauged from Thomas of Strasbourg's observation that "certain nuns of Germany" very explicitly demanded temporal goods from those who would enter

[36] "A simoniac is to be deposed […] simony […] renders him unfit for the execution of his office." Ibid., ad X 5.3.6, no. 1 (fol. 69vb).

[37] E.g., "in conventional simony a man is bound to restore such spiritual or temporal things unlawfully received." Ibid., ad X 5.3.34, no. 5 (fol. 80ra).

[38] See Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 1; cf. Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 2, q. 1, ad 1 (p. 383a).

[39] Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, quaest., s.c. 1 (p. 92b).

their community.[40] Wycliffe complained of a related practice among the friars, who for an annual fee sold laymen letters of confraternity, ostensibly promising them a share in the order's spiritual suffrages. He argued that it went hand in hand with their preaching for money, both being simony.[41]

The canonists and schoolmen gave the same answer at this point: no community may exact a fee for entrance into religious life, but if funds are truly lacking, it may decline to receive those it cannot sustain.[42] However, it may accept from an entrant, apart from any pact, the means of his own maintenance, and so admit a member its goods would not otherwise allow.[43]

Theologians inquired how a house might non-coercively request such provision. In general, a house might state its needs plainly, but for anything not strictly needed, it may not ask at all.[44] Astesanus of Asti relayed from the canonists a set form of words that stayed within the rule: "We gladly and freely receive you into our spiritual fellowship; but since our goods do not suffice for us and for you, bring with you the means to live."[45] In all of these accounts, necessity (*necessitas*) may warrant requiring money, but admission may not be given in return for payment under a contractual arrangement (*pactum*).[46]

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[40] Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2 (fol. 150v). See also Groote, *De simonia ad beguttas*, 16–18; Lynch, *Simoniacal Entry*, 220–21.

[41] Wycliffe, *De apostasia*, cap. 2 (36:22–30).

[42] For relevant canon law, see C. 1, q. 2; X 5.3.8; X 5.3.19; X 5.3.30.

[43] E.g., "When the possessions of some religious house do not suffice to sustain more persons, then something may be required of one who wishes to serve God in that place, not as a price of religion, but that the monastery may have the means to provide for him; and therefore simony is not committed. But if he can be received without burden to the church, it is simony to require anything for his reception." Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 7; cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 4; Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2 (fol. 150v).

[44] E.g., Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 3, q. 2, ad 6 (p. 386b).

[45] Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 4 (fol. 165r); cf. Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 148ra).

[46] E.g., "To receive [someone] under an agreement [*sub pacto*], especially where the house has no need, is openly simony. To the argument it must be said that admission is not granted because of the payment; rather, necessity exacts it, for they would

While religious societies provided a common case study, the principle was not confined to them. An actual lack of financial capacity could justify withholding some spiritual benefit until the need was met, but a commercial exchange remained impermissible, however advantageous it might seem to the work being done. Wycliffe set the limit even on a minister's own sustenance: "But first, ere men do simony, they should travail with their hands, or go to another people, or rather starve in their body."[47]

To Practice Charity

Another attempted justification of motive is to practice charity (almsgiving). That is, some considered it acceptable to sell spiritual things in order to give the proceeds to the poor. Gratian identified the error with this line of reasoning: it is objected that "sinister beginnings often reach happy outcomes"—Jacob reached the blessing by supplanting, a leprous hand sows a crop that is harvested clean, an adulterous union bears a beautiful child, "so too money that is acquired through simony has a happy outcome when it is distributed to benefit the poor." "But none of these things," he answered, "defends the simoniacs."[48] And in a canon drawn from Gregory, he laid down the rule: "Committing the sins of the simoniacal heresy under the pretext of almsgiving must be strictly avoided. For it is one thing to give alms on account of sins and quite another to commit sins on account of almsgiving."[49]

Puritan writers concurred. Burton recorded that people made similar objections in his own time, claiming to use for a charitable purpose money received for preferment.[50] To answer this objection,

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gladly receive him freely, and that need is why they consider money when conferring the place." Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad quaest. (p. 94b).

[47] Wycliffe, *Sermons*, serm. 83 (1, p. 284).

[48] C. 1, q. 1, d.p.c. 24, § 1.

[49] C. 1, q. 1, c. 27, § 2; cf. Gregory I, *Ep.* 9.218 (2, 207:24–27).

[50] "Another objection doth here cross my way on the patron's behalf, Sir, you need not be so rigid against giving and receiving for a spiritual preferment: for, for my part, I have a good intent to convert such money to some charitable use, as to bestow it in alms, etc." Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 65.

he appealed to Gratian, as cited above,[51] and further described such charity as no different from the purchase of the field of blood with Judas's blood money.[52] John Downame was no less severe, describing those who give alms out of money gotten by simony as "much more abominable" than those who give out of money gotten by oppression.[53] Just as the Deuteronomic code forbade the wages of a harlot to be offered to the Lord (Deut. 23:18), so the ill-gotten gain of simony may not be offered.[54]

To Encourage Charity

A less common but related justification is that of encouraging charity. Unlike the justification just considered, which gives simoniacal proceeds away as alms, this argument holds that the sale of spiritual things encourages good works, since it induces the purchaser to give.

Albert the Great considered an argument defending charges for entry to a religious society: "Further, it is not evil to induce men to give alms; therefore if they induce [them] to bestow an alms by receiving a man whom they otherwise would not receive, it is not evil;

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[51] Ibid., 65–66.

[52] "Like the high priests' charity, who with Judas treason-money, by some called simony, bought, forsooth, a field to bury strangers in. But for all this charitable work, by divine ordination (as Lyra saith) the field got such a name, as could never be washed off. For it is called, the field of blood to this day. Matt. 27:8." Ibid., 66.

[53] "But much more abominable are their alms, who spoil the Church by simony and sacrilege, and taking into their possession the portion of Levi, which is consecrated unto God, think to please the Lord, and as it were, satisfy for their sin, by giving some small alms to the poor, or keeping good hospitality of the spoils of the Church. And that not only for the time past, but with a resolution to continue still in their sin, paying these pittances to the poor, as the price or penalty of their sacrilegious wickedness: but unto these may be well fitted the saying of the Holy Ghost. Prov. 21:27. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: How much more when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" Downame, *The Plea of the Poore*, 67.

[54] "If the hire of an harlot, or price of a dog, might not be consecrated unto God, because they were an abomination unto him, then neither may we offer that which we have gotten by stealth and robbery [. . .] Whereby it appeareth that men cannot lawfully give alms out of those goods which they have gotten by theft and rapine, bribery and extortion, simony and usury, dicing and unlawful gaming." Ibid., 64–65.

therefore it is not simony."[55] Albert did not answer this argument directly, but effectively dismissed it on the ground that reception under an agreement is simony whatever end the payment serves. A house may count the devotion a man's generosity shows toward it among his qualifications for entry, but his reception on account of his gift may never take place by way of agreement.[56]

The objection therefore fails on its own terms: a payment made in exchange for some spiritual benefit is not charity but commerce. True almsgiving should be motivated by good will, but an exchange by agreement corrupts the nature of good works by attaching a contractual reward. On this point, one canon reasoned, "For we have never read that the Lord's disciples, or those converted by their ministry, enticed anyone to the worship of God by holding out any gift."[57] Generosity may and should be motivated by divine reward (Prov. 19:17; Heb. 11:6), but that reward comes at a time of God's choosing and apart from any human contract (Matt. 6:3–4).

Simony in the sale of indulgences and prayers provides a clear example of how such purchases are contrary to charity. The one who purchases an indulgence under the pretense of almsgiving offers no real sacrifice since he seeks to secure a benefit from man. While many of the schoolmen did not see inconsistency in defending these practices,[58] Protestants and proto-Reformers highlighted the hypocrisy. As Peter Martyr Vermigli remarked of the religion of Rome, "With their indulgences they corrupt good works: for they take away from alms their proper end, the glory of God. They say they are given so that punishments may be taken away."[59]

[55] Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, quaest., s.c. 2 (p. 92b).

[56] Ibid., IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad quaest. (p. 94b); Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 4.

[57] C. 1, q. 2, c. 2.

[58] For indulgences, see Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 20, pars 2, a. un., q. 4, ad 1 (pp. 536–37); for prayers, see Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 2.

[59] Vermigli, *Loci Communes*, 3.8.37 (p. 612).

To Uphold Custom

Another attempted justification was custom (*consuetudo*), which in canon law can carry legal force. One may reason that a longstanding practice cannot be simoniacal, for if it were, it would have been corrected long ago. Furthermore, to uphold the customs of the church would appear to be a worthy objective that warrants participation in the transactions they require. The *Liber extra* rejected this notion in many chapters,[60] which we will now consider.

The Council of Tours (1163) explained the basic principle: "The passage of time does not diminish a sin, but aggravates it."[61] The Third Lateran Council (1179) addressed those who invoked long-standing custom to justify charging fees to enthrone bishops and abbots, install priests, bury the dead, bless marriages, or confer other sacraments. It called them "blinded by greed" and warned that anyone who persisted would "have his portion with Gehazi."[62]

In a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Innocent III addressed an ingenious evasion. Certain of the archbishop's suffragans had been exacting payment for chrism. Hoping to elude his correction, they did not cease but merely collected earlier in the year and renamed the payment: first "chrismals," then "paschals," and finally "mid-Lenten customs." Innocent responded that a new name absolves no one of guilt. Such deception is to "cloak simony under an honest name," but "God is not mocked."[63]

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[60] X 5.3.8; X 5.3.9; X 5.3.16; X 5.3.19; X 5.3.21; X 5.3.36; X 5.3.39. John Major likewise addressed this issue at length, Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 4 (foll. 186ra–187rb).

[61] *Council of Tours (1163)*, can. 6 (Mansi 21:1178D); cf. X 5.3.8.

[62] "Many think that this is permitted to them, because they consider that long-standing custom has given it the force of law, not sufficiently paying attention—since they are blinded by greed—to the fact that crimes are all the graver for how long they have held the unhappy soul bound. […] If anyone shall presume to act against this, let him know that he will have his portion with Gehazi, whose deed he imitates by exacting a shameful reward." *Third Lateran Council (1179)*, can. 7 (Mansi 22:221E–222A); cf. X 5.3.9.

[63] "Gaping after shameful gain and saying in their hearts, 'There is no God,' they cloak simony under an honest name, as though by changing the name the guilt and the penalty would be transferred. But God is not mocked, according to the apostle, nor will such followers of Simon—even if they perhaps evade temporal

The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) was especially direct. It identified the practice of defending simoniacal exactions by appeal to custom and gave the definitive rejoinder: "We utterly reject this custom, which ought rather to be called a corruption."[64] While a custom may have the force of law, corruption cannot. This same council ordered that laypeople who, out of "the leaven of heretical depravity," undermined pious customs of giving should be restrained.[65] Yet the same canon prohibited clerical exactions.

Righteous Indignation

It is not sufficient merely to abstain from the earnest desire to buy or sell spiritual things; one must actively hate simony. As Gregory the Great admonished, "whoever does not burn vehemently to amend this crime out of regard for his office, let him not doubt that he will have his portion with him from whom this defiling outrage first arose."[66] In binding the duty to the office one holds, Gregory indicated that those in higher positions must exhibit a greater passion against the sin. Yet that is not to suggest that those who hold no particular office have no responsibility to burn against simony. The duty is measured

[punishment] in the present—escape eternal punishment in the future, since neither will the respectability of a name cloak the malice of the crime, nor will a word be able to abolish guilt." Innocent III, *Reg.* 2.96 (208:4–9); cf. X 5.3.36.

[64] "Some endeavor to defend this baseness and depravity by a custom long observed. Wishing therefore to abolish so great an abuse, we utterly reject this custom [*consuetudinem*], which ought rather to be called a corruption [*corruptela*], firmly decreeing that for these things—whether to be conferred or already conferred—no one presume under any pretext whatsoever to exact or extort anything. Otherwise both the one who receives and the one who gives such a wholly condemned price shall be condemned along with Gehazi and Simon." *Fourth Lateran Council (1215)*, can. 63 (Mansi 22:1051C); cf. X 5.3.39.

[65] *Fourth Lateran Council (1215)*, can. 66 (Mansi 22:1054D–E); cf. X 5.3.42.

[66] Gregory I, *Ep.* 12.9 (2, 357:3–5). Later writers cite it in the form that carried into canon law: "Whoever, therefore, does not burn vehemently against the simoniacal and neophyte heresy [the ordination of novices (1 Tim. 3:6)] according to the station of his office, let him not doubt that he will have his portion with him who first committed this defiling outrage." C. 1, q. 1, c. 5; cf. Wido, *Widonis monachi epistola*, 5:10–13.

by capacity: inasmuch as one has a voice against this sin, he must proportionally have the heart to use it in earnest.

Like many works on simony, *The Anatomy of Simon Magus* quotes this remark from Gregory,[67] but it additionally returns to emphasize the same point repeatedly. For example, the Anatomist wrote, "If the heinousness and impiety of this sin of simony were seriously considered, it could not but beget a perfect detestation and abhorrency thereof, in the heart of any true Christian."[68] A lack of disgust proceeds from too little meditation on the sin, or from no conversion at all. Again, he exhorted the reader, "Wherefore I beseech you, if ever any man shall henceforth come to tempt you to such a simoniacal bargain, by the offer of money, or any bribe, let your indignation evidence your abhorrency of such a sin, and your detestation of such a person; and say to him as Simon Peter said to Simon Magus, 'Thy money perish with thee.' And I'm sure the reward of such honest zeal shall meet you in heaven."[69]

Conclusion

Simony exists not only in a completed transaction but in various stages, as it extends from an internal earnest desire to outward expression and execution, from mental to conventional to real. Canon law may penalize only what is outward and adjudicable, but before God the will alone suffices to make a simoniac.

Nor can an innocent motive excuse the earnest desire to buy or sell spiritual things. The justifications examined above—sustaining a religious community, laundering proceeds through alms, encouraging charity, upholding custom—were each answered by the schoolmen and canonists. A pious end does not alter the nature of a simoniacal exchange. Genuine necessity may limit how many members a community can receive, and voluntary giving is permitted in the absence

[67] *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 70.
[68] Ibid., 98.
[69] Ibid., 188–89.

of a pact, but no goodness of intention converts the sale of spiritual things into something lawful.

Finally, because the sin consists in a desire, the remedy also lies in the heart. It is not enough to refuse simoniacal bargains; one must hate them, each according to his capacity.

PART III

Ministerial Maintenance

7

Gifts

Exchanging something for a spiritual thing makes one guilty of simony, whatever the thing exchanged. It might be objected that because Simon Magus offered money (Acts 8:18), a transaction must be financial in order to constitute simony. However, this line of reasoning quickly evaporates as one examines how many things may be exchanged for money, thereby themselves being of financial value.[1] In fact, reasonably or otherwise, men similarly value many things, so exchanging spiritual things for any of them counts as simony.

The matter is plain enough, but many have nonetheless supposed that a man may offer certain things in exchange for spiritual things without incurring the guilt of simony. In a relatively extreme example, Blaise Pascal contended against the Jesuit casuistry that would permit selling spiritual things so long as money was offered as a "motive" rather than a "price."[2] That is, so long as the amount exchanged is not truly proportional to the spiritual thing, it is permissible. Since spiritual things are by definition priceless, this would mean that any exchange for a material thing is permitted. In this framework, Simon himself is cleared of the sin that bears his name.

The kind of thing given therefore makes no difference to the guilt. Instead, the question is whether any gift is given in exchange for a spiritual thing, and how to discern the matter by the quality or circumstances of the gift.

[1] See Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 4 (fol. 315r).
[2] Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, 174; 187.

The Gregorian Triad

Almost all discussions on this matter go back to Gregory the Great, who provided the standard classification of gifts. Expounding Matthew 10:8, he quoted the Latin text of Isaiah 33:15 ("He who shakes his hands free from every gift") to observe that it speaks of "every gift" (*omni munere*) rather than merely "a gift." At this point, he exhorted the hearer to reject three kinds of gifts in divine matters:[3]

Latin	English	Description
munus a manu	a gift of the hand	material things or rights of pecuniary value
munus a lingua	a gift of the tongue	praise or commendation
munus ab obsequio[4]	a gift of service	service or obsequious conduct

These distinctions were embraced by many who touched on the subject afterward, including Gratian,[5] Thomas Aquinas,[6] Bonaventure,[7] John Wycliffe,[8] Peter Martyr Vermigli,[9] and even later divines like William Ames[10] and James Durham.[11] They appear not only in works on simony but also in writings on related ethical topics like bribery and usury. Many of the works that feature the triad directly attribute it to Gregory's homily, remarking on the relevance of both Isaiah 33:15 and Matthew 10:8.

[3] Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 4.4 (p. 25). This triad is unrelated to the later development of the *munus triplex*, the threefold office of Christ.

[4] Writers who quoted Gregory's sermon listed *munus ab obsequio* first as he did, but those who restated the triad usually placed it last as ordered here.

[5] C. 1, q. 1, c. 114.

[6] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 78, a. 2; II-II, q. 100, a. 5.

[7] Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, dub. 6 (pp. 658–59).

[8] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (3:32–4:8).

[9] Vermigli, *Loci Communes*, 2.8.14 (p. 250).

[10] Ames, *Conscience*, 4.67–68.

[11] Durham, *A Practical Exposition of the X. Commandements*, 409–10.

Writing in 1909, Nicholas Weber reported, "Subsequent ages have brought no addition to this interpretation of the material price."[12] More than a century on, his verdict needs no revision.

Speech and Service

Gifts of the hand, being material things or rights of pecuniary value, need little definition, but the other two members of the triad are not as easily recognized. We will here examine several examples that recur throughout the literature.

Formal Commendations

There are various gifts of the tongue. Some of these more obviously function as a price, tending toward matters of financial value such as commendations to high positions. For example, one who commends another to an ecclesiastical position gives the gift of the tongue in exchange for a spiritual honor, even though the honor is bestowed on another.[13] If such an entreaty is made on behalf of one who is unworthy, it constitutes simony.[14]

However, a commendation made on behalf of a worthy person is not thereby simoniacal. If words tend toward alleging a man's fitness rather than toward securing the office for him, then such words are

[12] Weber, *A History of Simony in the Christian Church*, 199.

[13] Recall that simony became entrenched through the right of presentation. See Chapter 1, p. 10.

[14] E.g., "And this is to be understood of the case where that spiritual thing is obtained by entreaties on behalf of an unworthy person." Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166a).

only a secondary cause of the appointment.[15] A truthful commendation is right to give and right to be desired.[16]

The same is true in the opposite direction, where spiritual things are given in order to secure a commendation. For example, Henry Burton spoke of "sermon simony," in which a man about to purchase a benefice preaches a showpiece sermon to win a commendation, which then satisfies the patron's conscience that he has preferred a worthy man.[17] But if he preaches with the desire to sincerely demonstrate his capacities and so receive a truthful commendation, and that desire is only a secondary cause of his preaching, he is innocent.

Praise and Flattery

Some gifts of the tongue less obviously function as a price, having no apparent financial value. For example, can mere praise constitute a simoniacal exchange even though it does not result in any financial advantage? John Chrysostom asked and answered, "For what, though you give no money, but instead of money employ flattery, and contrive many things, and use much scheming? May your silver perish with you!"[18] Augustine similarly concluded that exchanging spiritual things for praise was its own sort of commerce: "those who seek such things are selling."[19]

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[15] The same passage continues: "For otherwise, if it is obtained for a worthy person, and it is not given principally for the sake of the entreaties but secondarily, in this way simony would not be committed. Hence caution should be applied here, so that the entreaties do not tend directly toward obtaining the thing for the person, but toward alleging his sufficiency [his qualifications], so that they may thus be rather words of allegation and testimony than words of begging and beseeching." Ibid., IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166a).

[16] See also Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 147va).

[17] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 41–42.

[18] Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta apostolorum*, 3.5 (PG 60:41).

[19] "For what does it profit to acquire in this age any temporal and transitory thing whatever, whether it be money, or the pleasure of the belly and the throat, or honor in human praise? […] My brethren, those who seek such things are selling. For even that Simon wished to buy the Holy Spirit for this reason: because he wished to sell the Holy Spirit." Augustine, *Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis*, 10.6 (PL 35:1469).

Not only is it wrong to flatter one's way to some spiritual thing or into some ecclesiastical office, but it is also wrong to give any spiritual thing in order to be flattered. This occurs when one rightly gives a deserved church position, but does so for the sake of praise,[20] or when a minister preaches for the sake of approval.[21] In either case, he exchanges a spiritual thing for a temporal thing. Furthermore, those who do such a thing do not preach Christ, but themselves (cf. 2 Cor. 4:5).[22]

Though one ought not perform spiritual labor for temporal honors, he may do so for a good name in the kingdom of heaven. As Albert the Great remarked, "the fame of the saints rests in spiritual things."[23] The underlying concern is not that spiritual labor should lack all motivation but that its primary motive must exclude temporal reward sought from man.

Personal Favor

Personal favor, a gift of service, is not to be given for the sake of any spiritual thing. This may sound difficult to discern or enforce, but in a number of situations, personal favor shows itself plainly. In more extreme cases, explicit oaths of fealty might be given in exchange for spiritual things.[24]

Harder to discern is the case where someone might ordain or give spiritual things out of a pre-existing partiality. One might argue that nothing is exchanged in this case, but what is "given" by the recipient of the spiritual thing is a continued respect in the context of that relationship. The minister here discounts the demands of justice under some unspoken obligation, especially in an ordination or benefice. In

[20] See Fuller, *The Holy State*, 98.

[21] See Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad 1 (p. 93b).

[22] See *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 82–83.

[23] "To the next it must be said that popular praise has nothing spiritual in it; on the contrary, it is more temporal even than time itself, because it is thinner, and dissolves into the air. But the fame of the saints rests in spiritual things, and therefore it is spiritual." Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad 2 (p. 93b).

[24] See X 5.3.17.

the definition of simony, a temporal thing counts as a price whenever it is the primary cause of giving some spiritual thing.[25]

The most common concern on this front is partiality that would be shown toward family.[26] The *Liber extra* counted it simoniacal for a priest to conceal another's sin "out of respect for any person, or of consanguinity, or of familiarity."[27] Occasionally this language was grounded in James 2:1 ("Do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons"),[28] especially on account of Augustine's application of the passage to ecclesiastical honors.[29]

John Calvin remarked that within the papacy, not even one in twenty attains the priesthood apart from a simony evoked by kindred, affinity, parental influence, or obsequiousness.[30] Often, benefices functioned as dowries.[31] English sources referred to such presentations as "smock simony."[32]

Some schoolmen qualified their concerns on this point. While the canons speak with rigor on kinship in conferral, Aquinas distinguished

[25] E.g., "'Selling' and 'buying' are not taken so strictly in the definition of simony; rather, it is called a *sale* whenever any price whatever causes spiritual things to be given, 'price' being taken in a broad sense for every temporal thing that is the whole and sole cause of the giving." Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad 3 (p. 93b).

[26] After Peter the Chanter spoke of simony "on account of blood," some named it *munus a sanguine* or *munus sanguinis*. Peter the Chanter, *Summa de sacramentis*, app. V, 7 (III, 2b, p. 708); Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 3 (fol. 162r); Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 185va).

[27] X 5.3.14.

[28] E.g., Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, IV, q. 8, a. 4 (p. 82); Groote, *De simonia ad beguttas*, 14–15.

[29] "Nor indeed, in my judgment, is it to be thought a light sin 'to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons,' if we refer that distinction between sitting and standing to ecclesiastical honors. For who could bear that a rich man be chosen for a seat of honor in the Church, while a poorer man, better instructed and holier, is despised? But if he is speaking of everyday assemblies, who does not sin here—if indeed it is a sin—except the one who within himself so judges that the richer the other man, the better he appears to him? For this is what he seems to have meant by saying: 'Have you not judged within yourselves, and become judges of evil thoughts?'" Augustine, *Ep.* 167.18 (CSEL 44, 605:10–606:3).

[30] Calvin, *Institutio*, 4.5.6.

[31] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 42.

[32] E.g., *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 60; Douglas, *The Diaries*, 184.

between the one who gives a spiritual thing seeking to obligate the receiver and the one who hopes for some voluntary benefit from the receiver. The former he regarded as simoniacal, the latter carnal but not simoniacal.[33] Albert the Great spoke similarly, even permitting kinship as a factor so long as it was not the primary cause of giving any spiritual thing.[34] For appointment to an office, kinship may only be a secondary consideration, concurrent alongside genuine merit.

Qualities and Circumstances

One might suppose a gift may be excused on account of its quality or circumstances. Once again, we will examine several examples of these considerations that frequently appear in the writings of theologians and canonists from the fathers to the English casuists.

Spiritual Things

Does simony only occur when temporal things are exchanged for spiritual things, or is it simony even when spiritual things are exchanged for spiritual things? While the language of theologians tends to center on temporal things, gifts of service may indeed be spiritual services.

One might object that simony requires an unequal exchange—a temporal thing given for a spiritual one—and that exchanging like for like should be permissible. Occasionally, this was affirmed in some measure, such as the case of ministers exchanging posts with

[33] "For if the prelate intends to oblige the man to whom he gives the ecclesiastical benefice to make some recompense to himself or to his blood-relations, the intention is simoniacal, for he intends a kind of tacit sale. But if he does not intend to oblige him, but intends that the man should of his own accord make temporal recompense to him or to his own, the intention is indeed depraved and carnal, but not simoniacal." Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, V, q. 11, a. 3 (p. 116); cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 5, ad 2.

[34] "[For such an exchange to be problematic] kinship must be the cause and the reason for giving. For if goodness of life were the cause and kinship a concurrent cause, it would not be simony, since kinship is something bodily and derived from the flesh." Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad 3 (p. 93b).

the approval of a superior,[35] or two parties agreeing to pray for each other.[36]

However, there is reason to reject as simoniacal even the exchange of spiritual things for spiritual things.[37] Commenting on the exchange of benefices, Peter Paludanus remarked, "it is a wonder how an exchange should be less simoniacal of itself than a sale."[38] Writing in Hungary at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Oswald of Laskó explained it with the scenario of two agreeing to baptize each other. One sacrament could serve as the price of the same sacrament in kind, he granted, if sacraments were salable things; but they are not, and in such matters every agreement must cease. It is unlawful "both because a thing is bought from one who is not its owner, and because it is contrary to the nature of grace that it be sold for any price whatsoever."[39]

The primary concern behind simony is the treatment of grace as an object of exchange, not the material character of the price. Even a spiritual thing can become a simoniacal price when exchanged for another.

Delayed Things

Simony may be committed whether a temporal thing is given before, during, or after the conferral of the spiritual thing. One might suppose that offering money after an ordination is a mere gratuity rather than a simoniacal exchange, but this reasoning does not hold.

Basil of Caesarea wrote to bishops under his authority: "They think that they commit no sin, because they receive the money after and not before the ordination. But to take is to take, whenever it happens."[40] Gratian, quoting Tarasius of Constantinople, affirmed

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[35] E.g., Peter the Chanter, *Verbum abbreviatum*, cap. 40 (PL 205:133B); Innocent IV, *Commentaria*, ad X 3.19.5 (fol. 394v).

[36] E.g., Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 147vb).

[37] E.g., "commutation in spiritual matters seems not much unlike buying and selling, and [seems] to constitute simony." Peter the Chanter, *Verbum abbreviatum*, cap. 40 (PL 205:132D).

[38] Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 4 (p. 315b).

[39] Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 2.

[40] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 53 (p. 339).

that scripture and canon alike condemn the exchange regardless of its timing, "for to receive is to receive at whatever time."[41] This maxim is the Latin equivalent of Basil's Greek.[42]

Indirectly Given Things

Indirect exchanges of temporal things for spiritual things are likewise forbidden. This is manifest in the example of commendations. As John Major put it, "it is the same thing to give money to the bishop and to give it to someone else so that he may petition the bishop on the giver's behalf."[43]

Some religious societies (e.g., monasteries and collegiate churches) would admit new brothers only if they brought sufficient wealth. They struck no bargain, but would stall the decision in order to weigh the circumstances to see if they might bring much. This practice was common enough that Albert the Great spoke of it as taking place every day.[44] Against the scheme of leaving the inquiry to someone else, he argued that "it makes no difference whether one does it himself or through another where the whole cause of the conferral of the prebend is the expectation of temporal gain."[45]

If the ultimate cause of the exchange of a spiritual thing is the expectation of some reciprocal action, simony is committed regardless of how many hands the payment passes through or how indirectly any given party may be involved. Each participant is responsible for his own involvement, though an ignorant beneficiary would be personally innocent.[46]

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[41] C. 1, q. 1, c. 21. Immediately before this, Tarasius wrote, "The twenty-ninth canon of the holy apostles, and their Acts, and the third and fourth book of Kings pronounce wholly alien from the priesthood anyone who at any time gave or received money, whether before the laying on of hands or after the laying on."

[42] Cf. Migne's facing Latin in Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 53 (PG 32:398B).

[43] Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146va).

[44] Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, quaest. (p. 92b).

[45] Ibid., IV, d. 25, a. 5, quaest. (p. 92b). He continued, "because by whomever it is done, they expect this in return for the conferral; therefore simony is committed in whatever way it is done." Cf. ibid., IV, d. 25, a. 5, sol. (p. 93a).

[46] See John of Freiburg, *Summa confessorum*, I, tit. 1, q. 8–9 (foll. 1vb–2ra).

Small Things

One might assume that the sin of simony requires a substantial or profitable exchange, but even the smallest gift suffices. A penny spent to purchase a spiritual thing is no less simoniacal than a fortune, and the one who exchanges spiritual things for temporal is guilty even if he does so at a loss.

While canon law was willing to distinguish between magnitudes of gifts for the sake of adjudication, no such distinction exists in the forum of conscience.[47] Wycliffe responded to this justification by observing that God does not "weigh what or how much of his goods his servant has consumed, but in what manner and by what means he has sought them."[48] Jan Hus concurred, describing small simoniacal transactions as analogous to the widow's mites (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4). She gave "more than all the others" because she gave "out of such great desire," so "likewise a priest or scribe who takes a penny or two out of great desire will be struck down by great simony."[49]

Simony is measured by the avarice in the transaction, not by the wealth that changes hands. This is not, however, to say that the one who judges himself free of greed is innocent, because such greed is made manifest through an exchange, and one who is free of it "shakes his hands free from every gift" (Isa. 33:15).[50] Accordingly, when addressing whether hospitality toward clergy is necessarily simony, the confessors' summas hold that small measures are acceptable, but that any agreement or corrupt intention undoes this.[51]

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[47] "For although, as regards the presumption of law, a distinction is drawn whether [the gift] be large, which is plausibly likely to move the heart, or small, of which this is not plausible [. . .] nevertheless, as regards conscience, whether it be small or great, if a spiritual thing is bought or given for it, it is simony." Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 321a).

[48] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 8 (107:9–11).

[49] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 5.F.

[50] See ibid., 2.D.

[51] E.g., John of Freiburg, *Summa confessorum*, I, tit. 1, q. 11 (fol. 21rb); Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 3 (fol. 162r); cf. Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, ad X 5.3 (foll. 535vb–536ra).

While many were willing to acknowledge the harm caused by large amounts changing hands, the occasional judgment was that small gifts entail a greater divine offense. Writing of ordination, Burton observed, "Of all other kinds of simony, this is the most pernicious and damnable," because the less he gives or receives, "the less esteem he makes of so holy and excellent a calling."[52]

Voluntary Things

Theologians and canonists who addressed the topic of simony in detail generally concluded that things offered voluntarily (*voluntarie*) or spontaneously (*spontanee*) do not count as simony.[53] Because the gift is not the cause of giving the spiritual thing, no simoniacal exchange takes place. The one who gives the spiritual thing does so for selfless reasons, and the one who gives something in return likewise has some honest motivation.[54] The exchange is non-contractual; nothing is given out of obligation or designed to establish any obligation. Many discussions on this point go back to two texts of canon law.

The first text is the fifth canon of the Council of Rome (595). Various things such as notary fees had been annexed to ordinations in order to escape the appearance of simony. This led Gregory to forbid all money changing hands in the context of an ordination, except if given out of unprompted gratitude (*gratiae tantummodo causa*).[55]

The second is the eighth canon of the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675). It applies the same principle beyond ordination—to baptizing, confirming, and conferring chrism—and restricts what may be

[52] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 47.

[53] E.g., C. 1, q. 2, c. 4; Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320a); Ames, *Conscience*, 5.230.

[54] See Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 5, ad quaest. (p. 94b).

[55] "But if the one who has been ordained, not by agreement, nor under compulsion, nor upon request, after receiving his documents and pallium, wishes to offer something to anyone of the clergy solely for the sake of gratitude, we by no means forbid this to be accepted, because his offering brings no stain of guilt, since it did not proceed from the self-seeking of the recipient." Gregory I, *Ep.* 5.57a.5 (1, 365:8–11); cf. X 5.3.1; C. 1, q. 2, c. 4.

received according to the receiver's motive, so the giver's willingness does not settle the matter on its own.[56]

While these are artifacts of canon law, describing what may or may not be formally penalized, they appear affirmatively as examples in writings of theologians who aimed to describe moral behavior.[57] From Gregory the Great to the English casuists, those writers allowed for some category of gratitude by which one might give to a minister, even in the context of having received some spiritual thing. In this light, voluntary gifts are welcome because they are not contractual, establishing no obligation between giver and receiver, and so they do not reduce the spiritual thing to an article of commerce.

However, the same writers frequently caution against offering such a gift in any way that would be deceitful or arouse suspicion of simoniacal intentions. For example, the *Glossa ordinaria* on the *Decretum* treats the plea that one would have given it anyway as the mark of a "fraudulent gift."[58] Aquinas, having affirmed voluntary gifts, immediately added this caveat: "In all these things, however, one must carefully guard against whatever has the appearance of simony

[56] "Whatever is bestowed through the conferring of invisible grace ought in no way to be sold for monetary profit or for any rewards whatsoever, as the Lord says: 'What you have freely received, freely give.' And therefore, whoever henceforth, established in the ecclesiastical order, receives any rewards or prices voluntarily offered out of this kind of ambition—whether for baptizing and confirming the faithful, for conferring chrism, or for promotions of ranks—indeed, if, with the local bishop's knowledge, any such thing is perpetrated by his subjects, that same bishop shall be subject to excommunication for two months, because he both concealed evils he knew about and failed to apply the necessary correction. But if, without his knowledge, any one of his people should think that he may accept anything for the aforesaid matters: if he is a presbyter, he shall be punished by three months' excommunication; if a deacon, four; while a subdeacon or cleric serving these covetous desires shall be punished both by an appropriate beating and by the excommunication that is due." *Eleventh Council of Toledo (675)*, c. 8 (PL 84:461D–462B). Gratian transmitted the clause about gifts as an exception, "unless voluntarily offered." C. 1, q. 1, c. 101.

[57] This includes even small gratuities, like tips. Major held it acceptable if "one gives a douzain [*duodecimum*, a small coin] to the doorkeeper so that he may gain entrance to speak with the bishop." Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146va).

[58] Glossa ordinaria ad C. 1, q. 1, c. 115.

or cupidity, according to that word of the Apostle, 1 Thessalonians [5:22]: 'Abstain from every appearance of evil.'"[59]

English authors echoed the same concern. Ames explained that it is not properly simony when something is given "out of mere gratitude, not by any agreement tacit, or expressed, direct, or indirect."[60] However, "we must beware of deceit, and the very appearance of evil is to be avoided."[61] Similarly, Richard Baxter warned, "Nor may you show gratitude by any scandalous way, which seemeth simony."[62]

In the early church, some refused gifts of gratitude entirely. On this count, Patrick gave back the small ornaments laid on his altar.[63] Likewise, Jerome recorded that Hilarion refused to receive any gift after healing a possessed man, asserting, "If I take these things, I too shall offend God, and the legion will return to you."[64]

Conclusion

The scope of gifts that may constitute a simoniacal exchange is broader than one might first suppose. Gregory's triad—gifts of the hand, gifts of the tongue, and gifts of service—captures that full range. Not only money, but even praise and favors count as the temporal price of a spiritual thing. The timing and directness of the exchange are immaterial; simony is committed whether the gift precedes or follows

[59] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 2, ad 4.

[60] Ames, *Conscience*, 5.230.

[61] Ibid., 5.230.

[62] Baxter, *A Christian Directory*, 4.19.2.33 (p. 119).

[63] "I have tried in some measure to keep myself safe, even for the Christian brethren, and the virgins of Christ, and the devout women who used to give me of their own accord little gifts, and would cast some of their ornaments upon the altar; and I would give them back to them again. And they were scandalized at me because I did this. But it was for the hope of eternity that I guarded myself cautiously in all things, so that unbelievers might not catch me, or the ministry of my service, on any pretext, and that I might not give them occasion, even in the smallest matter, to defame or disparage me." Patrick, *Confessio*, 49 (p. 22). In the next paragraph, he insisted that he conducted baptisms and ordinations without the slightest hope of receiving anything.

[64] Jerome, *Vita Hilar.* 18 (PL 23:37C).

the spiritual thing and whether it passes through one hand or many. The amount matters as little: no sum is too small to be simoniacal. Even a spiritual thing may stand as the price of another. Though canon law and theologians alike spoke permissively of voluntary gifts, they drew that exception narrowly, since even voluntary things may come with simoniacal intention.

8

Giving

The foregoing chapters have established that simony consists in exchanging spiritual things—or things annexed to them—for any kind of gift. Scripture's prohibition is comprehensive, yet Scripture is equally clear that God's ministers are to be materially supported. Christ himself declared that "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (Luke 10:7), a principle that the apostle Paul repeated in 1 Timothy 5:18. The funding of ministry is commanded, not merely permitted.

A tension therefore presents itself. If every exchange of temporal things for spiritual things is simoniacal, how can the church fund its ministers without falling under that condemnation? When a congregation pays its minister's stipend, it gives temporal things to one who administers spiritual things and does so on account of such spiritual labor. This appears, on its face, to be an exchange, having the structure of simony.

The resolution of this tension occupied a substantial portion of the literature on simony from the patristic period onward. Part of the answer lies in distinguishing the *mode* of provision—the relationship between the temporal thing given and the spiritual thing received. Not every flow of money from laity to clergy constitutes a purchase, and the theologians labored to articulate exactly why.

What is given to a minister may be regarded in four ways: as charity (*eleemosyna*), as the price of the product (*pretium operis*), as the price of the labor (*pretium laboris*), or as the sustenance of the laborer

(*sustentatio laborantis*).[1] The primary consideration distinguishing licit from illicit gifts is whether they are given in exchange for spiritual things or in support of the one who provides them. We will consider each in turn.

As Charity

First, one might give to a minister of God as an act of almsgiving. Indeed, a minister receives of that which has been charitably given, but the notion that others provide for him as a mere act of mercy has been rejected since the early days of the church. For example, John Chrysostom concluded from Matthew 10 that Christ forbade his disciples to go about as "beggars"[2] and regarded others as their "debtors."[3] Augustine remarked that a minister's provisions are "not a matter of mendicity, but of authority."[4]

Medieval theologians formalized this distinction. The minister's stipend flows from due justice rather than charity, though he receives of alms given to the church.[5] Gabriel Biel offered a *reductio*: A gift given not in view of a person's need but on account of an obligation to some office or labor is not alms, but a stipend or a wage. Otherwise every tribute given to kings and princes would be alms. So too would every wage a man earns for the support of his own life and station, and consequently all such laborers would be beggars.[6]

Later authors concurred.[7] Thomas Hall, who addressed the matter at length, spoke starkly: "Our stipends, therefore, are wages, not alms.

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[1] For how the schools' distinction between the price of the work and the sustenance of the worker reached later English audiences, see *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 92; Ames, *Conscience*, 5.230.

[2] Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, hom. 33 (PG 57:587).

[3] Ibid., hom. 35 (PG 57:608).

[4] Augustine, *De opere monachorum*, 15.16 (p. 558).

[5] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 187, a. 4. The context of this citation is a defense of the religious (here the friars), but for our purposes it is sufficient to note Aquinas's application of this principle to secular clergy.

[6] Biel, *Collectorium*, IV, d. 16, q. 4 (sig. ff3rb).

[7] E.g., Bullinger, *Decades*, 5.10 (foll. 380r–v); Turretin, *Institutio*, 18.28.8–12.

Woe to those ministers who expect their support from the people's goodwill alone! Such goodwill will become ill-will; such nourishment will become stinginess; this something will soon become nothing."[8]

This conviction extended even to those who could comfortably support themselves and their families from their own patrimony. They should not be denied their stipends.[9] Though they may choose to charitably give them away in their own capacity, they ought not, without special reason, refuse them either, "lest they appear to seek the glory of some exceptional sanctity or burden their poorer colleagues with resentment, and lest the people, enticed by this exemption, nourish their avarice to the great disadvantage of successors and the peril of the whole church."[10]

As the Price of the Product

Second, things might be given as the price of the product (*ut pretium operis*), that is, as the price of the spiritual thing itself.[11] We have already seen the illegitimacy of such payments argued extensively, but their legitimacy is frequently inferred from certain scriptural passages that would appear to suggest them.

For example, their defenders regularly invoke 1 Corinthians 9:14 ("those who proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel"). Thomas Aquinas handled the objection that the apostle's language justifies accepting temporal things in exchange for spiritual things: "It must be said that stipends are due to preachers for the sustenance of their livelihood, lest they be forced to abandon the word of God and become occupied with procuring necessities for themselves; however, they are

[8] Hall, *Sal Terrae*, 101.

[9] E.g., Keach, *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*, 89–91. Ralph Cudworth wrote to the same effect: "Again, hence I gather, that those that labour in the word and doctrine, may lawfully take wages, albeit they have sufficient of their own to maintain themselves." Cudworth, *The Supplement*, 543.

[10] Turretin, *Institutio*, 18.28.13.

[11] The range of technical vocabulary used here is fairly narrow, but occasionally, "*spiritualium*" ("spiritual things") is used instead of "*operis*," and sometimes instead of "*pretium*," "*merces*," the Vulgate's word for "wages" in Luke 10:7.

not due to them as if they were a price for the preaching."[12] In his *Summa theologiae*, he answered the objection at greater length, and there added succinctly that "to preachers, likewise, temporal things are due for the sustenance of those who preach, not for purchasing the preached word."[13]

The command to freely give is not abrogated by the laborer being worthy of his food (Matt. 10:8–10); the two are reconciled by this very distinction. The wages of the worker are not the price of the product.

As the Price of the Labor

Third, things might be given as the price of the labor (*ut pretium laboris*), to pay the laborer in exchange for his work. At least at first glance, this appears to be what is required by phrases like "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (Luke 10:7; 1 Tim. 5:18), and indeed, some regarded payment for the labor as the proper mode of giving.[14] But rarely did any of these weigh another mode against it, and the few who did raised difficulties with reckoning the minister's provision as a sale of labor.

Labor as a Spiritual Thing

These theologians pointed out that the matter at issue in Acts 8 and elsewhere is not one of moderation. Nor is it one that permits a meaningful distinction between the labor and the product of that labor. Simon Magus could not absolve himself by claiming he was not looking to purchase the Spirit, but only Peter's labor of laying on hands. The causes of spiritual things are precisely what a simoniac sets out to buy.[15] William Swinderby forbade a priest to "sell by bargaining

[12] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, arg. 5 & ad 5.

[13] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 2.

[14] E.g., Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4, ad 4 (p. 648); Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 282:38–42); Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2, ad 2 (fol. 150v); cf. Alexander of Hales, *Summa Halensis*, III, P. 2, Inq. 3, Tract. 2, S. 2, Q. 1, T. 1, D. 5, C. 2 (pp. 644–45).

[15] See Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 3, ad 3. See Chapter 3, pp. 55–56.

and covenant his ghostly travail" (spiritual labor), claiming that any who does "errs and doth simony."[16]

Spiritual labor is itself a spiritual thing and therefore cannot be sold.[17] As Aquinas wrote of acts that are spiritual in their principle, "no one can in any way hire out his acts without simony."[18]

The Excuse of Selling Labor

John Wycliffe's language on the point admits of more than one reading,[19] but Jan Hus, working from Wycliffe's treatise, gave what is possibly the most complete treatment. Against those who would make such a justification for charging for their services, he wrote,

> But here they have Simon's little cap with which they cover themselves, saying commonly that they sell the bodily labor, but not the blessing or the consecration; and also that they take money for food, but not for consecration. But that excuse is like the greedy alewife who serves the food and then charges only for the beer, in that one payment more than covering both the meal and the drink. That excuse is also like the tale one writer tells, of a greedy lord who came to the annual fair. Then a servant told him that in that town the innkeepers at table give very fat geese for free, but beef and veal and other dishes they charge more dearly. So the lord commanded

[16] Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 5.468.

[17] E.g., "not only can the aforesaid spiritual things not be sold, but neither can the labor." Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166b).

[18] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, sol.; cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3.

[19] In his treatise on simony, Wycliffe argued for "inordinate willing" rather than "earnest desire," in part because he held that a preacher ought to exchange his spiritual service for modest temporal support. Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (2:13–28). However, this notion of "exchange" is not spelled out in terms that clearly indicate a sale, and elsewhere he denied that preachers may charge for their work. "And here Christ teacheth openly that men should not buy this office, ne [nor] take no meed [reward] of the people to travail thus in Christ's name, for then they put upon Christ that he sold preaching of his word, and gave leave to do simony; and both these be blasphemies." Wycliffe, *Sermons*, serm. 58 (1, p. 177).

his servants to eat the freely given food, and he himself would eat the coarser fare to which he was accustomed. And when dinner was over and the account was made, the veal was reckoned so dear that the free geese proved costly after all! Likewise the simoniacs wish to deceive the people of God with this answer, saying that they sell the labor, but give the blessing, consecration, or confirmation for free! Therefore against this cunning the holy ordinance says: "Those who buy bodily things and do not buy spiritual things should by no means be called simoniacs." And immediately it continues: "But the answer is that not only those who take spiritual things for money, but also those who take for money bodily things that are annexed to spiritual things, are called simoniacs."

So says the ordinance, so that you may understand that the labor of preaching, celebrating Mass, consecrating, anointing, baptizing, hearing confession, and distributing the body of the Lord—that labor is so joined with the spiritual, that is, with God's power and office, that it may not, and cannot rightly, be sold for money. Although people ought to sustain the priests in that labor, the priests ought not to sell that labor or set a price on it; for otherwise every case of simony could be excused by saying: "I am selling the labor!" Therefore the Lord God says through the prophet Malachi: "Who is there among you who would shut the doors and kindle my altar for nothing? I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand." Here Gratian, who compiled the Decree [i.e., the *Decretum*], says that to shut the doors is not the office of the holy sacrifice, but it pertains to the spiritual office.[20]

[20] The idea here is that shutting the doors of the temple is a bodily act, but is annexed to spiritual things, since it is only by the doorkeeper that one would have access. See C. 1, q. 3, d.a.c. 1.

> Therefore the excuse by which they defend themselves, saying that they sell the labor, is not valid.[21]

Giving four examples, Hus continued to demonstrate that those who claim to sell labor in spiritual things are selling something more. First, the bishop charges more for the same labor than one who does the same work. Second, the bishop who blesses an altar requires more than the carpenter or mason who crafted it, though they did greater labor. Third, the bishop's endowment already provides for his labor, yet he requires a second pay upon service. Fourth, the same consecration costs less from a poor bishop than from a rich one.[22]

Almost all of this discourse—from the excuse itself, to the parable of the geese, to the citation of Gratian, to the four additional arguments—is translated directly from Wycliffe,[23] with three notable alterations. First, Hus did not include Wycliffe's preface to the parable, which frames the abuse as a matter of degree: money "inordinately" collected, "excessive" fees, sacraments sold "so dearly."[24] Second, Hus did not translate Wycliffe's sarcastic compromise on the bishop's blessing, "Either, then, let him give it for nothing, or let him sell it justly for a fair price," which computed by proportion to a layman's labor would be "a halfpenny."[25] Third, Hus pulled Wycliffe's inference—that otherwise any simony whatever could be excused—forward to just before the Malachi passage, making it the ground of a direct prohibition of selling spiritual labor for any price.[26] In other words, Wycliffe's arguments showed that contemporary bishops sold spiritual things and not, as they claimed, mere labor, but stopped short of saying that the labor itself may not be sold. By the same line of reasoning, Hus set as a rule what Wycliffe had left as an inference: charging *anything* for spiritual labor necessarily sells spiritual things.

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[21] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 5.D; cf. ibid., 9.A.
[22] Ibid., 5.D.
[23] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 6 (74:3–76:13).
[24] Ibid., cap. 6 (73:12–74:2).
[25] Ibid., cap. 6 (75:24–29).
[26] Ibid., cap. 6 (74:26–27).

Labor Inseparable from Its Product

Some schoolmen also observed that economic reality does not permit us to divorce product and labor so cleanly in transactions. Peter Paludanus, rehearsing the argument of Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, put the issue thus:

> For who would ever buy the labor of a worker, except for the fruit of the work? No one. And therefore it is ridiculous to say that ministers can sell their labor [*labor*], where they cannot lawfully sell their work [*opus*]: if therefore an ecclesiastical minister dispensing sacred things receives anything, he does not receive it as the price of the work or of the labor, but as the sustenance of the minister.[27]

One problem with a model of giving that posits a purchase of labor is that it necessitates an obligation between the giver and the receiver. The receiver becomes servant to the giver, undermining the spiritual worker's duty to the Lord with a conflict of interest (Gal. 1:10). Thus, nothing should be given to any minister "by way of obligation and contract, but only by way of necessary assistance."[28] The one who receives is not bound to the giver as though his labor had been bought, and the one who gives does not owe the minister payment for what he has received. Either would bear the mark of a contract. Instead, the giver is bound to render temporal things by a natural obligation of justice to support the minister in his work.[29]

Regarding the word "wages" in Luke 10:7, repeated in 1 Timothy 5:18, the Westminster divine Anthony Tuckney[30] remarked on

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[27] Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 319a); cf. Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, *In Sent. (red. C)*, IV, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 315r). See also Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320a–b); contra, Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 1 (fol. 183rb).

[28] Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166b).

[29] See ibid., IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166b).

[30] Tuckney chaired the Westminster Assembly committee that framed the Larger Catechism's exposition of the Ten Commandments, where question 108 names "the ministry and maintenance thereof" among the duties required by the second

the danger of interpreting the term to entail a simoniacal exchange of money for labor and pointed to the corrective offered in the previous verse of Paul's epistle. Addressing ministers, he acknowledged the scriptural language of "hire" or "wages," but rejected the idea that this funding functions as a recompense of labor between the people and the minister, for that would bind the latter to the will of the former who makes the payment. All such sentiments are "base simoniacal chafferings."[31]

As the Sustenance of the Laborer

Fourth, things might be given for the sustenance of the laborer (*ut sustentationem laborantis*).[32] What is given to the spiritual worker, financial or otherwise, should be given in order to sustain him.[33] The people do not give as customers purchasing a product or as employers purchasing labor, but out of an obligation to sustain the laborer in his work.

Augustine explained this dynamic in a sermon on Ezekiel 34, first speculating that Paul may be indicated by the innkeeper of Luke 10:35. The Samaritan promises to repay the innkeeper on his return for whatever he spends beyond what he was given, and Paul, who chose to support himself by his own hands, would be paid at the Lord's return.[34] Augustine continued to explain that what ministers receive is not a price "as though the gospel were for sale," because then they would "sell a great thing for a trifle."[35] Instead of ministers selling, "let

commandment, and question 109 "simony, sacrilege" among the sins it forbids. WLC Q. 108; WLC Q. 109.

[31] Tuckney, "Sermon 38," 645.

[32] Once again, the literature varies in its vocabulary. Sometimes "stipend" (*stipendium*) is used instead of "sustenance" (*sustentationem*), and sometimes "minister" (*ministri*) instead of "laborer" (*laborantis*).

[33] E.g., "to receive or to give something for the sustenance of those who minister spiritual things, according to the ordinance of the Church and approved custom, is lawful." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, corp.; cf. ibid., II-II, q. 100, a. 2, ad 2; William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, III, tr. 21 (fol. 227rb).

[34] Augustine, *Sermones*, 46, cap. 2 (PL 38:272).

[35] Ibid., 46, cap. 2 (PL 38:273).

them receive from the people the sustenance [*sustentationem*] their need requires, and from the Lord the reward of their stewardship."[36] The reward for their labor does not come from the people; they must "look for their reward nowhere but where the people look for their salvation."[37]

Sustenance was not understood as bare subsistence. Proper maintenance included a significant measure of honor pertaining to the dignity of the person in his office.[38] The word "honorarium" has come down to us from the Latin *donum honorarium*, designating a gift meant to honor rather than to function as a wage.

Especially in the seventeenth century, a number of works made this distinction between "wages" (*merces*) and "honor" (*honorarium*), asserting that, properly speaking, ministers do not receive the former but the latter.[39] We have already noted that Tuckney required qualification for the term "wages" in 1 Timothy 5:18 in order to avoid simoniacal implications. He continued by observing that in the previous verse, "The Apostle would lift us up to higher thoughts, when he calls the Church officers' maintenance, not wages but honour."[40]

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[36] Ibid., 46, cap. 2 (PL 38:273); cf. *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 92ff.

[37] Augustine, *Sermones*, 46, cap. 2 (PL 38:273).

[38] E.g., the minister "can quite properly receive sustenance suitable to his state." Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166b).

[39] For example, the English clergyman William Sclater argued on the supposition that "my portion be not *merces*, but *honorarium*." Sclater, *The Quæstion of Tythes Revised*, unnumbered, 5 pp. after p. 33. John Cooke, a Puritan legal scholar, wrote of ministers among several professions to which this principle applies, offering in the margin the Latin phrase, *non mercenarium sed honorarium* ("not as wages, but as honor"). Cooke, *The Vindication of the Law*, 3.

[40] "All thy grace, wisdom, ability to dispense the Word and other ordinances, to govern the church, etc. are God's gifts, which he never betrusted thee with to enjoy, or make a market of for thyself, thine own gain or applause, but for the glory of thy Master, and the service of his spouse: and therefore although the labourer be worthy of his hire, Luke 10:7. yet neither be thou on the one side ever so mercenary, as to account thy maintenance such an hire of thy labour as which thou aimest at, and puttest off the ordinances of God for: no, in this sense freely thou hast received, and therefore freely give.

"Nor let the people be ever so mean as to think, when they have paid their pittance they have bought you for slaves, and like good chapmen have made a fair purchase of the Word, and the rest of God's ordinances, which they hereupon claim as their due,

The Particular Baptist Benjamin Keach made a similar observation, rejecting such a "base" exchange in favor of "honour." Remarking that New Testament ministers are to receive after the pattern of the Old Testament priests (1 Cor. 9:13–14), he pointed out that such funds granted to ministers are not direct payments, but given "as gifts due to the Lord, and to them from him."[41] Keach expanded on the same distinction to explain that the minister's stipend is not to be regarded as "base" wages but as "honour" because the people do not actually pay him as an employer might. Instead, they give to the Lord, and the Lord gives his wages to his own workers; the Lord is the employer to whom the minister is bound.

Conclusion

The prohibition of simony does not leave ministers destitute. Temporal things may and ought to be given to those who provide spiritual things, but the mode of this giving is decisive. What the people give is

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and in case, though by their own default, they come short of, you shall fall short of yours. But how unworthy are such base simoniacal chafferings of thee, as thou art either a minister, or Christian? something akin to Judas selling, and the Jews buying of Christ for thirty pieces of silver: and a goodly price, wherewith I was prised at of them, saith the Lord, Zech. 11:13. The Apostle would lift us up to higher thoughts, when he calls the Church officers' maintenance, not wages but honour, 1 Tim. 5:17. to be freely honorably allowed, not as a recompense of their labour, but as an honorable testimony of our love and respect, not as the price of the Gospel, and all that either we mean to give for it, or the ministers should look at in dispensing of it." Tuckney, "Sermon 38," 644–45.

[41] While the application is Keach's own, he made it by quoting Henry Ainsworth: "They were not (as Mr. Ainsworth noteth) to receive it after a base or servile manner, but as gifts due to the Lord, and to them from him: the Hebrew canons (saith he) show the Israelites were to give them their portion with honour; and it was unlawful for the priests or Levites to snatch away the heave-offering, or the tithes; yea, saith he, if they did but ask their portion with their mouth it was unlawful. [. . .] He saith again, the priest might not violently take the gifts, nor ask them with his mouth, but he received them when they were given him with honour." Keach, *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*, 107–8. In other words, while the people owe material support to ministers in one sense, because the priests had no right to demand or take provisions by force as one might with his own property, such things cannot be said to be owed to ministers by the people in the most immediate sense.

neither charity to a beggar, nor the price of a product to a vendor, nor wages owed to a hired laborer, but the maintenance of one whom the Lord has set apart to serve them. Their giving is directed ultimately to God, and from God the minister receives his support. The minister's stipend is therefore not *merces* but *honorarium*, a recognition of the dignity that belongs to the office.

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Receiving

The previous chapter showed that ministers may rightly receive support (*sustentationem*) from those they serve. This support must be given for the minister's sustenance rather than as a price of his labor, because "in every sale the price is taken as the end," and if the spiritual laborer receives what is given "as the principal end of his work, he commits simony."[1] A non-simoniacal reception of material things depends on whether his primary purpose in ministry is service to the Lord.[2]

However, we need not forbid *all* financial motivation in ministry. A minister who attends the divine office partly for its distributions is above reproach in the matter "if he has God as the principal end in such an act and looks to such distributions secondarily—not as to an end, but as to that which is necessary for his sustenance."[3] For the one who operates with these rightly ordered motives, "it is clear that he is not selling the spiritual act, and thus he does not commit simony, nor does he sin."[4]

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[1] Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

[2] "And thus any bishop, curate, or priest who accepts that state [of ecclesiastical dignity] chiefly on account of honor or temporal advantage is a simoniac and a heretic, and he continues in that heresy as long as he keeps that state and is unfit for his office." Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 2 (17:7–11).

[3] Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

[4] Ibid., VIII, q. 6, a. 1 (p. 175).

Scholastic sources frequently observe that it is acceptable to preach "for money" in the sense of preaching to encourage generosity for charitable collections.[5] Similarly, one may give something "for" (*pro*) a spiritual thing so long as the preposition means "on account of" (i.e., in supportive devotion) rather than "in exchange for."[6]

More germane to our concerns, however, a minister's service may be conditioned upon the supply of sufficient funds. But this may only function as a secondary motivation rather than a primary one. A minister must be enabled by material things rather than driven by them.[7] In the pithy saying that came down from Augustine, we ought to eat that we may evangelize, not evangelize that we may eat.[8]

Given the presence of additional and even financial motives, the right mode of giving (for sustenance) does not by itself vindicate the one who receives. His innocence depends on his rightly ordered motives. The desire for money must remain secondary, never displacing his service to the Lord.

For this reason, four marks of simoniacal ambition can be gathered from the canonists and theologians: a burden laid on a poor congregation, a position declined for its stipend, a transfer sought from a lesser post to a greater, and maintenance claimed without an office. None is conclusive by itself; each is evidence bearing on a minister's motives.

Financial Burden on the Congregation

If a minister who has enough for himself receives from the poor, it is a sign that his objectives in ministry are simoniacal. Such men, Aquinas wrote, "would be bound not only to desist from accepting alms, but

[5] E.g., Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 4; Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 320b).

[6] See John of Freiburg, *Summa confessorum*, I, tit. 1, q. 10 (fol. 2ra).

[7] See Turretin, *Institutio*, 18.28.12.

[8] "*Neque enim, verbi gratia, ideo debemus evangelizare, ut manducemus; sed ideo manducare, ut evangelizemus*." Augustine, *De sermone Domini in monte*, 2.16 (PL 34:1292). E.g., Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146rb).

also to give away their own goods, if they had any, for the support of the poor."[9]

Where the congregation is not in need, this does not bar the financially self-sufficient from receiving a salary.[10] On a first reading, one canon in Gratian's *Decretum* appears to forbid any independently wealthy minister to take a stipend from the church,[11] but later theologians interpreted the restriction narrowly. Aquinas responded to those who would use this to prohibit the rich from taking any stipend, asserting that it applies only in times of need, when the church could not otherwise care for the poor.[12]

The Reformed maintained the same balance between the burden a congregation can bear and the support its ministers are owed. In describing what kind of pay might be "simoniacal" or "mercenary," Francis Turretin warned against salaries burdensome to a congregation,[13] though he held that independently rich ministers should be supported rather than left to labor at their own expense.[14]

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[9] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 187, a. 4, ad 1.

[10] See Chapter 8, p. 141.

[11] "It is fitting that clerics whom the goods of their parents and relatives do not assist be sustained [*sustentari*] by the stipends of the Church. But those who can be supported by the goods and wealth of their parents, if they accept what belongs to the poor, certainly commit sacrilege, and by the abuse of such things, they eat and drink judgment upon themselves." C. 1, q. 2, c. 6. Gratian inscribes the canon to Jerome, but Friedberg labels the canon "*Caput incertum*," and the letters of Jerome to Damasus in the Pseudo-Isidorian collection are forgeries. Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, 1:409n68; cf. ibid., 1:784n730; "*Apocryphas illas esse dubium non est*" Hinschius, ed., *Decretales Pseudo-Isidorianae*, xcvii.

[12] "Those authorities are to be understood as referring to a time of necessity, namely, when the poor could not otherwise be relieved." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 187, a. 4, ad 1; cf. ibid., II-II, q. 185, a. 7, ad 3.

[13] "Indeed, if no wage were owed to them for the work they do [. . .] then it would not be lawful to bargain for stipends, and such a stipulation would be base and simoniacal. But, because they are owed most justly by the prescription of God and Christ, it is lawful to bargain for them, when they cannot be had otherwise and conveniently; nor in this is there any blemish or stain or suspicion of a mercenary spirit, provided they are moderate, not so large as to burden the flock, and sufficient for the honorable support of the pastor and his family." Turretin, *Institutio*, 18.28.12.

[14] Ibid., 18.28.8; 18.28.13.

Rejecting Positions

If a minister declines a position because the stipend is smaller than he had hoped, this too may demonstrate simoniacal intention. Of course, a position could simply not come with a sufficient stipend to support the minister,[15] but his rejection of the position is further evidence bearing on his motives.

Authors in the Reformed tradition spoke most plainly of the one who would reject a calling. For example, Thomas Boston warned those that "close with no call upon the account of stipend."[16] In his judgment, "This is direct simony; selling the gift of God for money."[17] Alluding to a number of relevant passages in sequence, he continued decrying this sin: "Let their money perish with themselves that will adventure to do so. Such are buyers and sellers, that God will put out of his temple. Such are mere hirelings, working for wages; and too much of Balaam's temper is to be found there."[18]

If the purpose of the stipend is maintenance to uphold the minister and his proper dignity, a man who would require more has some other purpose in view.

Transferring Positions

Canon law routinely prohibited ministers from transferring between posts on their own initiative, particularly when that transfer is from a lesser see to a greater one. The Council of Arles (314) required ministers to remain where ordained and deposed presbyters or deacons who moved elsewhere.[19] Eleven years later, the Council of Nicaea (325) expressly included bishops in the prohibition, decreeing that "neither

[15] See ibid., 18.28.14–15.

[16] Boston, *A Soliloquy on Man-Fishing*, 49. He continued, "Woe is me if a stipend should be that which would engage me to a place." See also Keach, *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*, 105–7.

[17] Boston, *A Soliloquy on Man-Fishing*, 49.

[18] Ibid., 49. The allusions are to Acts 8:20, Matt. 21:12, John 10:12–13, and 2 Pet. 2:15.

[19] *Council of Arles (314)*, can. 2 (p. 107); can. 21 (p. 110).

bishop, nor presbyter, nor deacon should pass from city to city."[20] Later councils repeated the rule, the Synod of Antioch (341)[21] and the Council of Sardica (343)[22] among them. Urban III carried the same suspicion into the exchange of prebends, in a rescript the *Liber extra* received:

> For there are some who resign their prebend and renounce their right in order that they may obtain a greater prebend, or that from this they may acquire a certain sum of money, which is indeed contrary to propriety, and without doubt contains simoniacal depravity. Therefore, you should hold as a general rule that exchanges of prebends cannot lawfully be made, especially where a pact has preceded, which, where spiritual things or things annexed to them are concerned, always carries the stain of simony.[23]

The schoolmen approved these canons as readily as the jurists.[24] These laws did not forbid all transfers, since superiors could still reassign clergy for necessary reasons; they stripped the individual minister of the initiative, because self-directed movement so readily becomes a vehicle for covetousness. The theme that runs through these sources, even when "simony" is not expressly mentioned, is suspicion of simoniacal ambition.[25]

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[20] *Council of Nicaea (325)*, can. 15 (p. 18).

[21] *Synod of Antioch (341)*, can. 21 (p. 86).

[22] *Council of Sardica (343)*, can. 1 (p. 88).

[23] X 3.19.5. Urban extended a canon of the Council of Tours (1163), which had forbidden the exchange of dignities, to the exchange of prebends, and named the practice simoniacal, which the canon had not. The first sentence quoted is a passage the compilers of the *Liber extra* cut and Friedberg restored. Cf. *Council of Tours (1163)*, can. 1 (Mansi 21:1176B–C).

[24] E.g., "not even an exchange of prebends or ecclesiastical benefices can be made on the authority of the parties without the danger of simony." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 5.

[25] E.g., Henry of Ghent judged it a mortal sin to leave a people in great need of preaching for one that needed it less "on account of more plentiful provisions expected elsewhere." Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibeta*, VII, q. 19 (fol. 271v).

Want of Office

A final indicator of simoniacal motivation is the absence of a proper call. If a minister's right to maintenance flows from his ordination and office rather than from a commercial transaction, then one who claims maintenance without ordination has no right to it at all. His receipt of it is, at best, irregular and, at worst, evidence that gain rather than service is his object.

Augustine and Monks

In *De opere monachorum* (On the work of monks), Augustine distinguished between physical labor and spiritual labor, speaking of the natural exchange of the former for physical food, but reserving to "evangelists and ministers of the word of God" the authority "to live by the gospel, performing only spiritual works."[26] Paul refused funds at Thessalonica, Augustine explained, so that by his example "those might be restrained who, though not so ordained in the church, deemed the like to be due to themselves."[27] He returned to the point later, objecting to monks who claimed the authority to live by the gospel without holding any ordained office. These brethren claim more than their right, he wrote, "for if they are evangelists, I confess, they have it; if ministers of the altar, dispensers of the sacraments, they rightly do not arrogate this authority to themselves, but plainly claim it as their due."[28]

William of Saint-Amour and the Friars

In the thirteenth century, William of Saint-Amour extended Augustine's argument to the new mendicant orders, the friars.[29] Glossing Augustine's remarks, he wrote:

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[26] Augustine, *De opere monachorum*, 7.8 (p. 543).

[27] Ibid., 3.4 (p. 537); cf. 2 Thess. 3:6–12.

[28] Ibid., 21.24 (pp. 569–70). Augustine's "evangelists" (*euangelistae*) denotes the commissioned role of Ephesians 4:11 (cf. Acts 21:8), not merely one who evangelizes.

[29] William acknowledged the centrality of *De opere monachorum* to his project in the prologue of the *Collectiones*, William of Saint-Amour, *Collectiones*, prol. (p. 125).

> The false [preachers], even though they are not so ordained in the Church that they can live from the Gospel […] nevertheless wish to live from the Gospel, receiving their sustenance from those to whom they preach, as if they were their evangelists or ministers of their altar. […] If they do not hold these offices in the churches of those from whom they receive, they do not have the authority to take sustenance from them either. For it is certain that sustenance from the Gospel is owed only to those who preside ordinarily in governance and teaching by the dignity of their office, and who are bound to the care of souls by the duty of their office.[30]

He went on to read the phrases of 1 Thessalonians 5:12 as marks of pastoral office rather than descriptions of mere labor,[31] then concluded, "Therefore those who do not have the dignity or the proper office of governing souls cannot claim sustenance as owed to them."[32] He objected to their receiving food from their hearers even when it was offered, and the more to their demanding it as owed: the false preachers "not only receive food from those to whom they preach if it is offered to them, but also sometimes importunately demand it, although it is not owed."[33] Such preachers, if they regularly ask for such gifts before or after their preaching, hoping to obtain them the more easily on its account, "seem to commit simony."[34]

In *De valido mendicante* (The able-bodied mendicant), William asserted that nothing should be given to those who beg before or after their preaching.[35] Only a teacher who holds the apostolic authority—a

[30] Ibid., D. 4, sign. 41 (pp. 457–58).

[31] "We beseech you, brothers, that you know (that is, that you show yourselves to know, namely by the furnishing of sustenance) those who labor among you. Gloss: In your governance and teaching. And who are set over you. Gloss: By dignity. And this, in the Lord. That is, by the ordination of the Lord. And who admonish you. Gloss: By the duty of their office." Ibid., D. 4, sign. 41 (p. 458).

[32] Ibid., D. 4, sign. 41 (p. 458).

[33] Ibid., D. 4, sign. 41 (p. 458).

[34] Ibid., D. 4, sign. 40 (p. 456).

[35] William of Saint-Amour, *De valido mendicante*, 85.

bishop or one he has sent—is owed a share by those he teaches,[36] and what such a man asks he asks by that authority and not as a beggar.[37]

William therefore tied proper financial support to mission.[38] Sustenance is owed by "the people to whom they preach as their own charges,"[39] that is, "those whom he feeds as a flock, or whom he cultivates as a vineyard."[40] To gather support beyond that boundary is to "make prey of congregations not their own."[41] Regarding those preachers who visit a congregation, William made the proper source of their support depend on who had commissioned them. If a bishop or lesser prelate sent a preacher to visit, he should also fund him.[42] He allowed an exception where such a visit met a specific need, and then only on judicial inquiry or at the parish priest's own request.[43] He regarded the contrary rule as untenable, since "if an unlimited number of persons were to have the authority of preaching in any given church, every church would owe unlimited procurations, which is absurd to say."[44]

The Protestant Reception

As noted in Chapter 1,[45] William's positions were condemned by the papacy and answered by Aquinas, but they found purchase among proto-Reformers and those Reformers who still faced the mendicants. Addressing the monastic orders that held the revenues of parish

[36] Ibid., 87.

[37] William of Saint-Amour, *Collectiones*, D. 1 (p. 156).

[38] "They must take their expenses in different ways, according to the different missions." Ibid., D. 1 (p. 154).

[39] Ibid., D. 1 (p. 153).

[40] Ibid., D. 1 (p. 156).

[41] Ibid., D. 4 (p. 466).

[42] "Those sending them must furnish necessities to those they send, or assign them prebends from which they may be competently sustained in the office committed to them." Ibid., D. 1 (p. 153). "Those bishops themselves—not the priests nor the lay faithful—ought to furnish them with the necessities of life." William of Saint-Amour, *De periculis*, cap. 2 (p. 26).

[43] William of Saint-Amour, *Collectiones*, D. 1 (p. 154).

[44] William of Saint-Amour, *De periculis*, cap. 2 (p. 26).

[45] See pp. 27–28.

churches while leaving the cure to vicars, John Wycliffe observed that "a benefice and its corresponding office inseparably follow each other."[46] Elsewhere, he judged the friars' office counterfeit and their collection of funds through it simony.[47] William Tyndale adopted these arguments in *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, speaking of those who would ask money for labor in the word outside the office of a preacher as robbers of widows.[48] John Calvin contended similarly, lamenting that the collation of benefices, formerly joined with ordination, had become wholly separate,[49] and that those who have no work or income but the sale of masses have no legitimate office to perform.[50]

Even after the mendicant orders ceased to be a live controversy, Protestant theologians continued to recognize that the office, not merely the actual work, legitimized ministerial maintenance. Matthew Poole, arguing against the congregationalist notion of a "gifted man" (i.e., a congregationally approved lay-preacher), built his argument on a shared foundation: only those who hold the office may be paid for it.[51] He further contended that to fund all those who are gifted and do the work in some measure "would be both absurd and impossible."[52] Failing to do the work of the office was itself read as a sign of simony. Ministers who hold a good benefice and do not preach, Henry Burton wrote, "are by strong presumption deep simonists," there being no other account of how they came by their preferment.[53]

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[46] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 8 (107:20–21).

[47] "The sixth abuse of the friars is the simoniacal collection of temporal goods through the office of preaching carried on in this counterfeit way." Wycliffe, *Trialogus cum supplemento Trialogi*, 4.34 (p. 368).

[48] "Likewise doeth a Christian man give to his brethren and robbeth them not as friars and monks do. […] They preach (sayest thou) and labor in the word. First I say they are not called and therefore ought not for it is the curate's office." Tyndale, *Obedience of a Christian Man*, fol. 126v.

[49] Calvin, *Institutio*, 4.5.6.

[50] Ibid., 4.5.9.

[51] He offered a syllogism: "All Scripture-Preachers may challenge maintenance: But all gifted men (though preaching) cannot challenge maintenance, Therefore they are no Scripture-Preachers." Poole, *Quo Warranto*, 114.

[52] Ibid., 115.

[53] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 43.

Conclusion

A minister whose primary end is gain rather than service corrupts an otherwise licit arrangement. The tradition therefore supplied four marks by which such a minister may be known: the financial burden placed on a congregation, the rejection of a position for its stipend, the transfer to a more profitable one, and the absence of a proper call. Each may expose whether a minister's true master is the Lord or his own appetite.

PART IV

Scripture and Simony

10

The Forefathers of Simony

The class of transgression at the center of our investigation existed long before Simon Magus or the events of Acts 8. In the words of John Major, "this plague was in the church before it was called simony."[1] It existed before the New Testament church and afflicted the Old Testament people of God at least as far back as their wicked prophets.[2]

Writers on this topic rarely committed themselves to an individual or specific instance as the origin of simony, but the antiquity of the sin led many to regard certain figures from Scripture as the forefathers of simony. These names recur across the literature, though rarely collected into a single list. However, Jan Hus provided an orderly collection and an extended discussion of each. After describing Simon

[1] Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb). One work dedicated to the topic frames it thus: "Not but that the crime had got footing in the world long before, and was known to the Jews by the name **טלימא**, and by the Arabians **טלם** *Talm*, says Schindler; and both from **טלם** *fraudavit expilavit*. The Greeks knew it by the name *Περίβολος*. And the Latins by the word *Ambitus*. Which I note, to show 'tis a moral evil, and was troublesome to all nations and religions. But this bold chapman's offer, purchased not the grace of God, but disgrace of turning his name into sin, by which he will be justly infamous to the last gasp of time." Metford, *A General Discourse of Simony*, 2–3.

[2] E.g., "This is evident: it existed in the time of Elisha, and even before him among the wicked prophets; and the church existed then, which began with righteous Abel. But it did not have this specific name before Simon Magus in the eighth chapter of Acts." Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb).

and Gehazi as the chief among these,[3] he listed Balaam, Jeroboam, and Judas.[4] These constitute the pedigree of simony, because simoniacs "pull on the boots of those evil fathers before them."[5]

The figures theologians of the past held up as simony's exemplars show how they understood the sin. What follows is a survey of each, ordered by frequency of appearance in the literature.

Simon Magus

Simony's namesake, Simon Magus, is the figure most often named in association with the sin. Having seen the Spirit given through the apostles' laying on of hands, he offered them money for the same power (Acts 8:18–19). Peter answered, "Your silver perish with you, because you have thought to obtain the gift of God with money" (Acts 8:20). This apostolic rebuke was applied to all who would engage in the same form of commerce. Most treatments of simony adduced Simon as the paradigmatic buyer of spiritual things, even if only briefly.

A number, however, related the extrabiblical tradition of Simon's later career and demise in some detail, usually without qualification or skepticism. For example, James Metford provided a concise introduction that records several ancient sources: "Simony is so called from Simon Magus, that famous Samaritan born at Gitton, mentioned in Acts 8, who came to Rome in the reign of Claudius Caesar (says Eusebius) where he was worshipped in an image (says Just. Martyr) between the two bridges of Tiber, with this inscription, *Simoni Sancto Deo*; yea the Samaritans and many others also, adored him saith Irenaeus."[6]

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[3] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 3.A. This is the standard conclusion. See below, pp. 165–67.

[4] "Know that just as from Simon they are called Simoniacs or Simonites, so from Gehazi they are called Gehazites, from Balaam Balaamites, from Jeroboam Jeroboamites, and from Judas Judites." Ibid., 3.B.

[5] Ibid., 3.A. He further wrote, "But if you wish to name them rightly, call them: heirs of Gehazi, Simon, Balaam, and Judas." Ibid., 3.B.

[6] Metford, *A General Discourse of Simony*, 2.

The tradition extends beyond his cult in Rome. A widely circulated legend, originating in the *Acts of Peter* (ca. 180–200) and retold by later authors, relates that Simon attempted to prove his divinity by flying over the city. In this account, Peter prays to Christ,[7] and Simon is cast down, breaking his leg in three places and subsequently dying from his injuries.[8] This legend, while not connected to the sin of simony proper, nevertheless contributed to the infamy of the name. Simon's fall became a popular subject in Christian art, depicted in paintings, frescoes, and illuminated manuscripts.[9]

Gehazi

Treatments that begin from the name itself rarely stop at Acts 8 without calling attention to the parallel text of 2 Kings 5. While Simon sought to purchase the gift of the Spirit, Gehazi sought to sell the gift of the Spirit, receiving two talents of silver and two changes of clothing from Naaman after he was miraculously cured of leprosy. The prophet Elisha rebuked his servant, transferring to him Naaman's disease (2 Kings 5:20–27).

Gehazites as Sellers

Gehazi is typically presented not merely as a forefather of simony, but as an Old Testament counterpart to the New Testament figure. Where Simon represents buyers, Gehazi represents sellers. The pairing goes back at least to Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis* (ca. 390), where Hilarion rejects gifts given in the context of miracle working: "Have you not

[7] In the *Acts of Peter*, Peter alone is present. Some later retellings add Paul. See *Acts of Peter and Paul*, 75–76 (p. 210).

[8] *Acts of Peter*, 32 (pp. 83, 85). The legend is retold by Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 6.15 (1, p. 176), Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, 2.28 (CSEL 1, 83), and the Funk, ed., *Constitutiones apostolorum*, 6.9 (pp. 319–21), among others.

[9] E.g., Gislebertus's historiated capital at the Cathédrale Saint-Lazare, Autun (ca. 1125–45); *Initial D: The Fall of Simon Magus* from the Stammheim Missal, Hildesheim (ca. 1170); Benozzo Gozzoli's predella panel in the Royal Collection (1461–62); and Pompeo Batoni's altarpiece for St. Peter's (1746–55).

read what befell Gehazi and Simon? One of them accepted a price, the other offered it, so that the former might sell the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the latter might buy it."[10] In the words of Albert the Great, "What Gehazi sells, Simon seeks to procure."[11]

Buyers and sellers took their names accordingly. As Peter Lombard wrote, "Those who wish to procure priceless grace for a price, in the likeness of Simon Magus, are properly called simoniacs; and those who receive a price for sacred ministry, in the manner of Gehazi, ought to be called Gehazites."[12] This naming scheme runs throughout the literature.[13]

Why, then, is the sin denominated by Simon rather than Gehazi? The scholastic answer is that Simon's offense contained both halves of the sin. While Gehazi only sought to sell, Simon attempted to buy in order to sell. The text does not state this explicitly; the inference rests on Simon's asking for the power to lay hands on others (Acts 8:19). In the words of Thomas Aquinas,

> Simon Magus wished to buy spiritual things so that he might later sell them; and therefore his purchase implicitly contained a sale as well. And on account of this, in ordinary speech, both the buyer and the seller are called simoniacs. Yet if we wish to speak precisely, the buyers are called simoniacs, and the sellers Gehazites, because Gehazi wished to sell spiritual things.[14]

In the seventeenth century, Henry Burton added his own explanation based on an English pun: "But Simon hath obtained to bear

[10] Jerome, *Vita Hilar.* 18 (PL 23:37B).

[11] Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 6, ad 1 (p. 95b).

[12] Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 25, c. 2 (p. 909).

[13] E.g., Hostiensis, *Summa aurea*, ad X 5.3 (fol. 534rb); William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 113); Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia; Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (2:9–11).

[14] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, ad 4. See also Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia; Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb); Thomas of Strasbourg, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, ad 1 (fol. 150r); Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 6, ad 1 (p. 95b).

the bell, and to carry the name away for both; sith the money so given and taken becomes Sin-money, bearing the image and superscription of Simon."[15]

Simoniacs as Lepers

Because of Gehazi's punishment (2 Kings 5:27), simony is frequently associated with leprosy. While writings often made remarks to this effect without reference to any source, many went back particularly to Ambrose,[16] who wrote:

> You have the Lord's command and the prophet's example: freely to receive, freely to give; not to sell the ministry, but to offer it; for God's grace is not appraised by a price, [. . .] Leprosy quickly follows a shameful reward, and ill-gotten money stains both body and soul. "You have received money," it says, "and from it you shall possess a field, a vineyard, olive groves, and flocks; and the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your seed forever." You see that the doer's act condemns the heir's succession; for the guilt of selling a mystery is unatonable, and the heavenly vengeance for [selling] grace passes on to posterity. In short, the Moabites and others shall not enter [the assembly] even unto the third and fourth generation[17]—namely for so long (to interpret it simply) until a succession of many generations might abolish the guilt of the doers.
>
> But since those who have transgressed against God in the error of idolatry seem to be punished unto the fourth generation, certainly the sentence seems harsher

[15] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 31.

[16] E.g., Humbert of Silva Candida, *Libri tres adversus simoniacos*, 1.16 (p. 128); C. 1, q. 1, c. 14; Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 52.

[17] Deuteronomy 23:3 reads "tenth" in the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate. Ambrose's "third and fourth" is the formula of Exodus 20:5, on the idolaters he sets against Gehazi's seed in the sentence that follows.

> by which the seed of Gehazi is condemned forever by prophetic authority for the greed of possessing—especially since our Lord Jesus Christ, through the washing of regeneration has given the remission of sins to all—unless you understand the "seed" to be of vices rather than of birth. For just as those who are children of the promise are reckoned as good seed, so also those who are children of error are reckoned as bad seed. For even the Jews are from their father the devil, certainly not by succession of the flesh, but of crime. Therefore all the covetous, all the greedy possess the leprosy of Gehazi along with their riches; and with an ill-gotten reward they have gathered not so much an inheritance of wealth as a treasury of crimes, for eternal punishment and brief enjoyment.[18]

If the punishments for idolatry only fall to several generations, but Gehazi's seed is afflicted forever, then the offspring in mind must be spiritual rather than physical. Those of faith are the sons of Abraham (Gal. 3:7), and those of simony are the sons of Gehazi. All who follow in his sin contract his disease.

Associations between leprosy and the sin of Simon existed in patristic literature, but these became exceptionally frequent in the Middle Ages both with the development of the notion of simony and with the actual widespread presence of pestilence across Europe.[19] Due to the latter, the medievals often regarded leprosy as more than a metaphor for simony—a literal form of divine retribution on the simoniac.[20]

The idea that the simoniac will inherit Gehazi's punishment is likewise recorded in canon law. The Third Lateran Council (1179) said that the simoniac "will have his portion with Gehazi, whose deed

[18] Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii sec. Lucam*, 4.52–54 (CSEL 32.4, 164:16–166:11).
[19] See Grigsby, *Pestilence*, 42.
[20] See ibid., 87–88.

he imitates by exacting a shameful reward."[21] Gratian wrote that "he who ordains for a price confers leprosy, not an office."[22]

The imagery is common enough, but the proto-Reformers seized on it and pursued its implications. John Wycliffe opened his work on simony by describing it as a leprosy that cannot be cured apart from a miracle.[23] From there, the remainder of his treatise is replete with this language. Comparing Gehazi and the pope, he analyzed the disease:

> Leprosy, I say, according to the saints mystically signifies simony, because just as no disease is more infectious than this, more deforming in that it dissolves unity and form, or more horrible to live with because of the stench or voice, so is the simoniacal heresy. For no sin is more infectious than this, since the simoniac infects first himself, secondly the one above him who confers [the office], and thirdly the people below him, to whom he administers ecclesiastical sacraments, indeed he infects the people on all sides through their consent. And as to the second [point], it is clear that he utterly dissolves the unity of the members of the church, since those whom he ought to unite with Christ according to the form of the gospel, he separates and deforms according to the law of the devil. And this is the reason why it is called heresy, which is interpreted "division." So no monster is more deformed before God, even if he seems to be the head of the church. Whence Aaron is expressly reproved and Miriam his sister was struck with leprosy as is clear in Numbers 12[:10]; "Behold," it says, "Miriam appeared white with leprosy like snow." And consequently Aaron entreats Moses on her behalf, that she may not become as one dead and as a stillborn child that is cast out from its mother's womb. For such people are cast out before

[21] *Third Lateran Council (1179)*, can. 7 (Mansi 22:222A); cf. X 5.3.9.

[22] C. 1, q. 1, c. 14.

[23] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (1:21–2:2). Hus added these same thoughts, Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 2.B.

> God out of mother church, even if they seem to rule her. And as to the third [point], it is clear that every faithful person should shudder at this leprosy more than at the devil himself; indeed their reputation infects many, they emit the voice of an asp and not of a trumpet; and therefore they were appointed under the old law, as is clear in Numbers 5, to remain outside the camp as men not to be endured.
>
> But the whiteness of the leprosy signifies the whiteness of hypocrisy, by which they feign holiness in the eyes of the faithful; and from the first simoniac pope[24] even to the last of this generation, all are struck almost irremediably by this leprosy. And thus it makes unworthy those who were previously worthy; it does not promote but condemns, and more grievously than Gehazi, in that, like another god, [the simoniac] blasphemously justifies a more dangerous sin against Christ, and thus he steals from the goods of the church, not his own, most sacrilegiously, like the chief antichrist.[25]

This association continued beyond the Reformation, later authors making similar observations and speaking of "the leprosy of simony."[26]

Judas

Beyond Simon and Gehazi, Judas is most frequently presented as the forefather of simoniacs. Gratian placed him between Gehazi and Simon, observing that he "sold the redeemer of all" and died without redemption because one cannot retain what he has sold.[27]

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[24] Wycliffe identifies John XXII (r. 1316–34) as the first simoniac pope, Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 5 (58:14–30).

[25] Ibid., cap. 5 (61:8–62:9).

[26] E.g., Burton, *Israels Fast*, 29; Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, 2.333.

[27] C. 1, q. 1, c. 11. Gratian ascribed the words to Gregory of Nazianzus, but they are likely Alger of Liège's. Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, 1:360n109.

The comparison is not merely that Judas is greedy as simoniacs are greedy or even that Judas devalues spiritual things as simoniacs devalue spiritual things. Rather, the repeated point is that Judas is guilty of selling Jesus as simoniacs are guilty of selling Jesus.

The notion that trading in the things of God is equivalent to selling Jesus is ancient. The word "christmonger" (*χριστέμπορος*) appears in Christian writings going as far back as the *Didache* (ca. 50–120).[28] A fragment attributed to Hippolytus turns the word on those who buy or sell grace and calls them worse than Judas.[29] Writings associating Simon and Judas also date back to the early centuries of the church. In his homilies on Matthew, John Chrysostom preached, "Let no Judas therefore approach this table, let no Simon; for both of these perished on account of avarice."[30] Cyril of Jerusalem called Simon "a second Judas."[31] However, with the development of a formal notion of simony, the identification of Judas with those who traffic in spiritual things became more frequent and pronounced.

William Peraldus made the charge that simoniacs are worse than Judas into a formal argument:

> It ought to suffice for such men that Christ was sold once for their sins. These sellers seem to be worse than Judas in these five [ways]: They sell him immortal and now glorified whom Judas sold mortal and in a state of humility: an insult offered to a knight is greater than one offered to a squire. Nor do they sell him only once like Judas, but more than a hundred times. They sell him for a smaller price than Judas. They also believe him to be God, which Judas did not believe when he sold [him] for thirty denarii. Judas also, when he was penitent for this sin, led by penitence, returned the thirty pieces of silver

[28] *Didache (Doctrina duodecim apostolorum)*, 12.5. Cf. the cognate *χριστεμπορία* in Alexander of Alexandria's encyclical, quoted by Theodoret of Cyrus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.3 (PG 82:889A).

[29] Hippolytus of Rome, *Fragmentum in Ruth*, 120:19–25.

[30] Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Matthaeum*, hom. 50.4 (PG 58:508).

[31] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 16.10 (2, p. 216).

> for which he had sold Christ; but simoniacs cannot be brought to penitence, so as to restore what they gained through simony.[32]

Examples exist among English authors as well. The royal chaplain Sampson Price called simoniacal patrons "heirs to Judas, whose Latin goeth no farther than *Quid dabis* [What will you give?]."[33] As the English preacher Thomas Adams wrote, "when Judas is the patron, Simon Magus must be the priest."[34]

Allusions to and citations of the parallel text in Zechariah 11:4–13 indicate that this identification of Judas with simoniacs was further motivated by the typology.[35] Like Judas, the prophet is given thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; Matt. 26:15), which are cast into the temple (Zech. 11:13; Matt. 27:5) and ultimately given to a potter (Zech. 11:13; Matt. 27:7). Zechariah plays the part of a shepherd who is put in charge of sheep that will be slaughtered, and these are his wages. Though one might hesitate to compare Judas to a mercenary pastor, Scripture itself compares him to a shepherd for hire by way of shared images.

Balaam

Earlier still, Balaam, the prophet of the Lord hired by Balak to curse Israel (Num. 22–24), is commonly regarded as a simoniac. In fact, the Christian legend regarding Simon's flight and fall, recounted above, may itself indicate an understood association with the Old Testament figure. In extrabiblical Jewish tradition, Balaam was a sorcerer who possessed the power to fly but was brought down by Phinehas, in

[32] William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 109). Wycliffe appealed to Peraldus to make the same point. Wycliffe named the author "Parisiensis"—William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris—following a misattribution common in his day. Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (11:18–22; 8:24n).

[33] Price, *The Beauty of Holiness*, 30.

[34] Adams, *Commentary on 2 Peter*, 451.

[35] E.g., Metford, *A General Discourse of Simony*, 40; Tuckney, "Sermon 38," 645.

one telling at his prayer.[36] The legend of Simon's flight and fall runs the same course point for point: both sorcerers fly, both are brought down by the prayer of a chief antagonist,[37] both fall and die. The similarity between these two suggests that early Christians took to heart the New Testament authors' depiction of Balaam as the prophet who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11).

Some considered Balaam to be the first simoniac. For example, Hugh of St. Victor devoted a chapter to the "authors of simony" and traced its genealogy back to Balaam.[38] Regardless of whether they counted him the first, many identified him as a simoniac, particularly on account of his willingness to sell the gift of prophecy for money.[39] Major, on the same ground, considered whether the sin might be named "balaamy" (*balaamia*) rather than "simony" (*simonia*).[40]

Hus labeled "Balaamites" those simoniacs "who preach for money and for the sake of money, like those swindlers who grant indulgences for money."[41] From Peter's description of false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1–15, he cataloged eight marks by which the sons of Balaam may be recognized.[42] Hus invited the reader to apply these marks to the clergy of his own day, for "those in whom one finds these marks are certainly

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[36] *Zohar*, 3:193b; cf. *Bamidbar Rabbah*, 22.5; Buber, ed., *Midrash Tanchuma*, Balak 23. For a composite retelling of the legend, see Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 3.410–11.

[37] Peter rebukes Simon (Acts 8:20–23), while Phinehas by his zealous action stops the plague that Balaam's counsel ultimately caused (Num. 25:7–13; 31:16).

[38] "The contagion of the simoniacal heresy sprouted long ago in Balaam, who, when the price of divination was offered, set out to curse the people of God." Hugh of St. Victor, *De sacramentis*, II, pars 10, c. 2 (PL 176:477C).

[39] E.g., Peter Damian, *Liber gratissimus*, c. 14 (p. 406).

[40] Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 1 (fol. 182vb).

[41] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 3.B.

[42] "Recognize them, for he says: [first,] they shall be liars; second, they shall introduce sects after them and shall be false teachers; third, they deny the one who bought them; fourth, they shall be fornicators, whose fornications many shall follow; fifth, through them the way of truth shall be blasphemed; sixth, with feigned words in covetousness they shall make merchandise of people and profit from them, for they have a heart practiced in covetousness; seventh, they have forsaken the right way and follow the way of Balaam; eighth, he grants them indulgences, saying that they are sons of cursing, and that their judgment does not cease and their damnation does not sleep, that is, does not delay." Ibid., 3.B.

the ones Saint Peter means."[43] Later, he gave a number of other tests for discerning Balaamites, largely focused on the temptations into which they would lure people,[44] and offered up an imprecation against them: "O Lord! Will you fight these Balaamites with the sword sharp on both sides, the sword of your mouth?"[45]

English writers likewise appealed to Balaam as a proto-simoniac. The Lollard tract *The Lanterne of Lizt* (ca. 1409–15) invokes the name of Balaam repeatedly, yoking him to Gehazi[46] and accusing huckstering priests of beguiling the people "with the foul sin of Balaam."[47] Later authors continued to name Balaam alongside Gehazi and Simon as the scriptural archetypes of the simoniac.[48]

Jeroboam

A further Old Testament forefather is Jeroboam, the king of Israel who split the kingdom and "filled the hand of whoever desired it, and he became a priest of the high places" (1 Kings 13:33). The connection to simony is, in part, motivated by the rendering of the Vulgate, which translates the Hebrew idiom for consecration literally as "fill the hand" (*implebat manum suam*). On this account, Latin theologians routinely interpreted the phrase as a financial transaction, Gregory the Great's *munus a manu*.[49]

The comparison asserts an analogy between Jeroboam and contemporary simoniacs not only in their sin but in their destruction. Jeroboam was destroyed because he made two golden calves and "second, because he bestowed the priesthood over those calves for money."[50]

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[43] Ibid., 3.B.

[44] Ibid., 3.G.

[45] Ibid., 3.H.

[46] Swinburn, ed., *The Lanterne of Lizt*, 120:26–34.

[47] Ibid., 84:32.

[48] E.g., Godolphin, *Repertorium Canonicum*, 556–57; Metford, *A General Discourse of Simony*, 61; *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 112–13; Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 58.

[49] E.g., William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 113).

[50] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 8.A.

The thrust of these observations is a fortiori: "If the selling of the priesthood of idols was thus avenged by the Lord, how will the selling of the true priesthood be avenged?"[51] Wycliffe prophesied that "wars shall continue by which nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, as long as this plague of simony endures,"[52] and then, turning to Jeroboam, concluded, "He who thus avenged the selling of the priesthood of idols must therefore avenge the selling of the priesthood of Christ."[53] Hus applied the same reckoning to his own generation and closed with a prayer: "Those who thus take money and make bishops and priests, or grant others benefices, are followers of Jeroboam; and God grant that they not be destroyed as he was."[54]

Burton applied this name to the pope, calling him "that grand Jeroboam of Rome," who "for base bribes, admits into the priesthood the basest of the people."[55] He further contended that Israel's corruption under its king indicates that simony inevitably corrupts the whole people: "What other ministry can be expected in a church where simony reigneth, than such as was under Jeroboam?"[56]

Conclusion

These five figures form a composite portrait of the simoniac. The chief two, Simon and Gehazi, represent buyer and seller. Beyond that, Judas trades in Christ, Balaam trades in the word, and Jeroboam trades in the priesthood. Theologians across many centuries returned to the

[51] William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 113). See also Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 8.A; Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 148ra).

[52] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (9:24–26).

[53] Ibid., cap. 1 (10:4–6).

[54] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 3.D.

[55] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 50.

[56] Ibid., 103. He made the same point in Latin: "What wonder is it if [King Jeroboam] alone made the entire Israelite nation sinful? […] In a priesthood vitiated by the corruption of simony, you search in vain for a pious and upright people." Ibid., 96.

same cast of forefathers. Where the gifts of God are treated as articles of commerce, the same sins recur and the same judgments follow.

II

Scripture Proofs

Beyond the *loci classici* of Acts 8 and 2 Kings 5, theologians of past generations have centered on several other passages of Scripture to demonstrate the immorality of trafficking in spiritual things. The breadth of this scriptural witness was recognized early. In the third century, Cyprian of Carthage compiled at the request of one Quirinus a book of biblical testimonies, including one heading "That the grace of God ought to be without price." Under this rubric he gathered Peter's rebuke of Simon Magus (Acts 8:20), the dominical command "freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8), Christ's denunciation of the merchants in the temple (John 2:16), Isaiah's call to come and buy without money (Isa. 55:1), and the apocalyptic promise of the water of life freely given (Rev. 21:6).[1]

This chapter takes up the passages the medieval tradition most often employed in the service of the doctrine of simony, treating each in turn before weighing them together in the conclusion. While theologians adumbrated the figure of the simoniac from the narrative passages covered in Chapter 10, we will here address those scriptural texts that more directly supplied the doctrinal grounds on which his trade was condemned.

[1] Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum*, 3.100.

Matthew 10:8—Freely Give

The most frequently referenced verse on the topic of simony is Matthew 10:8, cited more often than even Acts 8 or 2 Kings 5. In a detailed analysis of Gregory the Great's corpus of homilies and letters, one scholar concludes that "the most astonishing feature is the almost total absence of Simon Magus and of the text of the Acts of the Apostles among the biblical justifications proscribing the *simoniaca heresis*."[2] Much more often, Gregory appealed to Matthew 10:8.[3]

Medieval quotations demonstrating the importance of this verse to the topic of simony could be multiplied ad nauseam, and many have already been provided. Here it will suffice to include the words of the *Glossa ordinaria*, which says that in this verse, Christ "condemns the perfidy of the simoniacal heresy."[4] Among the schoolmen, not only was the dominical command the chief text on simony, but admonition against simony was perhaps the principal application of the dominical command.

This pattern continued into the early years of the Reformation, though with less consistency. Luther opened his annotations on Matthew 10:8 by naming simony among the vices the verse forbids, and went on to urge, "let us gladly and freely serve him and teach the people."[5] While he did not mention simony by name, Calvin made similar comments, arguing that "no one will be a sincere minister of his word and a dispenser of grace unless he is prepared to bestow his

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[2] Rosé, "Simon le Magicien hérésiarque?" 210.

[3] Ibid., 211.

[4] Glossa ordinaria ad Matt. 10:8 (PL 114:118A).

[5] "He prohibits the vice of avarice, simony, and ambition, that is, so that they might teach sincerely, not for the sake of glory, gain, or favor, but freely for the sake of God. For he knew there would be wicked men in the future who would say and do all things for the sake of profit. Therefore, he forewarns them so diligently, that they might sincerely care only for the Kingdom of God.

"The words are to be weighed: 'Freely you have received, freely give.' He admonishes us to consider how unworthy we were of so great a ministry; and so, mindful of our unworthiness and of his infinite mercy, let us gladly and freely serve him and teach the people." Luther, *Annotationes in aliquot capita Matthaei*, 10:8 (WA 38, 496:1–8).

labor freely," adding immediately that "all mercenaries unworthily corrupt and profane the sacred office of teaching."[6]

The children of the English Reformation often denied either that this verse was to be taken as an imperative to more than the first apostles or that it regarded more than the working of miracles.[7] This sentiment was expressed in their contentions with Anabaptists and separatists who would use this passage to condemn ministerial salaries.[8]

However, they did not absolutely deny its contemporary application and employed it routinely when directly addressing simony. For example, Ralph Cudworth asserted that the command to freely give in Matthew 10:8 is especially to be understood of the working of miracles, but in that very same discourse argued that the word of God should not be put to sale because "that which God hath given freely, ought not to be sold basely." He likewise connected such selling to simony, appealing to Peter's condemnation of Simon Magus.[9]

A few directly opposed the limits. The Anatomist refused to join those who said that the words of the Savior do not relate to preaching the gospel or that they were intended only for the apostles.[10] In providing the rules of interpretation by which a perpetual precept is to be recognized, Jeremy Taylor instanced the maxim of Matthew 10:8:

> Thus it was also in the first mission of the disciples (above spoken of) in which the body of precepts was temporary and relative; but yet when our Blessed Lord had inserted that clause [*freely ye have received, freely give*] we are not to conclude it to be temporary and only relating to that mission, because it is placed in a body of relative commandments: for there is in it something that is spiritual,

[6] Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, Matt. 10:8 (CO 45:276).

[7] E.g., Keach, *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*, 105.

[8] See Hall, *Sal Terrae*, 134–36; Prynne, *A Gospel Plea*, 35–36; cf. Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, 4.293.

[9] Cudworth, *The Supplement*, 537.

[10] "I shall not say with some, that these words of our Saviour do relate, not to the preaching of the gospel, but to those gifts of working miracles [. . .] nor that these words were intended only for the apostles, and not for the ordinary ministers of the Church." *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 88.

> and of an eternal decency, rectitude and proportion; and we are taught to separate this from the other by the reproof which fell upon Simon Magus, by the separate nature of spiritual things, by the analogy of the Gospel, by the provisions which upon other accounts are made for the clergy and the whole state ecclesiastical, upon the stock of such propositions which provide so fully, that they cannot be tempted by necessity to suppose God left them to be supplied by simoniacal intercourses.[11]

So long as things of the Spirit are freely received, they must be freely given. God has not ceased to give them freely, so the obligation has not lapsed with the apostles.

John 2:16—The Dove Sellers

Many medievals applied the narrative of the temple cleansing to the topic of simony, either explicitly or by way of allusion. Often, rather than introducing their own statements on the matter, they would quote church fathers to the same effect. These references go back particularly far, including comments from figures such as Origen[12] and Ambrose.[13] With some regularity, the medievals quoted Augustine on the matter: "the dove is not for sale."[14] But most frequently they

[11] Taylor, *Ductor Dubitantium*, 2.542. The bracketed clause is original. See also Ames, *Conscience*, 5.229.

[12] "And I think that the word about those who sell the doves fits those who hand the churches over to bishops or presbyters or deacons who are greedy for base gain, tyrannical, ignorant, and irreverent. This is why Matthew and Mark named the chairs of the dove-sellers alone, which they say were overturned by Jesus." Origen, *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei*, 16.22 (GCS 40, 549:22–550:5); cf. C. 16, q. 7, c. 9.

[13] "But why he overturned the chairs of those selling doves, I do not understand according to the letter; for the bird-sellers could not claim for themselves the dignity of any honored seat in the market. For what prerogative of dignity is there in doves? Yet the form of the Lord's baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended as a dove [Luke 3:22], gives warning—by the figure of merchants of this kind cast out of the temple—that those who traffic in the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot have fellowship in the Church of God. For 'freely,' he says, 'you have received, freely give' [Matt. 10:8]. Finally,

bolstered this point by referencing the interpretation of Gregory the Great:

> We know indeed from the Gospel what our Redeemer did by his own act: that he entered the temple and overturned the chairs of those selling doves [Matt. 21:12]. For to sell doves is to receive a temporal advantage from the Holy Spirit, whom Almighty God, consubstantial with himself, bestows upon men through the imposition of hands. And from that evil, as I said above, it is already indicated what follows: that the chairs of those who presumed to sell doves in the temple of God fell by the judgment of God. And this error, clearly, spreads with increase among those under them. For the man who is brought to sacred honor is himself, too, already tainted at the very root of his promotion, and is the readier to sell to others what he bought. And where is that which is written: "Freely you have received, freely give" [Matt. 10:8]? And since the simoniacal heresy was the first to arise against the holy Church, why is it not weighed, why is it not seen, that the man who ordains another for a price, by promoting him, brings it about that he becomes a heretic?[15]

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to Simon, who thought the gift of sanctifying could be conferred upon him for a price, Peter replied: 'May your money,' he says, 'perish with you; because you think you can obtain the grace of God with money. There is no part or lot for you in this faith' [Acts 8:20–21]." Ambrose, *Expositio evangelii sec. Lucam*, 9.19 (CSEL 32.4, 444:25–445:11).

[14] "Simon […] supposed the apostles to be traders of the sort the Lord drove out of the temple with a whip. For such he himself was, and he wished to buy what he might sell: he was of those who sell doves. For the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16). Who then are those who sell doves, brothers, but those who say, 'We give the Holy Spirit'? For why do they say this, and at what price do they sell? At the price of their own honor. They receive temporal chairs [seats of authority] as their price, so that they themselves are seen to be selling doves. Let them beware of the whip of little cords. The dove is not for sale: it is given freely, because it is called grace." Augustine, *Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis*, 10.6 (PL 35:1469–70).

[15] Gregory I, *Ep.* 5.63 (1, 379:9–19); cf. ibid., 5.58 (1, 369:14–25).

Gratian included this passage in his *Decretum*,[16] along with many others to the same effect.[17] Later medieval writers, such as Wycliffe and Hus, also followed Gregory on this point.[18]

In these readings from Ambrose on, the doves represent the Holy Spirit on account of his appearance at Christ's baptism,[19] and the sellers of doves are those who trade in spiritual things for temporal gain. The chairs or seats (*cathedra*) represent the temporal honors that simoniacs receive as the price of their trade. Christ's overturning them (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:15) represents their certain judgment. The *Glossa ordinaria* consolidated these points in its comments on Matthew 21:12.[20]

Modern readers committed to the singular sense of Scripture—as affirmed in the Westminster and Second London Baptist confessions[21]—may find these patristic and medieval readings difficult to accept. To some, the identification of the doves with the Holy Spirit and the chairs with temporal honors may resemble the kind of allegorical exegesis that the Reformers sought to restrain. However, William Whitaker—himself a critic of the fourfold sense (*quadriga*)—distinguished: "These things we do not wholly reject: we concede such things as allegory, anagoge, and tropology in scripture; but meanwhile we deny that there are many and various senses. We affirm that there is but one true, proper and genuine sense of scripture, arising from the words rightly understood, which we call the literal; and we contend that allegories, tropologies, and anagoges are not various senses, but various collections from one sense, or various applications and accommodations of that one meaning."[22]

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[16] C. 1, q. 1, c. 117.

[17] E.g., C. 1, q. 1, c. 23 (Jerome); C. 1, q. 3, c. 8 (Urban II, quoting Augustine); C. 1, q. 3, c. 9 (Alexander II); C. 1, q. 3, c. 11 (Bede); C. 1, q. 7, c. 5 (Leo IV).

[18] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (4:25–5:20); Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 2.D; Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 17.13 (pp. 109–10).

[19] Origen considered the doves to represent the faithful. Origen, *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei*, 16.22 (GCS 40, 550:20–24).

[20] Glossa ordinaria ad Matt. 21:12 (PL 114:153B).

[21] WCF 1.9; 2LBCF 1.9.

[22] Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 404.

The application of Christ's temple cleansing to the problem of simony need not be taken as a second "sense" of the text to be dismissed out of hand. It is better read as a legitimate accommodation of the one literal sense: Christ drove out those who profaned the temple with commerce, and simoniacs profane the church in an analogous way. The fathers and medievals after them did not mystically read meanings into the text so much as unfold the entailments of Christ's zeal for the temple, especially as informed by images invested with significance elsewhere in Scripture.[23]

Indeed, Protestant and Puritan authors would continue applying the temple cleansing to simony. John Trapp, glossing Zechariah 14:21 ("there shall be no more the Canaanite"), noted that the Vulgate rendered the word "merchant," which he identified as "the simoniac, the church-chopper, such money-merchants as Christ whipped out of the temple."[24] Christopher Ness, in a four-volume work given to the interpretation of types, wrote, "So this sorcerer, unsound Simon, hath given the execrable name to that abominable sin of simony, wherewith both the laws of God and men do brand all those that barter for spiritual benefices. N.B.[25] This sin is forbid, Lev. 25:34. The Levites' portion and patrimony was not to be sold, etc. The sellers of doves (in which form the Spirit descended, Matt. 3:16) our Lord did whip out of his temple twice."[26] Elsewhere, Ness described himself as "abhorring to destroy the literal sense of the Holy Scriptures by wanton allegories, as some have done, from the frothy exuberances of their own addle brains."[27] Even those grounded in the literal sense of Scripture could acknowledge the application of the text to the sin of simony.

[23] For a hermeneutical model of how such typological connections can be drawn with exegetical restraint, see Clowney, *Preaching Christ*, 32.

[24] Trapp, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 605. Trapp preferred the rendering "Canaanite," granting that the Canaanites "were indeed great merchants."

[25] *Nota Bene* ("Note well").

[26] Ness, *A Compleat History and Mystery*, 4.361.

[27] Ness, *A Crystal Mirror*, 70.

1 Corinthians 4:1—Stewards of the Mysteries of God

In any legitimate commercial transaction, the owner of a thing must authorize the sale. In the case of spiritual things, men are not owners but ministers. That is, they are stewards who are bound by the directives of God, the divine proprietor of all grace.[28]

Most commonly in arguing this point, the schoolmen cited 1 Corinthians 4:1 ("Let a man so account us as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God").[29] This apostolic self-description undermines any claim of ownership or authority that would permit commerce in spiritual things. As "mysteries," they are matters that have been revealed by God and are freely given.

Peter Paludanus put the argument in syllogistic form.

- **Major premise**: A sale is of itself illicit when the seller is not the owner but only a minister authorized to dispense a thing.
- **Minor premise**: A prelate is not the owner of spiritual things but only a minister appointed to dispense them.
- **Conclusion**: His sales are illicit.

In support of the minor premise, he cited 1 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Peter 4:10, and Matthew 10:8.[30]

As the owner of his storehouse of gifts and graces, God has made it clear how his ministers must steward them. They must be used to serve others (1 Pet. 4:10), and they must be given freely (Matt. 10:8). The sale of spiritual things is therefore forbidden.

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[28] See Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, corp.; Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 2; Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 146ra). "It is not in man's power to sell them, seeing he is not lord over them, but steward and dispenser of them." Cudworth, *The Supplement*, 537.

[29] This verse also appears in the margin of Calvin's *Institutes* where he said that both the word of God and the ancient canons require an elder to feed the flock. Calvin, *Institutio*, 4.5.9.

[30] Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (pp. 318b–319a).

Romans 11:6—Graceless Grace

The very word "grace" (*gratia*) denotes what is freely given. To attach a price to grace is not merely to misuse it but to nullify it, for a grace that is purchased ceases to be grace at all. The simoniacal exchange is therefore incoherent as well as immoral; it requires that one and the same thing be gratuitous and non-gratuitous at once. As Romans 11:6 ("if it is by grace, it is no longer by works; otherwise grace is no longer grace") confirms, grace that is given on the basis of some exchange is no longer grace.[31]

Paludanus again developed the point in a syllogism.

- **Major premise**: A contract is illicit in which the nature of the thing is repugnant to the nature of the contract.
- **Minor premise**: This is the case in the sale or purchase of a spiritual thing, since such things are accessory to grace, whose nature is to be freely given.
- **Conclusion**: The contract is illicit, the nature of grace being repugnant to buying and selling.[32]

Repugnance here describes contradictory natures. Grace is repugnant to exchange because it ceases to be grace upon exchange.

What then is exchanged in a simoniacal transaction? Gratian opened the question with a canon he ascribed to Leo the Great: what the simoniac has to give is not the Spirit of truth but the spirit of lies.[33] The simoniac therefore does more than take an unjust price; he

[31] See Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 2; Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4 (pp. 647–48); Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1.

[32] Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5 (p. 319a).

[33] "If grace is not given or received freely, it is not grace. Simoniacs, however, do not freely receive; therefore they do not receive the grace which is especially at work in ecclesiastical orders. But if they do receive, they do not have; and if they do not have, they can give to no one, either freely or not freely. What, then, do they give? Surely what they have. And what do they have? The spirit of lies, without a doubt. How do we prove this? Because if the Spirit of truth (as the Truth itself, from whom he proceeds, testifies) is received freely, then without a doubt that which is not received freely is proved to be the spirit of lies." C. 1, q. 1, c. 1.

deals in deception. In the case of ordinations, he promises the Spirit of truth but gives the spirit of lies. In every case, he ostensibly offers grace but can only give a semblance.

Micah 3:11—The Example of the Prophets

In rejecting simony, the schoolmen appealed to the example set by the prophets. Before considering particular figures, they usually anticipated the objection that the prophets charged for their prophecy, citing the payments prepared by Saul and the wife of Jeroboam. Their answer began from Micah 3:11 ("her priests teach for a price, and her prophets divine for money").[34]

Part of the reason for this structure is that the tradition frequently—either explicitly or implicitly—refers back to Jerome's commentary on Micah 3:9–12 to handle the cases of Samuel and Ahijah. His exposition touches a number of passages relevant to our study, but we will limit ourselves to those comments most frequently recited by later theologians.

> Nor let anyone be troubled by what we read in the first book of Kings, that Saul, wishing to go to Samuel, said to his servant that he could not go to him because he did not have a price to offer for the prophecy, and the servant answered: "Behold, there is found in my hand a fourth part of a shekel of money, and I will give it to the man of God, and he will declare to us our way"

[34] E.g., "It does not seem that one falls into any sin by selling a gift of the Holy Spirit, because it is said in 1 Kings 9 [1 Sam. 9:8] concerning Saul, and in 3 Kings 14 [1 Kings 14:3] concerning the wife of Jeroboam, that both brought a price to the holy prophets for a prophetic manifestation; and it is established that prophecy is a gift of his: therefore, etc. […] But to the objection that it is not a sin to sell on the example of the prophets, it must be said that no prophet who was good and holy sold the gift of prophecy, but only the wicked, as such are expressly rebuked in Micah 3[:11–12]: Her judges judged for bribes, and her priests taught for hire, and her prophets divined for money; and below: For this reason, because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, etc." Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4 (pp. 647–48). See also C. 1, q. 1, d.p.c. 22; Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2.

> [1 Sam. 9:8]. For it is not written that Samuel accepted it, or that they offered it: but rather they are fed by the prophet, and invited to a meal. But suppose he did accept it; what he took is to be reckoned alms for the tabernacle rather than a fee for prophecy. For a shekel has twenty obols, and a fourth part of a shekel is five obols. And therefore, if our priests wish to sell prophecy, and set out doves for sale on their chairs—the chairs the Lord overturned with a whip [John 2]—let them accept five obols, not the prices of estates. The same note is sounded also in the third book of Kings, where the wife of Jeroboam, whose son was sick, goes to Ahijah the man of God, bringing him loaves and raisins, and a small vessel of honey [1 Kings 14:3]. For we are told what she brought with her, and yet it is not written that the prophet accepted it, seeing that he both rebuked her and foretold the mourning to come. Granted, those who had been accustomed to go to soothsayers (since there were many diviners and soothsayers in Israel) may by a bad habit have supposed the same of the prophets too, and may have wished to offer holy men what they were accustomed to offer diviners; and granted that Scripture merely reports what they intended. Even so, it does not say that they dared to offer it, or that the prophets accepted it.[35]

On Jerome's reading, Scripture nowhere records a prophet accepting payment; it merely narrates what supplicants intended to bring. Even if Samuel had taken what was offered, he would have received it only as alms for the tabernacle rather than as a fee for prophecy. Subsequent writers on simony, from Gratian to Burton, adopted this line of reasoning, treating Jerome's argument—and authority—as decisive.[36]

[35] Jerome, *In proph. min.* In Mich. I, 3:9–12 (cols. 471–72).

[36] See, e.g., C. 1, q. 1, d.p.c. 24; Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 1; Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 3. For one who cited Gratian, see Burton, *A Censure*

Few expanded on this analysis, but Girolamo Zanchi, having cited Jerome and followed him closely, went on to answer a further objection that Saul and others brought gifts to the prophets because they thought that they were approaching God and must bring some show of gratitude. He observed that the prophets themselves sometimes refused gifts and sometimes accepted them—Elisha refusing Naaman's, but accepting hospitality from the Shunammite woman. These are distinguished because the prophet recognized a sale in the one, and in the other not a sale but a provision for his own need. Zanchi concluded, "Thus it remains firm: to give and accept gifts for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and for spiritual things, as a wage for such spiritual things and for profit, is mere simony, and it pertains to the irreverence, contempt, and overthrow of divine worship."[37]

Proverbs 23:23—Sell Not Wisdom

English translations of Solomon's verse render it as a paired imperative, "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23). The Vulgate keeps both imperatives but attaches the notion of sale directly to wisdom and its companions: "Buy truth, and do not sell wisdom, and instruction, and understanding" (*veritatem eme, et noli vendere sapientiam, et doctrinam, et intelligentiam*). Modern readers typically take the verse as a warning against parting with wisdom once acquired, but the medieval tradition, reading the Vulgate, more often heard in it a prohibition on charging for wisdom in the first place.[38]

Some, like William of Auxerre, extended the prohibition to knowledge of every kind, the liberal arts included: to buy or sell any science

of Simonie, 53; for one who made the same argument with no citation, see Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 147vb).

[37] Zanchi, *Tractatus de redemptione*, 1.17.4 (col. 500).

[38] In dividing up the several categories of spiritual things, Peraldus wrote, "Some are called spiritual because by them the Holy Spirit is possessed, as knowledge and virtue are. For by knowledge he is possessed insofar as he illuminates, and therefore knowledge is forbidden to be sold. In Proverbs 23[:23] it is said: 'Do not sell wisdom, teaching, and understanding.'" William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 114).

whatsoever is simoniacal, the gravity of this sin being proportional to the nobility of the discipline.[39] Others felt the force of the verse keenly enough to defend the practice of the schools on a careful distinction, that masters did not sell wisdom itself, but only the labor of teaching it, which could be remunerated like any other work.[40] Others were more explicit in narrowing the verse's application, concluding from it a prohibition specifically on charging for theological or moral instruction, where the subject matter is most plainly spiritual.[41]

Even apart from the more extreme reading, the principle that what is permissible to buy is permissible to sell required that the first clause of the verse ("buy truth") be understood coordinately. Since Proverbs 17:16 in the Vulgate says that the fool cannot buy wisdom though he has riches, the purchase cannot be made with money; it is a "spiritual purchase," and its price is the seeking, for wisdom offers itself to whoever seeks it.[42] Wisdom is only to be bought with wisdom, and the fool cannot buy it "because he does not have it."[43]

Conclusion

Beneath the variety of passages surveyed here, two concerns recur. The first is the gratuity of grace; what God gives without price cannot be received, held, or transferred on any other terms. The second is the limited authority of the minister; he handles what is not his to sell.

The modern reader will find these arguments uneven in their force. The dominical command of Matthew 10:8 and the stewardship language of 1 Corinthians 4:1 carry their weight on the surface of the text, and the definitional argument from Romans 11:6—that purchased grace ceases to be grace—does little more than restate the definition of the word "grace." The application of the temple cleansing requires

[39] William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, III, tr. 21, cap. 3, q. 2 (foll. 229vb–230ra).

[40] E.g., Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 8. The distinction is taken up in Chapter 8, pp. 142–47.

[41] E.g., Robert of Courson, *Summa*, 10.3 (fol. 47va).

[42] See Alexander of Hales, *Summa Halensis*, II-II, Inq. 3, Tract. 8, S. 1, Q. 3, T. 2, C. 4, A. 3, probl. 2, on Prov. 4:7.

[43] William of Auxerre, *Summa aurea*, III, tr. 21, cap. 3, q. 2 (foll. 229vb–230ra).

more of the reader, who must consider the Holy Spirit's purpose in inspiring the particular images recorded. Jerome's observations about the prophets rely on the didactic undercurrent of Micah 3:11 and on a pointed omission in the text: the gifts brought to Samuel and to Ahijah are recorded where their acceptance is not. The argument from Proverbs 23:23 rests on a literal understanding of "sell," on a figurative understanding of "buy" in the same verse, and, in part, on the Vulgate's particular wording.

Regardless of the force of any single text, the cumulative case represented by the tradition is substantial. Read together, these passages testify that spiritual things are not for sale.

PART V

The Censure of Simony

12

Sin and Repentance

Having defined simony and surveyed its many forms, we will now consider its moral weight and consequences, and the correspondingly severe question of repentance. What must the simoniac do, and for what may he hope?

Gravity and Effects

Throughout the relevant literature, simony ranks among the gravest of all sins, both in its aggravations and effects. While not all theologians agreed, many spoke of simony simply as the greatest of all sins. Beyond the common observation that Simon Magus is the first of all heretics, the canonical locus classicus for this claim stands in the *Liber extra*: simony is an offense "in comparison with which other crimes are reckoned as practically nothing";[1] it is a plague that "surpasses other diseases in its magnitude."[2] This often serves as the standard point of departure for later treatments. For example, William Peraldus began with the same dictum in presenting eight things that make simony detestable and twelve insults that simony inflicts upon God.[3]

Other authors likewise developed extensive catalogs of the ways in which simony is uniquely grievous. In addressing simony, William of

[1] X 5.3.32.
[2] X 5.3.6.
[3] William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (pp. 108–13).

Saint-Amour cataloged five perils that attend a preacher's receiving gifts, even unasked: he is blinded by what he takes, he comes to please those who give, he is drawn into the business of worldly men, he makes himself their slave, and he loses his own heart.[4] On similar grounds, simony has been associated with various judgments. Henry III declared it manifest that because of simony, famine, pestilence, and sword had come upon the sons of men.[5]

Many recorded execrations of its effect on the church at large. Wycliffe put it sharply, calling simony "the cause why a great part of what is called the Church lies scattered and dead."[6] Henry Burton devoted an entire chapter to "the miserable fruits and effects of simony," beginning with these words: "The effects and fruits of simony are no less miserable, than the censures are grievous, and the punishments thereof intolerable. For as Simon is the father of all simonists, so simony is the mother of all mischiefs in the church."[7] These writers traced the church's disorders back to avarice in holy things.

A Two-Table Offense

Occasionally, theologians asked whether simony is a first-table or second-table offense. That is, is it a wrong committed against God or man? Generally, they concluded that simony is a sin against both tables. William Ames captured both dimensions together, condemning the exchange of "a holy and spiritual [thing] for a temporal."[8] First, holy things are polluted by worldly temporal contracts, since "it is against the religion and reverence which is due to holy things."[9] Second, according to Matthew 10:8, "it is injustice to sell those things which

[4] William of Saint-Amour, *Si quis diligit me*, §§ 11–15 (186:14–187:6).

[5] Raoul Glaber, *Historiarum libri quinque*, 5.5.25 (pp. 133–34). The speech is quoted in Chapter 1, pp. 11–12.

[6] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (14:9–10).

[7] Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 93.

[8] Ames, *Conscience*, 5.229.

[9] Ibid., 5.229.

are to be bestowed on free cost."[10] Simony transgresses both religion (first table) and justice (second table).

Two arguments will demonstrate this: Aquinas on the first table and Alexander of Hales on the second. As with most discussions of the matter, these two address the two-table nature of simony in considerations of the eighth commandment ("you shall not steal"),[11] where simony is typically categorized along with usury.[12]

The First Table

If simony is treated under the command not to steal, this raises the question of how it could be regarded as matter pertaining to the first table of the law. Aquinas remarked on this in his *Quodlibet* where he handled the question of whether offenses against the second table are greater than offenses against the first. In particular, he responded to the argument that they are because simony is the greatest offense and, as a species of avarice, is a second-table offense.

This hypothesis fails, Aquinas contended, because simony is not exclusively a violation of the second table. The man who commits it "behaves irreverently toward sacred things, in which he touches upon the sins which are against the precepts of the first table."[13] While simony was often regarded as the greatest sin, Aquinas denied that it may be regarded so in any absolute sense. However, he pointed out that it is considered so great in part because of its connection to the first table, being a profaning of holy things.

The Second Table

Conversely, Alexander of Hales responded to the opposite notion, that simony is only a first-table violation.[14] He proceeded in the same

[10] Ibid., 5.229.

[11] In medieval literature, this is the seventh command, following the traditional Augustinian enumeration.

[12] E.g., Biel, *Collectorium*, IV, d. 15, q. 3 (sig. q5vb).

[13] Aquinas, *Quodlibet*, V, q. 10, a. 2, ad 2 (p. 114).

[14] The objection: "And since simony consists in selling or buying a spiritual thing, or something annexed to a spiritual thing, and since by this an injury is committed

way, framing the objection as a false dichotomy that acknowledges one offense without the other. When it comes to selling or buying a priceless, divine thing "an injury is committed against God and it is a sin against the worship of God and against the first precept of the first table."[15] But when it comes to receiving temporal things, which cannot be justly possessed by the recipient, one violates the command against theft.[16]

Alexander distinguished between the exchange ("selling or buying") of the spiritual thing and the exchange ("receiving") of the material thing. The first is a first-table offense, since God has exclusive ownership over divine things. However, in the case of the material thing, one has wrongly received something that someone else should instead have. This constitutes a second-table offense.

Alexander grounded this assertion of an unjust deprivation in Augustine's maxim that "everything that is wrongfully possessed is another's."[17] He continued from there to make the direct connection to the sin of theft: "that is, it is to be reckoned as another's property. And in this way, in this respect, simony is theft, inasmuch as it is drawn to the special name of sacrilege."[18] One may ask from whom anything has been stolen, given that the purchaser willingly parts with his money. But Augustine spoke of a more general wrong being done to the faithful, to whom belong all things. While this idea is present in other passages (Prov. 13:22; Eccles. 2:26; 1 Cor. 3:21), he remarked on a Septuagintal addition to Proverbs 17:6, "The whole world of riches belongs to the faithful man, but to the unfaithful not even a penny."[19]

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against God in itself, not against the neighbor, it seems that simony is forbidden among the precepts of the first table, not the second. Therefore it is not forbidden by this commandment." Alexander of Hales, *Summa Halensis*, III, P. 2, Inq. 3, Tract. 2, S. 1, Q. 2, T. 7, C. 5, A. 4, n. 1 (p. 569).

[15] Ibid., III, P. 2, Inq. 3, Tract. 2, S. 1, Q. 2, T. 7, C. 5, A. 4 (pp. 569–70).

[16] Ibid., III, P. 2, Inq. 3, Tract. 2, S. 1, Q. 2, T. 7, C. 5, A. 4 (p. 570).

[17] Ibid., III, P. 2, Inq. 3, Tract. 2, S. 1, Q. 2, T. 7, C. 5, A. 4 (p. 570); Augustine, *Ep.* 153.6.26 (CSEL 44, 426:9–10).

[18] Alexander of Hales, *Summa Halensis*, III, P. 2, Inq. 3, Tract. 2, S. 1, Q. 2, T. 7, C. 5, A. 4 (p. 570).

[19] Augustine, *Ep.* 153.6.26 (CSEL 44, 426:4–6).

In other words, if both parties are wrong, then the money still counts as being "stolen," belonging to the faithful.

Simony is a first-table offense because it transgresses God's statutes regarding worship and spiritual things. It is a second-table offense because it disenfranchises the godly.

Associated Corruptions

While simony is associated with a constellation of other corruptions,[20] two in particular are worth examining. The first is a direct consequence as sin begets sin: the commercialization of the ministry corrupts the word itself, whether by natural incentive or by divine judgment. The second is sodomy, an analogous corruption of nature for simony's corruption of grace.

False Doctrine

Among the corruptions attending simony, false doctrine is the most pronounced. When the ministry of the word is motivated by money, the word itself is corrupted. Theologians identified two aspects of this phenomenon, the natural and the supernatural. On one hand, corruption flows from human incentives, and on the other hand, on account of simoniacal dealings, God himself takes away truth and permits it to be replaced by error.

The association goes back to the second century, when Irenaeus declared broadly that "all who in any way adulterate the truth, and do harm to the preaching of the Church, are disciples and successors of Simon the Samaritan magician."[21] While Irenaeus was not speaking explicitly of selling the word, his observation establishes a pattern: the spirit of Simon stands behind every corruption of Christian proclamation.

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[20] For an overview of the medieval rhetoric against simony, see Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy*, 117–20.

[21] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus haereses*, 1.27.4 (p. 274).

The *Shepherd of Hermas* (ca. 100–160) provides a natural explanation for why the paid prophet corrupts his message. Hermas contended that one who requires payment to prophesy attaches to the empty people, "speaking to them all things emptily, according to their desires; for he answers the empty with empty things."[22] The prophet for hire gravitates toward those willing to pay, who are themselves empty vessels. Having no substance of their own, they readily receive whatever he supplies, and he supplies whatever they desire to hear. An empty vessel might otherwise be broken, but, put with other empty vessels, it finds itself in agreement with them.[23] The prophet requiring payment necessarily follows money rather than truth.

Jerome offered a more striking explanation that operates on a supernatural plane. Commenting on the mercenary prophets of Micah 3:11, he observed that Scripture never takes the word "divination" in a good sense.[24] From this, he concluded that "they seemed to themselves indeed to be prophets, but because they were taking money, their prophecy became divination."[25] Jerome made this remark immediately before likening prophesying for money to the offer of Simon Magus. The implication is not merely that mercenary preachers tend toward falsehood through natural incentive but that the prophetic character of their utterance is exchanged for divination through divine judgment.

We have already remarked on how frequently later authors referenced Jerome on this passage.[26] Where William of Saint-Amour quoted Jerome to this effect, he also gave the complementary natural explanation. Preachers may not receive large gifts "lest by this they burden their hearers; or lest the Gospel become hateful; or lest the preachers themselves lose the freedom of rebuking."[27] Gifts function

[22] Hermas, *The Shepherd*, Mand. 11.13.

[23] Ibid., Mand. 11.13.

[24] "But the prophets of Jerusalem also divined for money, not knowing that prophecy is one thing and divination another: for divination is never taken in a good sense in the Scriptures. 'There shall not be,' it says, 'augury in Jacob, nor divination in Israel' [Num. 23:23]." Jerome, *In proph. min.* In Mich. I, 3:9–12 (col. 471).

[25] Ibid., In Mich. I, 3:9–12 (col. 471).

[26] See Chapter 11, pp. 186–87.

[27] William of Saint-Amour, *Collectiones*, D. 4, sign. 40 (p. 453).

as bribes. The preacher who accepts them becomes obligated to his benefactor and can no longer rebuke freely. The word is corrupted by human constraint; the preacher says what his patron wishes to hear rather than what God has given him to say.[28]

English divines recognized the same connection. Henry Burton described simony and sacrilege as having different immediate effects but working together to one ultimate ruin: "both together cause prophesyings to fail, the people to perish, and idolatry to spread itself."[29] To sell the word corrupts it as much as failing to fund it takes it away.

Simony turns ministers into merchants (a natural corruption) and causes prophecy to fail (a supernatural one). As Jerome observed centuries earlier, the mercenary prophet's word ceases to be prophecy at all.

Sodomy

In Chapter 10, we discussed the association of simony with leprosy.[30] Medieval literature links simony to sodomy as well. This association is less prevalent than that of leprosy, but it still constitutes a recognizable strand of the tradition.

Consider the Summoner and the Pardoner of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. They are both simoniacs. Though it is his duty to call parishioners to appear before the archdeacon's court, the Summoner turns a blind eye for a fee: for a quart of wine he lets a man keep his concubine for a year.[31] The Pardoner sells indulgences brought from

[28] Paludanus made a similar comment in his discourse on simony: "One must not make the collection of money the end of preaching, like those who estimate godliness to be a gain [1 Tim. 6:5], preaching for no other purpose than to collect money: for which purpose they even fabricate indulgences, and in their preaching they compose many lies." Paludanus, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 5, concl. 2 (p. 320b).

[29] Burton, *Israels Fast*, 29.

[30] See pp. 167–70.

[31] Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 649–58 (pp. 19–20).

Rome and a bag of feigned relics, accruing more wealth in a day than a poor parson earns in two months.[32]

Both possess features that reinforce the picture of their spiritual corruption. Chaucer described the Summoner as leprous, with a disgusting visage, red and purulent.[33] The Pardoner's effeminate behavior and relationship with the Summoner are suggestive of sodomy. The Pardoner is a beardless man with a high-pitched voice who sings a love song while the Summoner carries the bass; the narrator declines to say whether he is "a gelding [castrated horse] or a mare."[34] Chaucer chose marks that already signified simony: the Summoner's leprosy manifests it,[35] and the Pardoner's suggested sodomy does the same.[36]

One twentieth-century scholar wrote, "Not merely does an analogy exist between simony and leprosy, between simony and sodomy, but an identification. The simoniac is a leper; the simoniac is a sodomist."[37] Peraldus explained the reason for this association:

> The second thing that makes simony detestable is that it is a spiritual sodomy. Just as in bodily sodomy he who is the work of nature acts against nature, so in simony he who is the work of grace acts against grace, because he has been redeemed by grace. And just as on the day of judgment the sodomite will be struck speechless according to the meaning of his name,[38] because he was an enemy of nature, which had made him—for as far as in him lies,

[32] Ibid., 686–706 (p. 21). "The grossest form of simony was exactly what the Pardoner does: the selling of indulgences." Patterson, "Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch," 664.

[33] Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 623–33 (p. 19).

[34] Ibid., 672–91 (pp. 20–21).

[35] "The Summoner's leprosy identifies him as an established threat to society because he is a simoniac." Grigsby, *Pestilence*, 87.

[36] "We can now infer that the Pardoner may be thought to be a mare—a sodomite—because he is a simoniac." Patterson, "Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch," 666; "if the Pardoner is indeed a sodomist, this would be a perfect sign of his 'character' as a *simoniac*." Vance, "Chaucer's Pardoner," 736–37.

[37] McVeigh, "Chaucer's Portraits of the Pardoner and Summoner," 58.

[38] Jerome gives the meaning of the name as "cattle, silent, or blindness, or their likeness." Jerome, *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum*, De Genesi, S

> the sodomite destroys the human race—so the simoniac will be struck speechless, who was an enemy of the grace by which he had been redeemed. And just as under the natural law sodomy is judged either the greatest sin or one of the greatest, because it is against nature, so in the time of grace, under the evangelical law, simony is judged the greatest sin, because it is properly contrary to grace. For properly it acts against that word of Matt. 10: "Freely you have received, freely give." Whence simoniacs are rightly signified by the Sodomites who wanted to break down the doors of Lot, of whom it is said in Gen. 19: "And they were now on the point of breaking down the doors of Lot," etc.[39]

Wycliffe affirmed this judgment, adding this simple explanation: "For just as in bodily sodomy seed is lost against nature, the seed from which an individual of the human race would be formed, so in that [spiritual] sodomy the seed of the word of God is cast away, through which a spiritual generation in Christ Jesus would be created."[40] The seed of the word of God is to be given freely, but the simoniac ministers fruitlessly.

Repentance

James Metford summarized the canonical and casuistical position concisely: "you are bound in conscience to resign whatever is so gotten, and to make restitution of what profits you have received."[41] These obligations are treated at length by the schoolmen.[42]

While the doctrine of simony encompassed the sale and purchase of all kinds of spiritual things, the bulk of the medieval material available

(PL 23:828). Peraldus's point is that the sodomite will fittingly have nothing to say in his own defense at the judgment.

[39] William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 108).

[40] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (8:27–30).

[41] Metford, *A General Discourse of Simony*, 155.

[42] E.g., Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 7 (foll. 189rb–190rb).

on repentance from simony consists of legal code regulating orders and benefices. Therefore, we will begin by outlining the categories of simoniacal ordinations before covering associated matters.

Categories of Simoniacal Ordinations

In canon law and the writings of the jurists, the question that recurs most is the matter of ordinations, either ones that occur simoniacally through a purchase or those that are administered by one who is himself a simoniac. Within these works, such problematic ordinations fall in one of three categories. One can be ordained

- simoniacally by simoniacs,
- simoniacally by non-simoniacs, or
- non-simoniacally by simoniacs.[43]

The first category is the most obvious. The second occurs when one has his ordination arranged by a purchase of which the administrator is unaware. In the final category, no simony is committed in the ordination, but the ordainer is later found to be a simoniac on other grounds. Certain writings still label such men "simoniacs" though they are not guilty of *actual* simony: "What makes these men simoniacs is not the guilt of the crime, but the ordination by a simoniac."[44]

Restitution

Those who obtained an office by simony were to be deposed from the office and deprived of the benefice.[45] Nuns who had obtained entry by simony were to be expelled from their monastery "without hope

[43] This threefold distinction originates from the Lateran synod of 1060, *Lateran Council (1060)*, can. 5 (p. 551); cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 107; Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 25, c. 5 (p. 910).

[44] C. 1, q. 1, d.p.c. 107.

[45] E.g., "deposed perpetually from the ministry of the altar." X 5.3.11; "remove them […] from the churches so acquired." X 5.3.13. Panormitanus reconciled the two: "a simoniac holding a benefice is not deposed from his order when he is not convicted by way of accusation, but is deprived of the benefice simoniacally acquired." Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.13, no. 2 (fol. 71vb).

of restoration" and thrust into a place of stricter rule "to do perpetual penance," a penalty the same canon extended to monks and other religious.[46]

The one non-simoniacally ordained by a simoniac may remain in his office.[47] This required a laying on of hands to signify his reconciliation[48] and was only granted due to "the necessity of the times."[49] None should willfully be ordained by one he believes to be a simoniac, but one ignorantly ordained in such circumstances may keep his position.[50]

These penalties apply only to conventional simony. For mental simony, no restitution or resignation can be required.[51] Sources that state the exemption go on to insist that the absence of restitution does not make mental simony any less sin; one does not clear himself of transgressions against God's law simply by evading the laws of man.[52]

Moreover, Peter's sentence against the buyer, "your silver perish" (Acts 8:20), stands. The one who purchased a spiritual thing by simony has no right to the return of his money.[53] The Puritan William Attersoll echoed many before him when he presented the dilemma and conclusion: "No restitution is to be made to the giver, that deserveth justly to lose whatsoever he hath given; neither ought the receiver to retain it, because he can lay no just claim and title unto it: so that it

[46] See X 5.3.40.

[47] Those who addressed this point frequently cited *Council of Piacenza (1095)*, can. 3 (Mansi 20:805).

[48] "If anyone is ordained by simoniacs, [. . .] he is not re-ordained, but is reconciled by the imposition of hands of a catholic bishop." Honorius Augustodunensis, *De offendiculo*, c. 51 (p. 56).

[49] *Lateran Council (1060)*, can. 5 (p. 551); cf. C. 1, q. 1, c. 107.

[50] See X 5.3.35.

[51] For the category, see Chapter 6, pp. 112–14. E.g., "they are not held liable for simony of this kind." X 5.3.46; "in mental simony the sin can be abolished by penance alone." Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.34, no. 5 (fol. 80ra); cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 6, ad 6.

[52] E.g., "nevertheless before God and in the truth of the matter he is a simoniac." Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 3 (fol. 185ra).

[53] See Burton, *A Censure of Simonie*, 38; cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 6, ad 1; X 5.3.33.

ought to be bestowed upon godly and holy uses."[54] This raises the question of what those holy uses might be.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving is no justification for simony.[55] However, the question of what may be done with such ill-gotten (*illicite acquisitum*) funds is a separate matter. Some permitted them to be given to the poor; others argued that they may not be.

For example, Bonaventure offered two categories of ill-gotten wealth:

1. Wealth wrongly exchanged; ownership transferred (e.g., prostitution) and
2. Wealth falsely exchanged; no ownership transferred (e.g., theft, simony, usury).[56]

In the case of a wrongful exchange, one may give alms, though not as an offering. However, in the case of a false exchange, the transfer of ownership is a fiction. Just as with theft, the money may not be kept, and no alms can be made of it. Therefore, Bonaventure required that the wealth of simony be restored rather than permitting it to be given as alms.[57]

However, Aquinas offered a threefold division:

1. Wealth unjustly taken (e.g., theft and usury),
2. Wealth unjustly taken for something unjustly given (e.g., simony), and
3. Wealth lawfully acquired, but out of an unlawful act (e.g., prostitution).[58]

[54] Attersoll, *Commentary on Numbers*, 326.
[55] See Chapter 6, pp. 116–17.
[56] Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 15, pars 2, a. 2, q. 1, concl. (p. 371).
[57] Ibid., IV, d. 15, pars 2, a. 2, q. 1, concl. (p. 371).
[58] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 32, a. 7.

For the first category, restitution must be made. The wealth of simony is not owed back to the giver, who deserves to lose it, but ought instead to be laid out in alms. Though the wages of a harlot may not be brought as an offering to the altar (Deut. 23:18), they may be given as alms.[59]

Aquinas and Bonaventure are representative of the range of positions within the tradition. There was agreement that a simoniac seller cannot keep the money, but whether it should be returned to the buyer or given as alms was not a matter settled with certainty. Ultimately, most concluded that it must be given to the church.[60]

Forgiveness

Later decrees excommunicated the offender. The English canonist John Godolphin summarized that canon law "excommunicates all simoniacs to that degree as not to be absolved but by the pope himself, nor by him till at the point of death."[61] The propriety of such regulations was generally affirmed by the schoolmen and canonists.[62]

Proto-Reformers and Protestants rejected any framework that hinged absolution on an earthly head of the church. Beyond the illegitimacy of the pope's authority, the particular claim regarding simony is ironic. Among the "errors" of Wycliffe and Hus condemned at the Council of Constance is the charge that "the pope does not dispense from simony, nor from a rash vow, since he is himself the chief simoniac."[63]

Instead, we may ask whether divine forgiveness is available. Peter gave Simon a qualified command to repent "if perhaps" (*εἰ ἄρα*; *si forte*) his intention may be forgiven (Acts 8:22). This conditional was taken by many as an indication that forgiveness for simony is exceedingly difficult to obtain.[64] Wycliffe argued that to be cleansed

[59] Ibid., II-II, q. 32, a. 7, ad 2.

[60] Suárez, *De Religione*, cap. 60, n. 8 (p. 656).

[61] Godolphin, *Repertorium Canonicum*, 556; cf. Extravag. comm. 5.1.2 (col. 1289).

[62] E.g., Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.22 (fol. 74rb); Major, *In Sent. (red. B)*, d. 25, q. 7 (fol. 189va).

[63] *Council of Constance (1414–1418)*, sess. 15 (Mansi 27:749C).

[64] E.g., William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (pp. 112–13).

of simony requires an "extraordinary miracle."[65]

This difficulty of forgiveness is not on account of any miserliness in God but on account of the ensnarement of the sin and man's weakness in turning from it. Peraldus compared the simoniac to a fish in a trap: he cannot easily exit the way he came and resign his benefice; the only other way out is by being caught. Because he does not easily renounce what he has taken, he has one foot in hell.[66]

Several likewise noted that many exposed simoniacs profess repentance but withhold what they ought to give in true repentance.[67] In recounting the life of the hermit Romuald of Ravenna, Peter Damian remarked on Romuald's difficulty restoring simoniacs to repentance from "that poisonous heresy." The bishops were "forever promising, forever putting it off from one day to the next and deferring it to a time still to come," so that "a Jew could sooner be brought to the faith than a heretical brigand could be fully roused to repentance."[68] The simoniac professes to repent but perpetually defers his conversion to a tomorrow that never comes.

Conclusion

Simony is a sin against both tables of the law, offending God by profaning what is holy and offending man by defrauding the faithful. Its gravity is attested across centuries of Christian witness, from the canonical judgment that other crimes are "practically nothing," to Wycliffe's lament that it leaves a great part of the church "scattered and dead." Not even the pope stood exempt from its reach.

The weight of the sin makes repentance all the more urgent. The simoniac must resign what he has wrongly obtained, restore what he has wrongly received, and seek divine forgiveness for what no human

[65] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (1:24–2:1); cf. ibid., cap. 2 (24:10–13).

[66] William Peraldus, *Summae virtutum*, 2.7 (p. 112).

[67] E.g., "there are many who say they repent, yet retain what they have taken." Vermigli, *Loci Communes*, 3.8.38 (p. 613). Vermigli pointed out that failure to restore goods is the mark of false repentance before giving the example of Simon as one whose repentance is uncertain.

[68] Peter Damian, *Vita beati Romualdi*, cap. 35 (PL 144:987A).

penalty can fully address. The tradition insisted on the difficulty of that repentance, but equally on the mercy of the Lord.

13

The Heresy of Simony

From the fathers to the medievals and beyond, a number of authors spoke of simony as a species of heresy. Earlier sources tend to do so without qualification, including Peter Lombard's *Sentences*[1] and Gratian's *Decretum*.[2] This identification goes back to Gregory the Great, who frequently spoke of "simoniacal heresy" (*simoniaca haeresis*).[3] In the homily where he first used the term, he proclaimed,

> But our Redeemer overturned the seats of those selling doves, because he destroys the priesthood of such traffickers. Hence the sacred canons condemn the simoniacal heresy and command that those who seek a price for conferring orders be deprived of the priesthood. The seat of those selling doves is therefore overturned when those who sell spiritual grace are deprived of the priesthood, whether before the eyes of men or before the eyes of God.[4]

[1] Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 25, c. 2 (p. 909); IV, d. 25, c. 5 (p. 910).

[2] C. 1, q. 1, c. 21.

[3] See Rosé, "Simon le Magicien hérésiarque?" 205–6; 235–38 for the first attestation and a map, then a table, of Gregory's use of the term in his correspondence.

[4] Gregory I, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 17.13 (pp. 109–10).

Moreover, the fathers and medievals regarded Simon Magus as the first of all heretics[5] and the father of all heresies. Cyril of Jerusalem called him "the inventor of all heresy."[6] Irenaeus referred to him as the one "from whom all heresies originate."[7] Simony is not only the first of all heresies but foremost among them[8] and therefore is more damnable than the rest.[9]

Later schoolmen qualified this identification in some measure, simony primarily signifying an action rather than an opinion held against the faith. Additionally, since it was counted a heresy, they sought to answer the question of whether the pope could himself commit the sin of simony.

The Basis of the Identification

On what basis did theologians of previous generations identify simony as a heresy? The discourse centered on three contentions: the simoniac prices what is priceless, he makes the Spirit a servant, and he blasphemes the Holy Spirit.

Pricing the Priceless

Lombard described the sin of simony as the activity of putting a price on a priceless grace.[10] Because many of the schoolmen addressed simony in the context of commenting on Lombard's *Sentences*, this description appears repeatedly. Many made the same observation

[5] Though he included in his description of them more than the commerce of the Spirit, Augustine referred to the "Simonians" (*Simoniani*) as the first in a catalog of eighty-eight heretical groups. Augustine, *De haeresibus*, 1 (PL 42:24–26); cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 1.

[6] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 6.14 (1, p. 174).

[7] Irenaeus of Lyon, *Adversus haereses*, 1.23.2 (pp. 246–47); cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.13.6 (GCS 9.1, 136:8–9).

[8] "*primos et precipuos hereticos*" Deusdedit, *Contra invasores*, 2.17 (p. 335); cf. C. 1, q. 7, c. 27; Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (4:18–24). A later addition (*palea*) to the *Decretum* and subsequent authors wrongly ascribed the passage to "*Pascalis Papa*."

[9] C. 1, q. 1, c. 21.

[10] "*impretiabilem gratiam pretio conducere*" Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 25, c. 2 (p. 909).

without using that exact phrase.[11] For example, in making this point, Thomas Aquinas appealed to Proverbs 3:15 ("she is more precious than all riches: and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with her").[12] Peter Auriol called it a sin against religion because "the priceless [*impreciabile*] and incommensurable [*inaequabile*] is given for something that can never match it." His example was a sacrament, "which the whole world cannot equal, nor even the least degree of spiritual things."[13]

In the words of the *Glossa ordinaria*, "Spiritual gifts are cheapened by a price."[14] On this count, some described simony as a spiritual harlotry,[15] selling for hire what nature made not for sale. Though not explicitly invoking the name of Simon or the label of "simony," Augustine explained the problem well:

> [The Word] is priceless, because it surpasses all things. For a thing for sale is either matched by its price, or is inferior to it, or exceeds it. When anyone buys for as much as a thing is worth, the price equals the thing bought; when for less, the price falls below it; when for more, the price exceeds it. But nothing can be made equal to the Word of God, nor in any exchange be inferior to it, nor superior.[16]

In canon law and scholastic theology, the phrase "pricing the priceless" did not merely describe the activity of simony but supplied the

[11] E.g., Oswald of Laskó, *Rosarium*, IV, s.v. Simonia, 2; Cudworth, *The Supplement*, 537; Ames, *Conscience*, 5.229.

[12] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, corp..

[13] Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166b).

[14] "*Dona spiritualia pretio vilescunt*" Glossa ordinaria ad Matt. 10:8 (PL 114:118A).

[15] For example, the theologian Nicole Oresme made this analogy while preaching to Urban V on Christmas Eve, 1363. Oresme, "Sermo coram papa et cardinalibus," 222. For the date, see Mathieu Caesar's introduction, ibid., 198–99. This sermon, proclaiming the corruption of the papacy directly before the pope (*coram papa*), Foxe later translated whole into the *Actes and Monuments*. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 5.415–16.

[16] Augustine, *Sermones*, 117, cap. 1 (PL 38:661–62).

basis for its condemnation. By his attempted commerce, the simoniac makes a comparison between the Spirit and wealth, in effect denying the pricelessness of the Spirit. Frequently, this is characterized as a denial of grace, as in the words of Bonaventure: "This is manifest heresy, and this is what Simon Magus thought. For such a man errs in faith, because he believes that grace is not grace."[17]

A Protestant perspective heightens this concern about pricing the priceless. With the recovery of *sola gratia* during the Reformation, the false gospel of grace on the basis of works became a chief concern. In this vein, Martin Luther went further, labeling all works-righteousness a form of simony, since it would make grace something exchanged for merit.[18]

Making the Spirit a Servant

The Second Council of Nicaea (787) restored the veneration of images, and with it the communion between Constantinople and Rome. Bishops who had conformed under iconoclasm were charged with having bought their sees, and Tarasius, the patriarch of Constantinople and president of the council, restored some of these after a year's penance. This cost him monastic support in the east, and a report of his laxity seems to have reached Rome. Tarasius answered with a letter to the pope.[19] It carries the following argument:

> For the impious heresy of Macedonius and those around him, the attackers of the Holy Spirit, is more tolerable [than simony]. For those men, in their raving, confess the Holy Spirit to be a creature and a slave of God the Father and the Son; but these men make that same Holy Spirit their own slave. For every master sells what he has if he wishes, whether a slave or anything else of those

[17] Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4, concl. (p. 648).

[18] "Every man is naturally a simoniac […] he would wish God to be one who would be appeased by human works and merits." Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 423:32–424:4). The passage is quoted in Chapter 1.

[19] Price, *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*, 54; 629–31.

> things he possesses. Similarly, he who buys, wishing to be the master of what he has bought, acquires it through the price of money. Thus, those who carry out this iniquitous transaction disparage the Holy Spirit, sinning equally with those who blasphemed, saying that Christ cast out demons by Beelzebub. And, to speak more truly, they are compared to Judas the traitor, who sold Christ to the Jews, the killers of God.[20]

The heresy Tarasius named might be set beside Arianism: instead of making the Son a creature, it makes the Spirit a creature. Yet simony is even worse by this analysis, making the Spirit so low a creature that he becomes the slave of man. This argument was recorded by Gratian,[21] and others repeated it after him, affirming that simony is a sin against the Spirit.[22]

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit

While many addressed simony as a sin against the Holy Spirit, John Wycliffe and, after him, Jan Hus described it in a more elaborate Trinitarian framework. For them, simony is not only a heresy but one of three categories of heresy, each offending a distinct person of the Trinity by the nature of its offense. This categorization appears to be unique to them.[23] Wycliffe explained that apostasy is a sin against the Father, who binds the bride of Christ to himself; blasphemy is a sin against the Son, who is the power and wisdom of God; and simony

[20] As recorded in Deusdedit, *Collectio canonum*, 4.15 (p. 407).

[21] C. 1, q. 1, c. 21.

[22] E.g., Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 9.F; cf. *The Anatomy of Simon Magus*, 113; Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 2 (p. 166b).

[23] Other Trinitarian models exist to describe simony. Robert Holcot described simony as selling the power of the Father, charging for a testimony as selling the truth of the Son, and doing good works for praise as selling the holiness of the Spirit; Holcot, *In librum Sapientiae*, lect. 132 (sigs. F1r–v).

is a sin against the Holy Spirit, who orders the peace of the house of God.[24]

This accords with the quotation from Tarasius as found in Gratian's *Decretum*, which also describes simoniacs as sinning equally with those who blasphemed by accusing Christ of casting out demons by Beelzebub.[25] Wycliffe and Hus pressed these charges to the fullest extent, categorizing simony as the sin against the Holy Spirit, which is "unforgivable both in this world and in the one to come."[26]

Qualifications

Following Gregory the Great and the testimony of canon law, the medievals were virtually unanimous in identifying simony as heresy. However, writers of the eleventh century introduced a qualification that carried through the following centuries.[27] For example, in his commentary on the *Sentences*, Aquinas handled the argument that heresy must be a belief rather than an action and conceded the point in his determination.[28] In the strictest sense, simony is not necessarily a heretical belief because it often is not a belief at all. Accordingly, Aquinas elsewhere judged that the sin of simony is not necessarily the unpardonable blasphemy of the Spirit.[29]

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[24] "God the Holy Spirit, who, since out of supreme kindness he wisely orders his house in peace, is provoked by simoniacal depravity contrary to his ordinance. For the simoniac, resisting the Holy Spirit, strives blasphemously to dissolve this benign order and thus the peace." Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (1:3–20); cf. Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 2.A–B.

[25] C. 1, q. 1, c. 21. Hus repeated the comparison with Macedonius. Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 9.F.

[26] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 1 (1:21–23); Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 2.B.

[27] See Gilchrist, "'Simoniaca haeresis,'" 216.

[28] The argument: "Every heresy is against some article of faith, about which a correct opinion is not held. But a simoniac can hold a correct opinion concerning all the articles of faith. Therefore, it is not a heresy." Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 2, s.c..

[29] "Not everyone who sins by choice sins against the Holy Spirit; but only he who chooses sin through contempt for those things which usually hold men back from sinning." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 2.

Among the medievals, even those willing to speak of the heresy of simony without qualification on some occasions admitted the qualification at others. For example, Wycliffe granted that the school of theologians "equivocates" in the name of heresy, calling simoniacal heresy now the will and now the inordinate exchange proceeding from it.[30] Elsewhere, he described some simoniacs as being able to repent,[31] though he had identified simony as the unpardonable sin.[32] Similarly, Hus opened by sorting the senses in which a man may be called a heretic, counting the one who holds an error by deed alongside the one who holds it by word.[33]

From the eleventh century onward, theologians and canonists managed to offer this qualification without rejecting centuries of canonical tradition by explaining two senses in which simony may be labeled a heresy: the similarity of the action and the enormity of the crime.

The Similarity of the Action

Aquinas continued in the same article of his *Sentences* commentary to defend his position, arguing that simoniacs are called heretics on account of the similarity between their actions and formal heresy. He explained that something may be attributed to another without qualification (*simpliciter*) or on account of a similarity of action (*propter similitudinem actus*). Accordingly, "simoniacs are not heretics properly and strictly speaking, since they do not hold any false opinion; but they are called heretics on account of a similarity of action, because they act as if they believed the gift of the Holy Spirit could be possessed with money, which belief would be heretical."[34]

Aquinas also compared it to the disparity between one's outward profession of religion and the faith that resides in his heart: "simony is called a heresy according to an outward profession." In selling the

[30] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 2 (24:37–25:3).
[31] Ibid., cap. 2 (24:10–13).
[32] Ibid., cap. 1 (1:21–23).
[33] Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 1.C.
[34] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 2, sol..

gift of the Holy Spirit, a man "in a certain way professes himself to be the lord of the spiritual gift, which is heretical."[35] By his actions, the simoniac professes the heresy of a salable Spirit, but the typical simoniac is a false professor of this heresy, not truly believing it in his heart.[36] He does not formally embrace the heretical ideas of Simon Magus but materially expresses them. Jeremy Taylor observed the same contrast, explaining that in Simon Magus it was a "false opinion" but that "his followers are rather noted of a vice."[37]

In the seventeenth century, John Donne appealed to this distinction in the midst of an English controversy. After the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, James I imposed the Oath of Allegiance (1606), which required the swearer to abjure as "impious and heretical" the position that princes excommunicated by the pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects. However, some Roman Catholics insisted that they could not take the oath because it belonged only to the pope to pronounce a doctrine heretical. Donne made an effort, with simony among his examples, "to deliver them of that scruple"[38] by showing from the church's own usage that a thing may be called heresy which "is not itself necessarily heresy, properly understood." Simony has been called a "true and undoubted heresy," not because it inherently is, but because it is among the acts that "beget or accompany heresy."[39]

The Enormity of the Crime

Beyond the similarity of the action, the schoolmen and canonists offered a second reason for calling simony a heresy: the two are functionally equivalent in the courts of the church. Simony is so grave an offense that it merits deposition from office and excommunication, the same ecclesiastical punishments as heresy. Panormitanus

[35] Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 1.

[36] See Albert the Great, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 3, ad 2 (p. 90b); Innocent IV, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.5 (fol. 498vb).

[37] Taylor, *Σύμβολον Θεολογικόν*, 947.

[38] Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr*, 372.

[39] Ibid., 387. He continued, "So that we see, such acts as beget or accompany heresy, are called heresy in this mild acceptation, which our law gives it. From which sense the Fathers did not abstain in using that word." Ibid., 387–88.

concluded that "on account of the enormity of the crime it is called heresy."[40]

Some made this point along with the similarity of the action. For example, Bonaventure said of the simoniac who does not truly believe his heresy that he "is not strictly a heretic, but nevertheless is called a heretic by the saints, either because he acts in the manner of a heretic, or because, like a heretic, he is cast out from the service and worship of God on account of his enormous crime."[41] Distinguishing the senses of the word, Gabriel Biel granted that every simoniac is a heretic "since he is excommunicated and a perverter of the sacraments, that is, of spiritual things or of things annexed to them," subsequently observing that the simoniac is called a heretic "by a certain likeness" because "he acts as if he held an opinion against the faith."[42]

These two grounds—the similarity of the action and the enormity of the crime—stand together rather than as alternatives. The label of "heretic" applies to the simoniac both because his conduct professes heretical opinions and because he is punished as one.

The Pope and Simony

In the Roman system, the supreme pontiff is the source of the church's law rather than a subject of it, leading some to conclude that he could not commit simony at all.[43] By and large, those theologians and canonists who treated the issue determined that he could indeed be guilty of the heresy of simony.[44]

Aquinas called the contrary opinion "erroneous" and said that a pope who accepted a gift in exchange for something spiritual would commit simony like any other man, "because it was under Peter, whom

[40] Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.5, no. 1 (fol. 69vb).

[41] Bonaventure, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, a. 1, q. 4, concl. (p. 648).

[42] Biel, *Collectorium*, IV, d. 13, q. 2, a. 3, dub. 1 (sig. m6vb); cf. Richard of Middleton, *In Sent.* IV, d. 13, a. 5, q. 2 (p. 169a).

[43] E.g., "the pope, according to some, cannot commit simony." Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, arg. 7.

[44] E.g., Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 3 (p. 167a).

the pope succeeds, that the vice of simony first received its condemnation in the New Testament."[45] If Peter himself condemned simony, no successor can be exempt from that standard. John Major put the matter plainly: "The Supreme Pontiff can commit simony just like anyone else—this is evident. This entire definition can apply to him just as to another; hence Peter recoiled from Simon Magus, lest he fall into it."[46]

The exemption was also argued from ownership. If the goods of the church are the pope's own, then in taking them he receives nothing from another, and no sale occurs. Aquinas denied the premise: "Although the property of the Church belongs to the pope in a certain way, it is not his to possess in every way, as is what he holds in hand."[47] A pope who gave spiritual things for the temporalities of a church would therefore be selling them as surely as a man who gives something spiritual to his debtor in order to recover what is his.[48]

A Qualification for Positive Law Simony

In Chapter 4, we addressed whether one could commit simony by commerce in otherwise non-spiritual things whose sale is forbidden by the church.[49] For those who would answer "yes," this complicates the question of whether the pope can be guilty of simony. If he is the highest authority, do such laws apply to him?

Panormitanus reported finding none who addressed the question but a single cardinal who inferred a flat exemption for the supreme pontiff.[50] Holding that the pope commits simony wherever the office sold carries the ministry of the sacraments, which is of divine law, he conceded that in matters of positive law alone the pope would not commit simony, because that law does not bind him. All the same,

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[45] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 3, ad 2; cf. Aquinas, ST II-II, q. 100, a. 1, ad 7.

[46] Major, *In Sent. (red. A)*, d. 25, q. un. (fol. 145vb).

[47] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 3, ad 2; cf. Astesanus of Asti, *Summa de casibus*, VI, tit. 55, q. 2 (fol. 162r).

[48] Aquinas, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. 3, a. 3, ad 2.

[49] See pp. 83–84.

[50] Panormitanus, *Commentaria*, ad X 5.3.1, no. 6 (fol. 69rb).

he judged that the pope "ought nevertheless to abstain."[51] The other party in that transaction is not covered by the exemption. He "is not safe as regards God," and where a prohibitory statute is in force, he incurs the penalty the pope escapes. So a subject who gambles with the bishop who decreed excommunication for gambling incurs it, though the bishop "could not be bound by his own constitution."[52]

For those who reject the category of positive law simony altogether, the question is moot. The pope incurs the guilt of simony exactly as anyone else does, without regard to church law.[53]

Positive Accusations of Simony

For many, this was not a theoretical possibility but an observable reality. Dante accused the popes in verse, depicting simoniacs in the eighth circle of hell, stuck upside down in holes with their feet set ablaze. In particular, simoniac popes are stacked in a single hole, each subsequent one pushing the others further down.[54] When Dante arrives, Nicholas III mistakes him for Boniface VIII, the pope at the time of the poem's fictional setting in 1300: "Are you already standing there, are you already standing there, Boniface? By several years the writing lied to me."[55]

Wycliffe and Hus likewise denounced the office of the bishop of Rome as steeped in simony.[56] Wycliffe argued that if the pope cannot commit simony, then he is the Antichrist, because he has made himself higher than God.[57] Hus said much the same in a letter to the rector of the University of Prague, describing himself as "the Goose" whose wings must beat against the wings of Behemoth and against the tail that covers "the abomination of the beast of Antichrist." Identifying the pope as the beast's head, he judged it a greater abomination than

[51] Ibid., ad X 5.3.1, no. 7 (fol. 69rb).

[52] Ibid., ad X 5.3.1, nos. 8–9 (fol. 69rb). Cf. Andreae, *Mercuriales*, Cui licet (fol. 10ra).

[53] E.g., Auriol, *In Sent.* IV, d. 25, q. un., a. 3 (p. 167a).

[54] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia*, Inferno XIX (pp. 543–46).

[55] Ibid., Inferno XIX (p. 544).

[56] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 3 (27:9–40:13); Hus, *O svatokupectví*, 4.

[57] Wycliffe, *De simonia*, cap. 3 (28:3–15).

the exposed harlot who is "publicly ready for anyone who wished to fornicate with her" because it is "standing ready to sell whatever anyone should wish to buy in spiritual things" and "sells that which it does not have."[58]

For these proto-Reformers, the point of contention was not so much whether a pope *could* commit simony as whether the reigning pope *had*. The Reformers spoke along these lines as well. Luther remarked that simony is the very soul of the pope; he cannot be purged of it, but if he could, all that would remain would be the bishop of Rome.[59]

Conclusion

The identification of simony as heresy rests on three arguments: the simoniac prices the priceless, makes the Spirit his servant, and blasphemes him. Upheld with the necessary qualifications, the charge stands on two grounds, one theological and one juridical. The simoniac professes by his conduct that the gifts of God are subject to human commerce, and his crime is so grave that it warrants the same ecclesiastical punishments as heresy.

On the theological ground the schoolmen and the Reformers found the bishop of Rome no exception; on the juridical, the canonists excepted him only where the law was his own. The answers ranged from "yes, he can" to "yes, he has."

[58] Hus, *Korespondence a dokumenty*, letter 52, p. 154.
[59] Luther, *Vorlesungen über 1. Mose*, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 422:28–33).

PART VI

Analysis

14

Spiritual Words

While theologians of the past addressed simony in preaching and teaching, their primary concerns lay with the issues of their own day. Accordingly, the literature dwells on simony in ordinations more than on any other kind. For many, questions regarding charging for the preached or taught word were more theoretical than practical.

This was especially the case in the time after the Reformation. John Godolphin exemplified this in his survey of canon law on simony when he declined to wade through the details of "whether it be simony in ecclesiastics to take money for sermons or theological doctrines," having no desire to "abuse the reader in perplexing him with exotic questions."[1] Some after the Middle Ages still addressed the matter, but such treatments grew increasingly rare.

In our own day, a different picture appears. Simony in ordinations has all but ceased to be a present danger among Protestants, and related matters such as systems of patronage hardly arise, even in established (i.e., national) churches where the practice had once been common. Yet the sale of theological instruction now turns over enormous sums. Between Christian books and seminaries alone, theological education is a multibillion-dollar industry.[2] It remains, then, to apply the

[1] Godolphin, *Repertorium Canonicum*, 557–58.

[2] On religious-book sales, see Milliot, "Publishing Industry Sales"; on seminary revenues, Association of Theological Schools, *2025–2026 Annual Data Tables*, Table 4.6.

framework developed in the preceding chapters to this primary sort of commerce in spiritual things that exists today.

Simony in Words

Despite the medieval use of Proverbs 23:23,[3] the clearest demonstration of biblical teaching as spiritual words comes to us from the pen of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:13 ("And this is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words"). The precise meaning of the final phrase "πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συνκρίνοντες" remains debated. While each word presents its own difficulties and the exact meaning of each shades the final rendering, the primary issue hinges on the gender of the first word. If the first word is taken as masculine, it signifies applying spiritual truths to spiritual people. If it is to be taken as neuter, then it entails setting them in spiritual words or fitting them to spiritual matters. In either case, the teacher speaks words taught by the Spirit.

The subject of biblical teaching, regardless of focus or form, is ultimately the Scripture as given by the Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Furthermore, though it may have reached him through the work of other men, it is at last revealed to the teacher by the Spirit, who enables him to comprehend the thought of God (1 Cor. 2:10–11). The learner, on his side, apprehends it not by his natural capacities alone but by spiritual discernment, since "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). The contrast Paul drew between the spiritual and the natural is not a contrast between the material and immaterial aspects of the human rational mind, but between the operations of the Spirit and the unaided faculties of man. The godly teacher's proper hope, then, is to be made by grace an instrument through which the Spirit himself works upon the hearer. Such teaching is spiritual in each of the three senses earlier distinguished: as this teaching is derivative of Scripture, it is of the

[3] See Chapter 11, pp. 188–89.

uncreated Spirit (*a spiritu increato*);[4] as it produces a spiritual effect, it is spiritual by cause (*per causam*);[5] and as it proceeds from the Spirit at work in the words of the teacher who has received that same Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12–13), it is spiritual as to its principle (*ex parte principii*).[6] To set a price on it therefore meets the definition of simony, differing in essence not at all from Simon Magus's original proposal.

The chief objections that the tradition has raised against simony all apply to the case of biblical teaching. We will examine three of those here and, in each, respond to a potential defense of its sale.

Stewardship of the Word

In any legitimate sale, the seller must have a proper authority to conduct the transaction. If one owns the thing, he can decide of his own accord; if one is a steward, such a sale needs to be authorized by the owner. As we have seen from 1 Corinthians 4:1 ("Let a man so account us as ministers of Christ and stewards [*οἰκονόμους*] of the mysteries of God"),[7] the one who teaches God's word is a steward rather than an owner. Adam was charged to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it (Gen. 1:28), and from that grant flows the authority by which men buy and sell the goods of the earth as their own. The content of biblical teaching, however—whether it be the bare words of Scripture or the doctrinal truths contained therein—was not given as part of nature or committed to man under this kind of dominion. These mysteries may be possessed only under a stewardship. The steward answers to the Master, who sets the terms of their administration and has strictly prohibited the sale of his goods.

Paul revisited this truth in 1 Corinthians 9:17 ("If I do this willingly, I have a reward. But if unwillingly, I am still entrusted with a stewardship [*οἰκονομίαν*]"). Many have interpreted this as a contrast between a minimal requirement Paul was under and his chosen approach of

[4] See Chapter 3, p. 54.
[5] See Chapter 3, pp. 55–56.
[6] See Chapter 3, pp. 56–57.
[7] See Chapter 11, p. 184.

going above and beyond.[8] However, the apostle considered it unthinkable to do anything less (1 Cor. 9:15–16).[9] To preach the gospel for a price is to do so "unwillingly" (1 Cor. 9:17), the labor being compelled by contract. Because such a man transacts with the Master's goods as an owner rather than as a steward, he forfeits all reward of stewardship. Thus, Paul presented the gospel free of charge (1 Cor. 9:18).

Paul acknowledged a minister's right to receive. Moreover, he did not absolutely reject funds on account of the gospel in Corinth; he repeatedly anticipated the Corinthians sending him on his way (1 Cor. 16:6; 2 Cor. 1:16).[10] Instead, his commitment, as stated here and elsewhere, was to never exchange his teaching for a price (2 Cor. 2:17; 11:7, 12).

In fact, it is that stewardship that makes one fit to live of the gospel; to accept a price for one's teaching is to forfeit the grounds by which one can rightly receive material support in any measure. Consider Paul's appeal to the Old Testament priesthood in 1 Corinthians 9:13 ("those who serve at the altar partake of its offerings"). The priests received from the Lord as their inheritance precisely because they did not possess an inheritance of their own (Num. 18:20). To take ownership over that which one was given to steward is to lose the reward the Lord offers for such service. The laborer is worthy of his wages, but the work that God has given is not unspecified; it is the work of stewardship. For this reason, Micah condemned the priests who taught for a price (Mic. 3:11).

One might counter that Paul spoke of "preaching," not teaching more generally. Yet the concern over stewardship does not lie in what the steward does, but in what he offers. The truths of Scripture preached in sermonic fashion remain just as much "mysteries of God"

[8] E.g., "the one is a thing commanded, whereas the other is an achievement of my own choice." Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistolam ad Corinthios priorem*, hom. 22.3 (p. 261).

[9] E.g., "he did nothing but what the necessity of his office (though it was an extraordinary necessity) demanded." Calvin, *Commentary on the Corinthians*, 1 Cor. 9:18 (p. 303).

[10] The word "send" (*προπέμπω*) used in each of these verses implies a material equipping. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 873.

as those taught otherwise. Thus, while there may be factors that make charging to hear preaching in the formal worship of God more reprehensible than charging for biblical teaching in other forms, nothing differs in the violation of one's own status as a steward.

The Grace of the Word

Typically appealing to Romans 11:6 ("And if by grace, it is no longer by works; otherwise grace is no longer grace"), medieval theologians contended that simoniacal transactions undermine the grace they ostensibly communicate.[11] Requiring some payment—whether of the hand (*munus a manu*), the tongue (*munus a lingua*), or service (*munus ab obsequio*)—violates the nature of the gift by subjecting it to the terms of a commercial transaction. This is as true for biblical teaching as it is for the sacraments or church office. The "word of his grace" (Acts 14:3; 20:32) is not only the word *about* the grace of God, but is a word that is given *by* the grace of God. A teaching of free grace must itself be free of charge, or it runs the risk of communicating a different gospel.

Paul described the truths of God the Spirit illuminates as "freely given" (1 Cor. 2:12), and Jesus appeals to the same free receiving in Matthew 10:8 as the grounds for proclaiming the kingdom freely to others. What has been graciously received must be graciously given. To do otherwise suggests it was never graciously received in the first place. The same is illustrated in forgiveness: the one who is forgiven much loves much, and to love little exposes a lack of forgiveness (Luke 7:47).

It may be objected here that those who charge for biblical teaching—especially of the more advanced or specialized variety—do not charge for the gospel. In fact, almost all of these would give the gospel for free to any who ask. Yet this objection presumes a distinction the apostles rejected. The gospel should not be seen as introductory or separable from other truth in the course of proper biblical teaching.

First, apostolic teaching regards Christ crucified as the essence of all true teaching. Paul knew nothing among the Corinthians except

[11] See Chapter 11, pp. 185–86.

Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2) yet told the Ephesian elders that he would have blood on his hands had he shrunk from declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26–27). In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul was not confessing that he had shrunk from the fullness of his task; he was showing that true biblical teaching resides in the power of the Spirit rather than the wisdom of man. Similarly, to the Colossians, he summarized the nature of his teaching with the phrase "him we proclaim" (Col. 1:28). Jesus himself instructed the apostles that to understand Scripture rightly it must be interpreted concerning himself (Luke 24:44–45). Rightly proffered, doctrinal teaching communicates the gospel.

Second, when the apostles distinguished between levels of instruction, using the terms "milk" and "meat," they did not isolate the gospel to one or the other. The author of Hebrews called his audience to move beyond the milk (Heb. 5:12), giving examples of these elementary doctrines of Christ: repentance, faith, washings, laying on hands, resurrection, judgment (Heb. 6:1–2). These are things that relate in some ways to Christ, but the particular instance of "meat" that prompted his comments was the relation between Christ and Melchizedek, the superior nature of his priesthood that guarantees an eternal salvation (Heb. 5:10; 7:1–28). Similarly, when Paul chided the Corinthians for not being ready for solid food (1 Cor. 3:2), he confessed no failure of his own to provide advanced teaching beyond the gospel, but charged them with a failure to receive the full teaching of the gospel. The notions of "flesh" and "merely human" in 1 Corinthians 3:3–4 are designed to contrast with the mind of the Spirit in the preceding chapter of the epistle, where he already demonstrated that the full understanding of spiritual truth depends on the work of the Spirit. The "solid food" is nothing other than the essential message of Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2).

Third, such a distinction between introductory teaching that must be graciously given and advanced teaching that may be sold suggests that the Spirit's work is only required to understand the former. If 1 Corinthians 2 were not enough to demonstrate otherwise, the apostle John taught that the anointing of the Spirit teaches "all things"

(1 John 2:27).[12] The one who claims to distinguish his own theological instruction from the gospel in order to absolve its sale from charges of simony must likewise assert that it lies outside that which the Spirit would teach. While we may concede that John did not employ the term "all things" (*πάντων*) to include every range of secular expertise, the term cannot be narrowed so as to exclude any area of biblical revelation or Christian faith.

The Pricelessness of the Word

The chief ground on which the tradition identified simony as heresy was that it puts a price on that which is priceless.[13] Like Simon, who believed the gift of God could be purchased with money (Acts 8:20), the simoniac confesses by action that God's immeasurable gift is not immeasurable. This same observation applies to the teaching of the word. The word of God is more desirable than gold and better than thousands of pieces of gold and silver (Pss. 19:10; 119:72), and wisdom is more precious than rubies such that nothing compares (Prov. 3:15).

Some may object to a broad prohibition on the sale of the teaching of the word of God that it fails to distinguish between that which is necessary in the Christian life and that which is optional. This distinction seems to factor into how one should value a thing. Things like baptism would be wrong to sell because they are necessary, but not all need additional theological instruction, especially at the higher academic levels. Yet if the core crime of simony is the activity of placing a price on the priceless, this distinction between necessary and optional is irrelevant. Both produce spiritual development in the believer, and therefore both are priceless.

If, however, we are to entertain the necessary/optional distinction for a moment, we will see how quickly it breaks down, depending on what is meant by "necessary." First, one may refer to that which is required for the Christian life. It is true that advanced theological education is not needed in an absolute way by anyone, but neither is

[12] Cf. John 14:26; 16:13.

[13] See Chapter 13, pp. 210–12.

baptism. Baptism is normative and beneficial in the Christian life, but those who find themselves providentially hindered from baptism will not thereby lack salvation.

Second, one may refer to that which would be unavailable elsewhere—e.g., "you don't have to come here for theological instruction, you have other options." Once again, the same is true for baptism, and it is on this count that many of the schoolmen directed a man to seek the sacrament elsewhere rather than pay the priest who withheld it.[14] Yet while the rightly practiced baptisms of true churches are identical in benefit, teaching differs from teacher to teacher. On this point, theological instruction is actually *less* interchangeable than baptism.

Third, one may refer to those activities that are required for a church to be faithful. Indeed, churches must baptize, and they are under no universal obligation to begin higher-level academic institutions, but how would such a distinction apply to other varying functions of churches? Those who would make such an argument would likely recoil at the idea of charging for a midweek prayer meeting, though it is an optional activity of the church, subject to the discretion of the leadership.

The Scope of Application

Having identified the sale of biblical teaching as a species of simony, we may now consider where this prohibition bears on contemporary practice. The examples below do not exhaust potential application, but they do cover a number of the more common venues where spiritual teaching is presently offered for sale.

Biblical Counseling

Biblical counseling is a form of teaching where one applies the truths of Scripture to the personal life of another. Distinguished from Christian therapy, where Christian principles may be applied but the teaching of the word does not define the practice, biblical counseling seeks

[14] See Chapter 5, pp. 93–94.

to give that which is priceless. Beyond the pricelessness of scriptural wisdom shown above, many who have received biblical counseling have personally found it invaluable.

None can appeal to the fact that the Bible is already available; presumably, such counsel is sought because understanding of it is lacking. Furthermore, it would be misguided to justify commerce in counseling by claiming to place the price on time rather than instruction. If the counselor is called to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all patience and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2), then both time and teaching must be given graciously. How can the counselor who charges by the hour be said to exhort with all patience?

Christian Conferences

The same restrictions apply to Christian conferences. By Christian conferences, we have in view those gatherings whose essence is biblical preaching or teaching, not events with a merely Christian tone or cultural veneer. Additionally, none of this bears on third parties who may levy their own incidental charges (for example, a toll for a bridge to reach the conference), nor do the restrictions apply to other factors that may limit attendance (such as a lack of space). However, regarding attendance at the conference itself, to charge for admission is to charge for access to priceless teaching.

It may seem that such charges could be warranted since the venue is a physical thing rather than a spiritual one. However, James's prohibition of special seating should give us pause (James 2:2–4). Though he may have had in mind worship services proper, the principle behind it is universal: Christians should not show partiality in holding out the faith (James 2:1). A faithful application of this precept does not permit the finance-based partiality that admits to an in-person space those willing to pay and requires others to sit at home, perhaps as they watch online.

The notion of annexation offers further clarity here. Because the nature of a conference is *live* teaching, the physical space is not annexed to the spiritual thing by mere direction (*ordinatum*) but by

dependence (*dependens*).[15] Just as a benefice presupposes the office to which it pertains, so a conference space presupposes the gathering it hosts. The distinction between dependence and direction may not be intuitive; considered differently, we might observe that the money of a benefice could have been put to another purpose, as could a conference venue. However, just as the grant of a benefice secures an office that cannot be had without it, presence in the conference space during the event secures a fullness of teaching that cannot be had without that access. Other teaching may pre-exist the medium that communicates it, being captured and reproduced without loss elsewhere, but this is not the case with live teaching. Recall that teaching is a spiritual activity that extends beyond the transmission of raw propositions (1 Cor. 2:13). These details of access are therefore not incidental.

Seminary Education

No degree of academic sophistication exempts seminaries from the prohibition on the sale of biblical teaching. Charging tuition for such teaching is therefore simony on the ground used by the masters at Paris when they argued that the labor of teaching theology could not be sold.[16] Additionally, as they distinguished, we should not include the liberal arts among the subjects that may not be taught at a price; even instruction in Greek and Hebrew is not a spiritual thing that must be given freely. Likewise, Bible colleges that offer a Christian slant to the humanities need not fall under this regulation, save in those courses that teach the word of God and what arises from it.

Scholarship programs do not resolve the difficulty. They do not extend to every student, and the very requirement to apply for relief is itself a kind of price. The same is true of the common mechanism of having churches pay on behalf of their members who attend. As we have seen, payments on behalf of another still fall under the purview of the doctrine of simony.[17]

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[15] See Chapter 4, p. 73.
[16] See Chapter 1, p. 23.
[17] See Chapter 5, p. 103.

The practical concerns of the medievals should instruct us as well. In part, they legislated against both simony in office and simony in theological teaching licenses to ensure that the ranks of bishops and masters were kept pure.[18] Ought we not be concerned that our commercial approach to theological education has lowered the quality of the church's pastors and professors?

As conceded with conferences, a seminary need not admit all who apply. While a finance-based partiality is prohibited, other forms of partiality may be acceptable. Seminaries would be wise to admit only the best-qualified candidates, or even to restrict admission to students belonging to a particular roster of churches. Regarding additional financial limitations on an institution, we may observe the conclusions of medieval theologians on the same concerns with respect to religious societies.[19] Should the burden of a student's presence exceed what the institution can absorb, it may gate entry upon his ability to provide for his own space. What it may not do is gate entry upon the willingness to pay for the teaching itself.

Theological Books

The prohibition on the sale of biblical teaching extends to theological and devotional literature. The spiritual thing under consideration is not a printed volume but the words that compose the teaching. The prices of digital editions often evidence that it is indeed these words that are sold, when they run near the price of print editions. One might suggest that substantial prices reflect the cost of electronic storage and transmission, the convenience of the service, or some feature of the formatting. Yet the similarity in price between print and digital remains best explained by the one quality they share: the words.

For physical books, the notion of annexation is once again helpful. In this case, the printed volume is annexed by direction (*ordinatum*). The essence of the spiritual thing in the book is the words, which

[18] See the exclusion of simoniacs from office in Chapter 6, p. 113, and the regulation of entry into the masters' ranks in Chapter 1, pp. 21–23.

[19] See Chapter 6, pp. 114–16.

are separable from the physical ink and paper, perfectly reproducible elsewhere. This distinguishes books from Christian conferences as treated above. Live teaching is defined by that space wherein it is given, but the written word may be losslessly copied and distributed, even by an independent third party. Therefore, the physical volume might be sold as a purely material thing.

This does not, however, dismiss every concern raised by the sale of a physical book. The price set on the bound volume may demonstrate a sale of a spiritual thing. As the schoolmen observed of consecrated vessels, a high price may indicate a simoniacal transaction since it suggests that the thing is not being sold for itself, but for the sake of its annexation, much as Hus remarked on substantial fees for ordination certificates.[20]

The Advent of Copyright

Having considered these applications, we ought to reflect on what has changed to so increase the sale of biblical teaching in our own day. Many factors might be catalogued, but a primary catalyst appears to be the advent of modern copyright. While there had previously been the occasional regulation of the press that restricted the printing of certain works to named stationers, the Statute of Anne (1710) was the first law that vested a general proprietary right over the text in the author himself. Until then, authors of theological works had been financially supported by their own churches or patrons. As we saw, Luther never received money for his works and even refused to sell a guarantee of first access.[21] However, the Statute of Anne opened a legal mechanism for royalty schemes by which the author could control the work to claim a share of the proceeds rather than rely on the church or patronage. What Luther declined as unconscionable, later authors accepted as default. While the advent of copyright only directly accounts for books in our previous list of examples where teaching is sold today, it

[20] See Chapter 4, p. 82.
[21] See Chapter 4, p. 81.

is not hard to imagine how the sale of knowledge in book form would normalize the same transaction in any given medium.

Considered in the medieval categories, copyright provides a legal mechanism by which spiritual things may be annexed to temporal things. Recall the right of patronage: when law ties a right of presentation to the ownership of land, a spiritual thing is so annexed to a temporal thing that selling one sells the other.[22] The same happens in print. One who sells a bound volume with "All Rights Reserved" does not merely sell the paper but the right to access its contents, since copying or distributing the contents otherwise could expose one to litigation. In our established technical terms, this converts the book from a directed annex into a dependent annex. No longer are the paper and ink merely directed toward the *use* of reading spiritual words; annexed to them is the *right* of reading spiritual words. In this scenario where rights transfer with the printed volume, simony is not discerned merely by price as discussed previously; the transaction is inherently simoniacal, at least in regard to the seller.[23]

The Prevention of Alterations

One supposed advantage of copyright is the prevention of alterations. Whether it accomplishes this is its own question; anyone may still introduce corruptions into copies he makes, with or without authorization. Regardless, both Scripture and the Reformed tradition require the adaptation of divine revelation.

Paul instructed the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16). The Westminster Confession appeals to this verse to justify Bible translation,[24] and it does not require a

[22] See Chapter 4, p. 78.

[23] On how the buyer may remain innocent, see Chapter 5, pp. 89–91.

[24] "[the Scriptures] are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner." WCF 1.8.

stretch from there to see how it would also motivate additional arrangements, such as setting the Psalms to meter.[25] On similar grounds, the Second Helvetic Confession affirms that "the preaching of the word of God is the word of God."[26]

If the word of God commands adaptations of itself for the sake of pedagogical utility, and it retains power (authority and efficacy) in the process, then that which is derivative of it must be subject to the same, lest the human author sacrifice the authority of his teaching, conceding it to be merely of human wisdom rather than a transmission of divine truth that must be propagated. The use of copyright to restrict the alteration of theological resources does not so much guard the word as it places an obstacle before the obedience the word commands.

The Prevention of Plagiarism

Another supposed advantage of copyright is the prevention of plagiarism. While Christians have contended for the truth since the apostles, this wrangling over credit, especially in theological works, is a modern development. The synoptic gospels were given to us through authors borrowing from each other without specific attribution.[27] Chrysostom met the contrary instinct in his own day and lamented that any would compare to a thief the preacher who uses another man's words without credit.[28] Even Hus, as scrupulous a witness against simony

[25] Calvin defended his own psalter on this basis: "For the rest, we must remember what St. Paul says: that spiritual songs cannot be well sung except from the heart. Now the heart requires understanding. And in this (says St. Augustine) lies the difference between the singing of men and that of birds. For a linnet, a nightingale, a parrot will sing well, but it will be without understanding. Now the proper gift of man is to sing knowing what he says: after the understanding must follow the heart and the affection, which cannot be unless we have the canticle imprinted on our memory, that we may never cease from singing." Calvin, "Preface to the Genevan Psalter," CO 6:171–72.

[26] SHC 1.

[27] See Luke 1:1–2.

[28] "If any preacher should chance to weave into his own discourses some part of what others have labored to produce, he incurs greater reproach than those who steal money. Often, when he has taken nothing whatever from anyone but lies under mere

as this book has quoted, translated large passages of Wycliffe's earlier work word for word, with no particular acknowledgment.[29]

Waiving the Right

Even after the advent of copyright, many Christians have noted its negative effects and made efforts to waive these rights either partially or wholly.[30] To cite one notable example, Loraine Boettner placed such a notice on the copyright pages of his books. While the wording in some works differs slightly, in *Studies in Theology*, it reads:

> Any one is at liberty to use material from this book with or without credit. In preparing this book the writer has received help from many sources, some acknowledged and many unacknowledged. He believes the material herein contained to be a true statement of Scripture truth, and his desire is to further, not to restrict, its use.[31]

At least some others followed suit.[32] More recently, some Christian authors have begun adopting public domain dedications.[33]

Large Language Models

A further consideration has arisen in our own generation. Large language models—the artificial intelligences increasingly consulted on every subject, theology included—gather their information from the

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suspicion, he suffers the fate of one caught in the act." Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio*, 5.1 (PG 48:672–73).

[29] "Hus is indeed guilty of such a practice, for as a matter of fact he seldom mentions Wyclif by name." Spinka, *John Hus and the Czech Reform*, 12. See Chapter 2, p. 44.

[30] See Jore, *Christian Commons*.

[31] Boettner, *Studies in Theology*, 4; cf. Boettner, *The Millennium*, ii; Boettner, *Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*, 4.

[32] E.g., Reisinger, *God's Will, Man's Will and Free Will*, Author's Note.

[33] The dedication chiefly adopted is Creative Commons Zero, which provides a license fallback in jurisdictions that do not permit a full waiving of rights. See Owens, *Dorean Principle*, 129–30.

texts available to them, which is to say, predominantly from texts that are free. From an outside perspective, what any particular training corpus contains is not known, but a work restricted by copyright is almost certainly less likely to be included than one that is not, all else being equal. Therefore, whatever picture of Christian doctrine such a system synthesizes comes disproportionately from those who have made their teaching freely available. If Christ commanded his disciples to teach all nations, and the nations now mediate much of their inquiry through tools fed on open text, a new reason has been added for the Christian to forgo the control copyright affords.

Conclusion

Theological education, insofar as it teaches the word of God, falls under the various concerns of the medievals who wrote on simony: it fails to recognize man's stewardship of the mysteries of God, it undermines the nature of grace, and it prices the priceless. This applies to various forms of biblical teaching, from conference tickets to seminary tuition to the price of theological books.

Arguably, the problem as it exists today arose from the legal innovation of copyright in the eighteenth century. Regardless, the history of practices around theological teaching testifies to a commerce that Christians have tolerated only in recent centuries, one requiring a new address that appeals back to the foundations of older sources.

Biblical teaching, properly taught, is not a matter of human wisdom but that which is taught by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13). To sell such a spiritual thing is simony. The dilemma it poses to the would-be seller of theological instruction is therefore unavoidable. Either he confesses his guilt before God, or he pleads that what he sells is merely the wisdom of man. The word is manna from heaven, and those who hoard it by withholding from all but those who pay should not be surprised when they find their surplus to be rot.[34]

[34] Cf. Deut. 8:3; Exod. 16:20.

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Mediated Obligation

The financial maintenance of ministers rests on an obligation of a peculiar kind. On the one hand, Scripture speaks of a real duty that a people owe their ministers: "Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). On the other hand, the one who gives is said to give not finally to the minister but to the Lord. Christ promises a reward to him who receives a prophet because the one who does so receives Christ himself (Matt. 10:40–42). Additionally, the giver who supplies the laborer "sows to the Spirit" rather than to the flesh (Gal. 6:8). The obligation between a people and their minister is therefore genuine but not direct. It is mediated by their mutual obligation to the Lord.

The present author has elsewhere attempted to account for the reality of this mediated obligation, distinguishing licit from illicit giving with the terms *ministerial co-labor* and *ministerial reciprocity*.[1] While they lack the established authority of the technical vocabulary we have covered in previous chapters, these categories have the potential to simplify a number of the more difficult questions former generations sought to resolve. After briefly establishing this mediated obligation along with the distinction between co-labor and reciprocity, we will demonstrate how they may resolve several of the issues where either agreement or clarity seemed to be lacking.

[1] Owens, *Dorean Principle*.

Co-labor and Reciprocity

This mediated obligation may be pictured as a triangle where people give to the Lord who then gives to his own ministers. This arrangement is presented most directly in Numbers 18, where that which is given to the Lord is given to his priests (Num. 18:8). Because the Lord is the priests' inheritance, they receive from him (Num. 18:20). Paul appealed to this dynamic in explaining the New Testament minister's financial support (1 Cor. 9:13–14). In fact, every other analogy that Paul employed in the same passage—soldiers, vinedressers, shepherds, oxen—operates the same way. None of these laborers receive out of a direct obligation due from that which yields its fruit. The citizens pay taxes to the king, who pays the soldier, and the ox receives grain from the owner as it treads; the vine and the flock owe nothing to the worker, but their owner arranges for him to receive from them. This accords with the foundational passages of Matthew 10:10 ("the laborer is worthy of his food") and Luke 10:7 ("the laborer is worthy of his wages"). These do not picture the commercial transaction of a vendor and his customer, but of a worker and his employer. In each of these passages, the employer who supplies pay for his laborers is the Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2). The instrument of provision, the giver, is himself of the harvest; that which is owned has duties to the owner of the field.

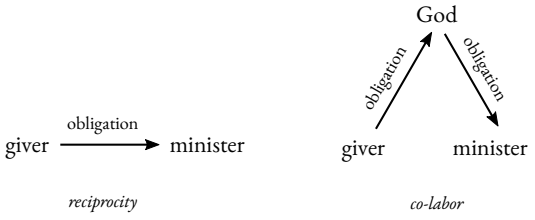

Figure 15.1: Reciprocity vs. Co-labor

The term *ministerial co-labor* refers to the activity that occurs

when this dynamic is executed with a proper inward disposition. Both the minister and giver operate with a felt obligation to God, and as each receives—whether it be a spiritual thing or a temporal gift—he understands it as ultimately coming from God. *Ministerial co-labor* is a fitting term because in this model, the giver and minister work alongside each other for the same Master, accomplishing the same purpose of advancing the work of ministry. By such giving, they become "fellow workers for the truth" (3 John 8). *Ministerial reciprocity* refers to any breakdown in the activity of co-labor. When the minister or giver operates with a sense of direct obligation to the other, or either receives as though the other is the ultimate source of the blessing, a transaction occurs in which God does not have his proper place. At some level, at least one party treats the exchange as a form of direct reciprocation. For example, Hophni and Phinehas preempted mediated obligation when they demanded the sacrifices before they were offered to the Lord rather than waiting until after (1 Sam. 2:12–17).

This distinction accounts for what might appear to be inconsistencies in Paul's financial policy. He refused hospitality in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). He received it in Philippi, however, after Lydia demonstrated her disposition as a servant of the Lord (Acts 16:15; Phil. 4:15). He stated his intention never to receive payment from the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:15, 18; 2 Cor. 11:7–9), but he planned on coming to them in order to receive their support (1 Cor. 16:6; 2 Cor. 1:16). In each, he refused reciprocity but accepted co-labor. A number of other apparent discrepancies may be catalogued with the same resolution.[2]

Reframing the Tradition

With these distinctions in hand, we may revisit some of the questions we explored in earlier chapters. The categories of co-labor and reciprocity will help us to understand matters where we may otherwise struggle to articulate our concerns. We will look at three questions: the sense in which a minister's maintenance may be called wages, how

[2] See ibid., 74.

mental simony may be discerned, and how mendicant support may be categorized.

Understanding Ministerial Wages

In Chapter 8, we surveyed several ways one might regard what a minister receives. To construe it as pure charity does not accord with Scripture's insistence on the laborer's worthiness; to construe it as the purchase of his spiritual products would be manifest simony. Many then concluded that the giver pays a minister for his labor; yet we noted a strain of the tradition that found even this formulation in need of correction.[3] Spiritual labor is a spiritual thing, so its sale does not escape the charge of simony. As was observed, no one who pays a laborer truly desires the labor itself, but the thing that labor produces. In terms of modern economic theory, we might frame these medieval observations as a subjective theory of value contending with a labor theory of value.[4] Those who denied that one should give to a minister as a purchase of his labor argued instead that one ought to give for his sustenance.

Alternatively, we might ask whether a ministerial stipend is for the worker or the work. The question so posed turns on an ambiguity in one word. The preposition "for" carries two distinct senses: it may mean "in exchange for," as in the price one pays for a purchase, or it may mean "in support of," as in a financial contribution to a campaign. The notion of mediated obligation supplies clarity here. To give in support of the worker is co-labor; to give in exchange for the work is reciprocity. Both may be called wages as both are in some sense payment for labor; but in the one model, these wages issue from the Lord while in the other they come directly from a human client.

[3] See Chapter 8, pp. 142–47.

[4] A labor theory of value holds that a good is worth the labor required to produce it, so that price tracks the quantity of work that went into a thing. A subjective theory holds that worth lies in the estimation of the one who values, so that the same good is worth different amounts to different people and nothing at all to one who has no use for it.

This was the concern of Hus, Paludanus, Durandus, and others who objected to any simple formula of selling labor.[5] Anthony Tuckney and Benjamin Keach, for their part, granted that a minister's maintenance might be called wages, yet denied that it could be called *base* wages.[6] What is this distinction but a recognition of the mediated shape those wages must take? In each case the aim was the same: to deny that a people stand in direct reciprocity with their minister.

Discerning Mental Simony

Several of the thornier cases considered in previous chapters came down to questions of mental simony.[7] When outward sales of spiritual things were uncertain, canon law imposed regulations as protective measures. Where such sales were absent, theologians described features of the conscience that might betray a simoniacal disposition. The distinction between co-labor and reciprocity offers clarity for both of these, anchoring the many tests for the detection of simony that might otherwise remain disconnected.

Consider the place the medieval writers gave to the existence of a "pact" as a mark of simony. On the one hand, there is some utility in the notion because in a pact direct obligations are formed between men. Typically, the giver exchanges directly with the minister, and the minister binds himself in direct obligation to an individual, acting under compulsion rather than eagerly (1 Pet. 5:2). On the other hand, it does not take much creativity to identify pacts that seem perfectly acceptable, such as that arrangement by which a pastor agrees to care for a congregation as they financially provide for him. Rightly understood, this latter pact places minister and congregation under no immediate obligation to each other; it holds both to account in their respective duties to God (that is, co-labor). The minister will continue to labor in the service of God so long as he is able by their support, and the people will offer to God by supporting his minister so long as that minister is faithful in the work.

[5] See Chapter 8, pp. 142–47.
[6] See Chapter 8, pp. 148–49.
[7] See Chapter 6, pp. 112–14.

The tradition named marks by which a licit gift is known, each conceived as antithetical to a pact: it is offered spontaneously (*spontanee*), voluntarily (*voluntarie*), and only out of gratitude (*gratiae tantummodo causa*).[8] But each, however useful for outward discernment, leaves the underlying question unasked. A spontaneous gift is one given without prior agreement, but one may spontaneously give out of a felt obligation to the minister as the source of the spiritual things in which he labors. The same applies to the notion of voluntary giving. The Corinthians, after all, were already supporting other teachers and would have given to Paul voluntarily in exchange for his preaching (1 Cor. 9:11–12), but he never entertained the transaction (1 Cor. 9:15, 18; 2 Cor. 11:7, 12). Apart from specifying its object, gratitude fares no better. Is the gratitude directed to man as the immediate source of the spiritual thing or to God? Paul's interaction with the Philippians is instructive here, as he identified their gift in Philippians 2:30 as a due service to him, and in Philippians 4:18 as a sort of payment to him but a sacrifice to God. Their relationship was one of partnership, co-labor (Phil. 1:5). Thus, while the epistle was occasioned by their gift, Paul said remarkably little by way of gratitude toward the Philippians rather than toward God.[9]

The insufficiency of these categories shows plainly in the modern practice of "suggested donations," wherein one who receives some spiritual service—typically a form of teaching—is prompted to spontaneously and voluntarily give out of gratitude. Yet once a value is specified to the one who received it, a price is essentially set on the service provided. The justification of encouraging charity differs little from the rationale once offered for indulgences.[10] There is a place for specific pastoral guidance on giving, but the categories of co-labor and reciprocity have the capacity to frame the giving as a partnership rather than a direct exchange.

Medieval writers on simony analyzed a number of scenarios by asking whether anything spiritual was given with the hope of some

[8] See Chapter 7, pp. 135–37.

[9] For this reason, some scholars have labeled the passage a "thankless thanks." For an overview and rebuttal, see Peterman, "'Thankless Thanks'".

[10] See Chapter 1, pp. 29–31.

benefit in return. This approach to identifying simony is, once again, insufficient apart from the distinction between mediated and direct obligation, co-labor and reciprocity. For example, mutual exchanges of spiritual benefit were alternately permitted or forbidden,[11] and the reason given for each would have served the other just as well. When we consider the examples surveyed, why should an agreement to pray for each other be reckoned licit, and an agreement to baptize each other not? While we might object to the second on grounds of our own—requiring greater qualifications for the administrators of baptism—the categories of co-labor and reciprocity mark the difference simply: mutual prayer is generally understood as a shared partnership in serving the Lord, while the other arrangement suggests an exchange of spiritual services. In 2 Corinthians 9:13–14, the apostle Paul even commended charity with an eye to the prayers the recipients will offer on the giver's behalf, regarding the scheme as a form of partnership (*κοινωνία*).

Medieval theologians likewise attempted to articulate the senses in which preaching for the sake of a good name or a truthful commendation might be distinguished from the simoniacal motivation of receiving man's praise.[12] Neither a good name nor a truthful commendation is a price, since the esteem a hearer gives is not his to withhold as payment; it is granted in a shared service to God.

Categorizing Mendicant Support

In Chapter 9, we traced William of Saint-Amour's insistence that sustenance from the gospel is owed only to one who holds church office, particularly from those under his care.[13] Apart from a special commissioning, one has no right to such support, and to request it on account of his preaching is an act of simony. Some readers may find it difficult to determine whether William's position truly arises from a contextual understanding of the passages to which he appealed or demands more than they will allow. In either case, his arguments are

[11] See Chapter 7, pp. 131–32.

[12] See Chapter 7, pp. 127–28 and pp. 128–29.

[13] See pp. 156–58.

in substance an appeal to the biblical notion of mediated obligation. Those who had been properly commissioned by the church as ministers or evangelists could require support as an act of co-labor, while the mendicants could only do so as reciprocity.

The simony of the mendicants may be considered by how it collapses the two obligations of the triangle. First, it communicates giving as a reciprocal exchange, such that the hearer gives directly rather than to God. Of course, the friars explicitly denied such a thing, but, as their opponents observed, to request money before or after preaching is effectively to suggest an exchange of temporal things for spiritual.[14] The call for support suggests hearers are immediately obligated to the preacher on account of receiving the message preached. Second, the practice of the mendicants completely bypasses the second half of mediation, where God gives to his minister. If God himself really stands at the apex of this triangle, mediating financial support, we must be able to show that he wills these funds to go to the one who receives them. He commanded that priests receive from the altar and that ministers receive from the people whom they serve (1 Cor. 9:13–14) but named no one else to be provided for similarly. If the New Testament minister receives after the pattern of the Old Testament minister, then he may not take that office to himself autonomously or by virtue of the approval of a different institution (Heb. 5:4).

One commissioned by the church, such as an evangelist, receives his funds from those who send him. This follows from both ends of the triangle once again. To receive from those to whom he is sent would be to suggest reciprocity, but if those who wish to send him bear his costs, they give to God by provisioning a servant with whom they co-labor. The apostle John observed the same dynamic: evangelists are worthy of support when they do not receive from those to whom they are sent, and those who support them become fellow workers for the truth (3 John 7–8).

[14] See Chapter 9, pp. 156–58.

Modern Concerns

We have seen how the notion of mediated obligation untangles questions that former generations answered with the doctrine of simony. But the benefit runs the other way as well: the older doctrine can remedy misunderstandings of mediated obligation that are distinctly modern.

While other issues might be raised, we will address two in particular, one institutional, the other semantic. First, what do these things mean for parachurch institutions, especially those that would charge for teaching? Second, given that we mean to regulate finances surrounding instruction in the word rather than other charitable activities, how should we then speak of "ministry"?

The Rise of the Parachurch

Parachurch organizations, designed to perform ministry tasks outside of the government of any particular church, have a long history.[15] At the turn of the eighteenth century, Thomas Bray founded both the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1699) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701), associations respectively designed to distribute Christian literature and send, equip, and maintain missionaries.[16] Over the following century, Britain produced several missionary, Bible, and tract societies, and American counterparts were soon modeled after them.[17] In the 1960s, several forces combined to create an explosion of these institutions.[18]

In erecting structures of their own that remain outside any meaningful governance by the church, these institutions bear a marked

[15] See Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 19–32; White, *The Church and the Parachurch*, 35–58; Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*; Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*.

[16] Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 21.

[17] Ibid., 22–23.

[18] Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, 115; White, *The Church and the Parachurch*, 55–58.

resemblance to the mendicant orders.[19] This similarity naturally extends to their fundraising. A local church depends on the weekly giving of the saints; the parachurch organization, lacking any such congregation, must cultivate a distinct generosity among its supporters or else resort to sales. Such organizations are various,[20] and many of them raise no more concern than any other charity, but those designed to perform the church's primary functions of preaching and teaching are open to the objections William of Saint-Amour and John Wycliffe raised against the friars.

Applied to our own day, the antifraternal arguments yield a surprising implication. Parachurch organizations are forbidden not only to charge for teaching and preaching but even to receive gifts voluntarily given on account of such activity. That is, unless those within these institutions are actually commissioned by their own churches, they do not qualify as the sort of laborer that is worthy of his wages, authorized to receive from the Master. Those who minister have a right to receive from the altar (1 Cor. 9:13–14), but those whom no church has commissioned have not been entrusted with any such stewardship. And even if such a man does indeed labor under a proper calling (e.g., a pastor teaching in a seminary), he should be supported by his own church—or those that would truly partner with that church—rather than soliciting funds from those whom he serves.[21]

None of this settles the appropriate shape of a calling or commission; even within the Reformed tradition, that question has a number of answers. Neither does it settle what sorts of donation-supported organizations may rightly assist the church in her work. Regardless, whoever seeks to do justice to the demands of mediated obligation must wrestle with the nature of these institutions, especially insofar as they are designed to establish those who would be materially sustained on account of spiritual labors. The church is a pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), and no other institution has been so appointed.

[19] See Chapter 1, pp. 25–26.

[20] For a breakdown into sectors see Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 60–61.

[21] See Chapter 9, p. 158.

The Vocabulary of Ministry

The concerns of mediated obligation relate to the notion of ministry, the stewardship of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1). The word "ministry," however, has grown ambiguous in contemporary use. Our own day has seen an increasing number of movements blending the secular and the sacred, and the term now stretches over nearly any endeavor undertaken with a Christian intention, whether it be the labors of a pastor, charity to the poor, or the operations of a Christian-branded business. Rather than referring to a definite stewardship of spiritual things, "ministry" now names little more than a pious purpose.

Exegetically, the question primarily comes down to the proper rendering of Ephesians 4:12, which describes the purpose for which Christ gave the church its apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers: "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ."[22] Two translation decisions determine whether "ministry" here names the work of these officers or the work of all believers. First, should we render the three tasks as a coordinate series or remove the first comma, binding the work of ministry to the saints rather than to the officer? Second, should we render *καταρτισμός* as "perfecting" or "equipping," which implies a preparation for some further activity (that is, ministry)?

The latter choices for each decision are recent novelties. Chrysostom, a native speaker of Greek, assigned all three works to the officers themselves,[23] and the older English versions, from the Geneva Bible to the first edition of the Revised Standard Version, are agreed on the matter.[24] Westcott and Hort were perhaps the first to punctuate the Greek text to indicate ministry as the activity of all believers, omitting the comma after "the saints" (*τῶν ἁγίων*),[25] but from about 1940 the reading was promoted by the ecumenical lay-ministry movement, and

[22] *πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων, εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ.*

[23] Of the officers of the church, "each one edifies, each one perfects, each one ministers." Chrysostom, *Homiliae in epistolas ad Galatas et Ephesios*, hom. 11 (p. 218).

[24] See Barcellos, "The Christian Ministry in the Church," 7–8.

[25] Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Eph. 4:12.

later especially by D. T. Niles and by the World Council of Churches' Departments of the Laity and Evangelism.[26] Despite receiving push-back since 1980,[27] almost every major English Protestant version since 1963 has both removed the first comma and traded "perfecting" for "equipping" or a near synonym.[28]

All of this would be irrelevant if the newer reading could be maintained on the text's own terms. However, to carry it, three things must be shown at once: that the parallel purpose clauses take different implied subjects, that *καταρτισμός* is properly translated "equip," and that *ἔργον διακονίας* denotes not acts of service in the general sense but the Christian ministry itself.[29] None of these have been demonstrated. T. David Gordon judges the lay-ministry reading "so contrary to the natural grammar of the passage, and so strikingly contrary to the teaching of the remainder of the NT, that we cannot account for its popularity on the basis of careful Biblical study." Its appeal must instead be credited to "the egalitarian, anti-authoritarian, populist *Zeitgeist*."[30] What presents itself as exegesis is—at least in part—a remaking of Christianity in the image of the age.

We may reframe this modern confusion with the triangle of mediated obligation. For any activity performed by man for some benefit to another, we may regard it in one of two ways. First, we may regard God as the special source of that benefit, rendering the recipient directly obligated to God. Second, we may regard God as no more the source of that action than of any other, in which case the recipient is directly obligated to man. Once every earnest endeavor is "ministry" and every believer a "minister," we must descend into either legalism

[26] Barth, *Ephesians*, 479n265; cf. Mayes, "'Equipping the Saints'?" 9. For the slogans related to this movement, see Gordon, "'Equipping' Ministry in Ephesians 4?" 69.

[27] See Barcellos, "The Christian Ministry in the Church," 21–22.

[28] The first edition of the Revised Standard Version (New Testament, 1946) was the last major version to render the three phrases as coordinate, though it had already replaced "perfecting" with "equipment"; the New American Standard Bible (New Testament, 1963) dropped the comma. See ibid., 8–9.

[29] See Gordon, "'Equipping' Ministry in Ephesians 4?" 70.

[30] Ibid., 77, appealing to the work of Nathan Hatch, Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

or license. If "ministry" describes the administration of the Lord's supper as well as it does a Christian travel agency, then either one must offer for free all work accomplished with noble intentions or it may all be sold. Modern Christianity has drifted toward the latter, treating more as salable and withholding less from sale. This is the natural result of expanding the definition of "ministry" so that it marks off nothing in particular. As the saying goes, if everything is holy, nothing is holy.

The doctrine of simony helps here by providing the category of spiritual things. Distinguishing between things of created spirits and things of the uncreated Spirit, we may identify what benefits render man directly obligated to other men or directly obligated to God. Even apart from recovering a narrow conception of the word "ministry," this distinction restores the triangle where it should be, identifying man's reception of supernatural gifts from God through one who stewards these blessings.

Conclusion

The obligation between a people and their minister is genuine but mediated. Within this framework, giving in relation to the ministry of the word may be categorized as either co-labor or reciprocity. These categories help us to understand issues raised by the older writings on simony: ministerial wages are properly co-labor, mental simony may be discerned by reciprocal cues, and mendicant support essentially functions as a form of reciprocity, even when posturing as co-labor.

Similarly, when combined with the historical doctrine of simony, this framework helps us to understand matters of our own time. Parachurch organizations designed to establish teachers of the word encourage a reciprocal fundraising similar to that practiced by the mendicant orders. Additionally, the twentieth-century inflation of the term "ministry" flattens the triangle of obligation and removes the categories by which the doctrine of simony was able to flourish, and by which it may do so once again.

A doctrine of simony recovered in these terms restores and refines the discernment older generations possessed. Set out with that clarity, it may be established so as not to be lost again. Combined with the notion of mediated obligation, the doctrine of simony can be employed to positively describe the nature of ministerial maintenance rather than merely confront contemporary ills. So employed, it would outlast any corruption it eradicates.

16

Present Danger

Previous generations often regarded simony as one of the greatest dangers of their own day. To what degree do these concerns apply today among evangelicals? The recovery of a doctrine should end in proper use, and proper use requires an updated assessment of its present application. In some ways, we have provided that in the last two chapters, but points of inquiry remain.

First, we should consider the difficulties of discerning and acknowledging modern simony. Second, we should consider the gravity of simony and its cure.

The Difficulty of Discerning Modern Simony

Modern simony is difficult to discern on account of both the subject who would discern the matter and the object in question. As regards the subject, we have lost important categories; as regards the object, the common offenses have shifted greatly from what they once were. In either case, a robust doctrine of simony is the remedy.

Missing Categories

In the appendix to *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell described the formation of "Newspeak," a version of English so pared of its vocabulary that it rendered sophisticated thought impossible. By this, the totalitarian regime that imposed the language became invincible.

If one lacks the words to *describe* evil, he tends to struggle to even *identify* it. Orwell's scenario was a fiction of his own making, but this phenomenon of language and cognition has been identified by scientists in empirical studies. For example, compared to a speaker whose language features a word for a particular shade of color, a speaker whose language features no such word is slower to distinguish that shade from its neighbors.[1]

So it is with the doctrine of simony. Once its vocabulary is lost, the sale of spiritual things may go entirely undetected. Recovering the vocabulary of simony, as we have done here, is therefore a first task. The varieties of spiritual things (by essence and by cause)[2] together with their annexes (by direction and by dependence)[3] allow us to identify the spiritual side of the exchange. The Gregorian triad (the gift of the hand, the tongue, and service)[4] identifies the temporal. And this is only the core vocabulary of the exchange itself. Beyond it lie the modes of exchange, and within these, the various modes of giving and receiving.

There is almost certainly room to recover and develop further vocabulary still. Yet given the breadth already covered, the greater part of the work that remains might be not expansion but refinement, sharpening of the categories already in hand. The sharper our vocabulary of simony grows, the better our ability to discern it becomes.

Shifting Offenses

Former appearances of simony have largely receded from view. Commerce in ordinations, sacraments, indulgences, relics, and rights of patronage is rare. This is not to say that the old forms are extinct. They survive in some measure in Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, and even among Protestant churches, fees for baptism services and the like are not unheard of. Regardless, the battles fought

[1] Winawer et al., "Russian Blues Reveal Effects".

[2] See Chapter 3, pp. 55–56.

[3] See Chapter 4, p. 73.

[4] See Chapter 7, pp. 126–27.

by former generations against the manifestations of simony in their own day were largely won.

Yet simony is protean.[5] We have observed how the advent of copyright has enabled the sale of biblical teaching itself in a way that was formerly impossible,[6] and recent phenomena like the formalization of biblical counseling have created more opportunities for commerce in spiritual things.

As the pace of technology quickens, so does the transformation of simony. Digital media have opened new channels for monetizing doctrine, and the platforms that facilitate this introduce their own complexities. Advertisements and revenue sharing—sometimes not even optional—do not have the appearance of a direct sale, but involve their own sorts of exchanges. Our culture has multiplied the ways a spiritual thing may be annexed to a material thing, and with them the occasions for confusion. Some are plainly innocent. For thirty years, Alaska Airlines gave its passengers prayer cards printed with a verse of Scripture;[7] no customer could reasonably understand his airfare as purchasing a presentation of the word of God. Other practices, such as theology cruises, require more consideration.

The changing nature of simony is nothing new. For example, in Protestant England the prevalent form of simony had shifted from the sale of orders to corruption in the collation and provision of benefices.[8] A new era yielded a new manifestation of the sin, but established doctrine furnished the means to identify and proscribe it. Regarding this phenomenon, one nineteenth-century professor of civil law observed that if the ancients inveighed principally against simony of one description and the moderns against simony of another,

[5] "Among all the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, no little fox is more wicked or more cunning than simony. For, as a certain author [Horace] says, 'By what knot do I hold Proteus as he changes his aspect?' so we may say: by what knot shall we hold simony—that most cunning little fox, manifold in face, thousand-shaped in habit, and almost always unlike not only the other little foxes but even unlike itself, to such a degree that, while it ruins the vineyards of Christ, it is sometimes seen in the very guise of the vinedresser?" Gerhoch of Reichersberg, *Liber de simoniacis*, 268:27–38.

[6] See Chapter 14, pp. 234–35.

[7] The tradition ended in 2012.

[8] See Willis, *Simony: In Two Parts*, 21–22.

this "arises not from any different view taken by the church as to the nature of the offence, but from the change of discipline which change of times and manners has rendered necessary."[9]

Proper definitions keep simony from passing unrecognized when its appearance changes. When these foundations erode, hard-won ground is easily surrendered. The house swept clean of one form of the offense may have seven more return in its place, so that the last state is worse than the first. A proper doctrine of simony resident in the church guards against that return.

The Difficulty of Acknowledging Modern Simony

Regarding modern simony, the difficulty of acknowledgment at least rivals, if not exceeds, that of discernment. Competing authorities easily govern even those who regard themselves as unbiased judges. We might break these down into two primary categories: the authority of others and the authority of self-interest.

The Weight of an Implied Consensus

Common practices among relatively elite ranks suggest to onlookers a studied consensus, and the propriety of these practices is often assumed on account of this implied authority. Customs form from a variety of factors and often go without being subjected to serious scrutiny. Such is the case with modern simony. Because the sale of spiritual teaching saturates the Christian landscape, it exerts a kind of hegemony. The participants in this commerce include not only false teachers and charlatans but men of unquestioned devotion, so challenges to the practice are often regarded as malicious attacks against the pillars of the church.

We might partition those affected by this phenomenon into three groups. First, there are those who practice or endorse the sale of spiritual teaching with obstinacy. Like the priests of Micah's day, they

[9] Joseph Phillimore, as quoted in Phillimore, *The Ecclesiastical Law*, 1103–4.

presume upon the mercy of the Lord on account of the ubiquity of the practice (Mic. 3:11). Second, some are uncertain on the issue, but withhold firm judgments against the sale of spiritual teaching on account of an apparent consensus to the contrary. Third, there are those who have concluded that the practice is contrary to God's law yet hold their tongue for fear of opposing the masses.

In any of these cases, the doctrine of simony exposes the artificiality of this authority. First, the doctrine has already met this argument from authority and rejected it, for even those who respected Rome concluded that its highest bishop could not be presumed free of the sin.[10] Second, technical terms and categories demand answers in a way that prevailing customs do not. Third, an ancient tradition reframes the whole notion of consensus, widening it from one generation of the faithful to many.

Conflicts of Interest

The question is difficult to approach honestly when the answer is of significant personal consequence. As Upton Sinclair quipped, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends upon his not understanding it!"[11] We do not suppose that all whose salaries so depend knowingly suppress the truth; interest of this kind works quietly upon the judgment, making the most convenient conclusions appear the most likely.

This interest governs one's reading of Scripture. In Chapter 8, we observed that those who promote the sale of spiritual things often employ 1 Corinthians 9:14 in their defense.[12] Paul established a minister's right to financial support in the first fourteen verses, but this is only the initial premise of the apostle's discourse. The weight of the argument falls on its remainder and Paul's refusal to use that authority (1 Cor. 9:15, 18).[13] Those who appeal to the passage commonly stop where the premise ends. Contending against pew rents in the

[10] See Chapter 13, pp. 217–19.
[11] Sinclair, *I, Candidate for Governor*, 109.
[12] See pp. 141–42.
[13] See Chapter 14, pp. 225–26.

nineteenth century, James Begg observed the same selective quotation from his opponents, remarking that they "always *halt in the middle* of the apostle's statement with an evident design."[14]

Many are hesitant to identify the sin where it may interfere with their present activities or even require repentance for past ones. In the fourteenth century, the point was made directly by the popular *Epistola Luciferi*, a satire penned in the guise of "Lucifer prince of darkness," addressed to the prelates of the church, thanking them for their faithful service to his kingdom.[15] Therein, the devil observes that corrupt clergy cannot speak out against simony because she is their mother: "We commend to you our very dear daughters, Pride, Avarice, Fraud, Luxury, and the others, especially Lady Simony, who has made you and suckled you with her own breasts and nourished you. And you shall not call her simony or sin, because you own everything."[16]

This interested blindness is not restricted to previous centuries. Today the idea that seminary tuition or royalties on a theology text might be illicit is rarely suggested, and where it is, established voices preclude it as an intolerable conclusion. Even apart from those with a financial stake in institutions that sell biblical teaching, nearly everyone within the church has benefited in some way from those institutions and has within them friends, mentors, or benefactors. Few are willing to indict those they love or those who have served them well.

So long as the sale of spiritual teaching is treated as a matter of practical judgment—of wisdom, proportion, or taste—this interest will find room to maneuver. Such judgments are endlessly negotiable. Principle gives the matter fixed bounds and demands a consistency that resists, at least in some measure, personal bias. A recovered doctrine of simony provides that principle and forces the issue.

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[14] Begg, *Seat Rents*, 20.

[15] The letter was composed around the turn of 1352 and has been attributed to a number of candidates. See Schabel, "Lucifer princeps tenebrarum," 127–29.

[16] Ibid., 132, translating the critical Latin at ibid., 171. An English version of the letter is printed among the Lollard writings annexed to the trial of Walter Brute in Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 5.503.

The Gravity of Modern Simony

We have already surveyed how previous generations spoke of simony and weighed it against other sins.[17] However, we have yet to provide our own assessment of these conclusions, especially as they relate to the sale of biblical teaching today.

Heresy

As we saw in Chapter 13, simony was long regarded as a heresy. The charge began with Gregory the Great, whose label of *simoniaca haeresis* was maintained by later generations. The implicit claim that a price could be placed on a priceless grace was regarded as a fundamental denial of the faith. Does this same reasoning apply to modern simony? And is "heresy" even the proper category to apply here?

We have already seen that divine revelation is priceless, and that the teaching of the word is priceless with it.[18] One point bears adding. When the psalmist counted the law of God's mouth better than thousands of gold and silver (Ps. 119:72), he did not simply rank the word above them; he denied that it could be weighed against them at all. Nothing a man may desire can be compared with such wisdom (Prov. 3:15). To sell Scripture—or teaching derived from it—is therefore to put a price on that which is priceless.

Moreover, the teaching of the word of God does not merely describe but communicates the Infinite One himself. It would be manifest heresy to deny God's eternity or immensity—that he transcends both time and space—because it ascribes creatureliness to the Creator. This denial is precisely what is implied in idolatry (Isa. 40:18, 25). Therefore, to treat divine revelation as salable is to treat God himself as salable, valued along with creation.

Heresy is at bottom a denial of the gospel, and the sale of biblical teaching functions as such a denial. Though this may not be obvious at first, it follows from two observations made in Chapter 14. First, right biblical teaching—whatever its scope—necessarily communicates the

[17] See Chapter 12.

[18] See Chapter 14, p. 229.

gospel.[19] Second, the proclamation of the gospel is not a mere vessel for its message; the "word of his grace" (Acts 14:3; 20:32) is itself given by that grace.[20] To borrow Marshall McLuhan's famous phrase, the medium is the message.[21] It is not merely that the word of God *ought* to be offered "without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1; cf. Rev. 21:6; 22:17), but that what is offered for a price must be something other than the gospel. This is not to claim absolutely that no one could learn the saving message through paid instruction, only that such understanding comes *despite* the sale, not on account of it.

Simony is, moreover, the unpardonable sin, even as Wycliffe and Hus observed.[22] Consider the two kinds of temporary faith delineated in the parable of the sower with the rocky soil and the thorny soil. The rocky soil falls away on account of difficulty (Matt. 13:21; Luke 8:13), while the thorny soil falls away on account of the pleasures of this life (Matt. 13:22; Luke 8:14). It is this second failure that Hebrews 6:6 marks as impossible to renew to repentance, speaking of the land that "bears thorns and thistles" (Heb. 6:8). The distinction is further demonstrated in Peter and Judas, the former corresponding to the rocky soil and the latter to the thorny. Peter denied his Lord out of fear but was later restored; Judas delivered him up out of greed and perished. The simoniac sins in the manner of Judas.

All of this requires qualification.[23] Simony exists in outward action, typically without the inward conviction that would make it heresy in all the aforementioned senses. The idea of a practical heresy is not foreign to Scripture, which even speaks of the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God" (Pss. 14:1; 53:1). This is not a settled creed of atheism but a practical disregard of divine judgment. Though Judas was the son of perdition, Simon Magus himself received the hope of forgiveness at the words of Peter (Acts 8:22). Regardless, the sin of simony remains a grave danger as does any sort of heresy. Even those who only outwardly commit it play with fire.

[19] See pp. 227–29.
[20] See p. 227.
[21] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 7.
[22] See Chapter 13, pp. 213–14.
[23] See Chapter 13, pp. 215–16.

The Greatest Sin

A number of theologians identified simony as not only a great sin, but the greatest sin.[24] In part, the comments above on simony's relation to the unpardonable sin bear that judgment out. Those who would count the things of this earth as having a value comparable to Christ such that he could be traded for them "crucify again to themselves the Son of God" (Heb. 6:6).

Not all who sell holy things truly intend to prize the world above their Lord, but the severity of the expression remains. Whatever the inward reservation, no deed declares a knowing and culpable devaluation of the gospel more openly than fixing a literal price on it. Scripture names the love of money a root of all kinds of evil and places the service of mammon in direct competition with service to the Lord (1 Tim. 6:10; Matt. 6:24). In the sale of biblical teaching, a man places Christ below material things in the plainest sense.

Alarm over the sale of religion tends to settle on those who actively promote false teaching.[25] The profiteering of prosperity preachers, for example, is frequently singled out for special condemnation, yet our findings here should lead us to question this judgment. We must resist the urge to weigh sin only by the harm done to man and not by the offense given to God. The false teacher's lies are a separate matter. On that narrower question of the sale itself, pricing what is worthless is a mote beside pricing what is priceless. We should not suppose that Demetrius the silversmith sinned more grievously in selling false gods (Acts 19:24) than did Judas in selling the true God. After all, the New Testament regards Balaam as chief among deplorable mercenary prophets (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11), but all his words were true (Num. 22:38; 23:12).

Epithets

The charge of heresy and the condemnation that went with it are only a sample of the language the ancients turned against simony.

[24] See Chapter 12, pp. 193–94.

[25] See 2 Pet. 2:1–3.

One seventeenth-century minister writing on the topic remarked, "I could amass many other sharp invectives of the fathers against this crime; but I forbear, lest this article swell to too great a bulk."[26] Few today have the palate for this sort of rhetoric, but modern sensibilities aside, we must ask whether there is truth to some of the more severe appellations, especially in regard to the sale of biblical teaching. Two we examined in Chapter 12, leprosy and sodomy, warrant revisiting.

As for "leprosy," the standard observation was of its contagion: as one simoniac ordained another, the corruption of office perpetuated itself.[27] The concern may seem to weaken once the doctrine is applied to the sale of biblical teaching, but in practice it is no different. Those raised into ministry under men who sell their teaching learn to sell in turn. Much of the training for ministry in our day takes place in seminaries where professors are funded by tuition rather than by churches. Implicitly, the men set before students as models endorse the sale of biblical teaching. Beyond the seminaries, the local church often redirects its members to parachurch ministries that charge those seeking instruction. When those so raised take up the work of teaching, they commonly practice—or at least condone—what was modeled for them. Moreover, we should heed Ambrose's argument: biblical patterns permit and perhaps even require understanding Gehazi's curse as applying not to his physical descendants but to those who follow him in his sin.[28]

As for "sodomy," the rationale was one of perversion: as the sodomite perverts natural acts, so the simoniac perverts gracious acts; one spills the seed of the body, the other spills the seed of the word.[29] While this metaphor is the least likely to survive modern scruples, it applies strikingly well to the varieties of simony that exist most commonly today. A teacher labors at great pains over the word, develops his teaching, and then places it behind a paywall, undermining the spiritual fruitfulness that might have resulted.

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[26] Gordon, *Reformed Bishop*, 98.

[27] See Chapter 10, pp. 167–70.

[28] See Chapter 10, pp. 167–68.

[29] See Chapter 12, pp. 199–201.

Before dismissing the use of such polemical language, we should remember that Peter was willing to pronounce a curse against Simon: "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money" (Acts 8:20). Christ himself was willing to overturn tables on account of commerce in the house of God. Those who stand in a position to correct teachers who sell their instruction must be prepared to "rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:13).

The Cure for Modern Simony

What, then, is the remedy? The twin needs of the hour are zeal and knowledge, or more specifically, zeal according to knowledge.

Zeal

Recall the admonition of Gregory the Great: whoever does not "burn vehemently" against simony according to his station will have his portion with Simon.[30] The Lord calls his people, and most especially his ministers, to vigorously oppose the sale of spiritual things. Not only are we to take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but we are to expose them (Eph. 5:11). Many biblical passages may be added to reinforce this point.[31]

This zeal requires a courage that is necessarily at odds with the fear of man. Many believed but refused to follow Jesus because they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God (John 12:42–43). Ultimately, this requires a love of God so great that it could even be said to imply a hatred of man (Ps. 139:21; Luke 14:26). But such a posture is in fact a love of man, and even the only genuine kind, since love "does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6).

By zeal, Christ cleansed the temple, and it is by zeal that he will continue to cleanse the temple of his church. He calls his people to share in this righteous indignation (Ps. 119:53).

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[30] C. 1, q. 1, c. 5.

[31] E.g., Lev. 5:1; Prov. 24:11–12; Ezek. 33:8; Rom. 1:32; James 4:17.

Knowledge

Proper zeal exists and operates according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2). The doctrine of simony supplies that knowledge, appropriately directing zeal.

Where doctrinal knowledge is lacking, practical judgments fill the gap, producing at least two kinds of errors. First, those who lack understanding focus on the most obvious offenders, even when they are not the worst offenders. Consider our earlier comparison between those who would sell false teaching and those who would sell true teaching. The latter is in some ways a greater offense, but those who lack understanding primarily, if not exclusively, direct their attention to the former. Second, those who lack understanding permit practical concerns to excuse sinful behavior in the absence of an immediate solution. Many defend the sale of teaching because they cannot say how teachers might otherwise be supported. Pragmatism cannot be permitted to trump principle, and such compromises in the things of God do not ultimately succeed since he who is sovereign over the outcome will not be mocked (Prov. 11:24; Gal. 6:7).

Many think of knowledge as primarily tempering zeal, but right understanding *generates* zeal. The one who can name a sin is far more capable of burning against it than one who cannot. Only those who study the law deeply can know its breadth (Ps. 119:96), and therefore what it forbids. This is true above all of mental simony, since inward sins are the likeliest to elude the conscience (Rom. 7:7; Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28). Many justify peddlers of the word on the basis of a supposed sincerity, unaware that a man who holds out his faith to those who pay and withholds it from those who do not pay necessarily reveals an ulterior motive (2 Cor. 2:17; James 2:1, 9–10).

We have made initial steps in providing a right understanding, but our historical survey has implicitly raised a number of questions that it has left unresolved. We have not commented on modern practices of financial exchanges in weddings and funerals, though these were frequently addressed by the medieval theologians and canonists. Medieval and Reformed concerns about pastoral salaries likewise remain unapplied. Even some things to which we have given a closer

examination—such as the antifraternal approach to addressing simony—deserve dedicated treatments. Such further recovery of the doctrine of simony will be a great blessing to the church, offering the knowledge necessary to direct righteous zeal.

Conclusion

A recovered doctrine of simony aids in discerning the sin, giving us a vocabulary and principles by which to identify it however its appearance changes. That retrieval likewise aids in acknowledging the sin by mitigating the competing factors that would commend silence. Even in its modern forms, simony may be regarded as a practical heresy, counted among the chief sins and targeted with much of the rhetoric used by the saints of the past.

While such commitments and strategies may seem less than genteel, the difficulty may be navigated by a zeal that is according to knowledge. Right understanding both directs and generates right zeal, that same zeal by which Christ cleansed the temple of commerce in the days of his earthly ministry.

Conclusion

Simony is *an earnest desire to buy or sell something spiritual or something annexed to a spiritual thing*. This doctrine was affirmed in principle by the fathers, defined and elaborated by the medievals in theology and law, wielded by the Reformers, and then slowly forgotten as the grossest abuses were corrected. In the foregoing parts, we considered the definition of simony, examining the nature of spiritual things, the circumstances of their exchange, and the desire that itself constitutes the sin. We also explored the boundaries of licit and illicit giving, revealing the shape of the minister's proper maintenance: from the people he receives honor rather than a price for his service or labor; from God, his true employer, he receives wages. Then, we surveyed how the tradition grounded its case in Scripture, weighed the gravity of the sin, and classed the transgression as a species of heresy. To buy or sell a spiritual thing is to put a price on the priceless and undermine the very character of grace. Lastly, we built on this foundation to analyze the simony that exists in our own day and identify what may be done about it.

Like previous generations who honestly assessed the prevalence of commerce in spiritual things, we must acknowledge the bleakness of our present condition.[1] Simony plagued the medieval church, and it remains the leprosy of the twenty-first-century church. Insofar as her

[1] One nineteenth-century Anglican clergyman wrote, "That the statements I have laid before you present a melancholy view, through a long period of the Church, of that corruption, which, even in holy things, has so constantly exhibited its baneful form, we must confess." Willis, *Simony: In Two Parts*, 25.

citizens continue to tolerate the sale of biblical teaching in presumed security, they invite the same destruction that made Jerusalem a heap of ruins (Mic. 3:11–12), yet she will be saved at the last (Rev. 20:9).

The path of repentance will not be easy. Sometime around the feast of Bartholomew in August 1540, Luther's wife Katharina joked that he should begin charging his students. The doctor rejoined, "For thirty years I have taught and preached for free. Why would I now, in my decrepit old age, begin to sell anything?"[2] For many it will be the opposite: they have taught at a price for decades; why should they now change their ways?

While we have no guarantee that the present generation will live to see reform, we do have the guarantee that the church will grow into the full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13). This precious and very great promise affords the certain expectation that this corruption within her will be greatly diminished before he returns. A recovered doctrine of simony adds immediacy to that hope. Much remains to be done, and many areas still await exploration, but perhaps this initial effort will supply the instruments by which we may begin charting the murky waters that lie before us.

May the Almighty grant repentance to the wicked in order that, if possible, they be forgiven the intent of their hearts and set free from the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

[2] Luther, *Tischreden*, no. 5187 (WA TR 4, 704:18–23).

Appendix

The Layman's Complaint

The epigraph of this book is known to scholarship as "The Layman's Complaint." The only known copy appears in a fifteenth-century hand in a manuscript of *Pore Caitiff*, a fourteenth-century devotional work.[1] *Pore Caitiff* itself, "like most English compositions of the time," was "once ascribed to Wycliffe."[2]

Original[3]	Modernized
Þou þ*a*t sellest þe worde of God,	Thou that sellest the word of God,
Be þou berfot, be þou schod,	Be thou barefoot, be thou shod,°
Cu*m* nomor*e* here.	Come no more here.
Inpr*i*ncipio erat verbu*m*	*In principio erat verbum*°
Is þe worde of God, all *and* su*m*,	Is the word of God, all and some,°
6 Þ*a*t þou sellest, lewed frer*e*.	That thou sellest, lewd° friar.
Hit is cursed symonie	It is cursed simony
E þ*er* to selle or to bye	Either to sell or to buy
Ony gostly þinge;	Any ghostly° thing;
Þerfore, frere, go as þou come,	Therefore, friar, go as thou come,
And hold þe i*n* þi hows at home	And hold thee in thy house at home
12 Til we þe almis brynge.	Till we thee alms bring.°

[1] Utley, "The Layman's Complaint and the Friar's Answer," 141.

[2] Allen, "Some Fourteenth Century Borrowings," 4.

[3] As provided in Utley, "The Layman's Complaint and the Friar's Answer," 144, with normalized capitalization, italics representing expansions of abbreviations, and supplied punctuation.

Goddis lawe ȝe reu*er*son,
And mennes howsis ȝe p*er*sen,
As Poul beriþ wittnes.
As mydday deuelis goy*n*ge abowte
For money lowle ȝe lowte,
Flatteringe boyþe mor*e and* lesse.

God's law ye reverse,
And men's houses ye pierce,°
As Paul beareth witness.
As midday devils° going about,
For money lowly ye lout,°
Flattering both more and less.°

2 Be thou barefoot, be thou shod. Some friars went barefoot to demonstrate their vow of poverty.

4 *In principio erat verbum.* "In the beginning was the word," John 1:1 in Latin. This was a standard greeting of the mendicant friars.

5 All and some. The whole of it—a doubled tag like "one and all," but said of a thing rather than of persons.

6 Lewd. Ignorant.

9 Ghostly. Spiritual.

11–12 Hold thee in thy house at home / Till we thee alms bring. An inversion of the mendicant program: the friar is to stay home, and the alms he would beg for never come.

14 Men's houses ye pierce. An allusion to 2 Timothy 3:6, which the Wycliffite Bible renders "they that pierce houses."

16 Midday devils. A traditional personification of the sin of acedia, the neglect of duty; taken from Psalm 91:6.

17 Lout. Bow.

18 More and less. Rich and poor.

Glossary

Advowson. The right to present a candidate to a vacant benefice.

Benefice. The income annexed to a church office; commonly, the office so endowed.

Canon. (1) A rule enacted by a council or other church authority. (2) A member of a cathedral or collegiate chapter.

Canonist. A specialist in canon law.

Chrism. Consecrated oil, used in baptism, confirmation, and ordination.

Clerk. A clergyman.

Collation. The conferral of a benefice.

Collegiate church. A church served by a chapter of canons but not the seat of a bishop.

Curate. The clergyman with the actual charge of a parish.

Dispensation. A relaxation of a canon in a particular case.

Distributions. The daily payments to cathedral and collegiate clergy for attending the church's offices.

Dominical. Of the Lord; said of a saying or command of Christ.

Endowment. A permanent fund supporting a church or ecclesiastical office.

Feoffee. A trustee holding property conveyed to him for another's use.

Forum. A tribunal: the church's court (external) or conscience (internal).

Glossa ordinaria. The standard medieval commentary on a text: the Bible, the *Decretum*, or the Decretals.

Impropriation. A benefice whose tithes are held by a layman, who pays the clergyman serving it.

Indulgence. A remission of the temporal penalty due for sin, in whole (*plenary*) or in part.

Letters dimissory. A bishop's letter authorizing his cleric's ordination by another bishop.

Orders. (1) The grades of the ministry conferred by ordination; holy orders. (2) A religious community living under a rule—monks, canons, or friars.

Pallium. The woolen band sent by the pope to a new archbishop.

Parson. The clergyman holding a parish benefice.

Pension. A yearly charge reserved out of a benefice's income.

Prebend. The share of a cathedral's or collegiate church's revenues allotted to a canon.

Preferment. Appointment or promotion to an ecclesiastical office.

Prelate. A bishop or other high ecclesiastical dignitary.

Presentation. The patron's nomination of a clergyman to the bishop for a vacant benefice.

Procuration. The hospitality owed a prelate on his visitation, or the payment that replaced it.

Rescript. A pope's written answer to a legal question or petition.

Right of patronage. A landowner's authority over the church on his estate, of which the *advowson* is the operative right.

Stationer. A printer or bookseller; in a regulated trade, one licensed or privileged to issue a work.

Suffragan. A bishop under an archbishop in the same ecclesiastical province.

Suffrages. (1) Prayers, masses, and other good works offered on another's behalf. (2) Concurring votes or opinions.

Temporalities. The lands, revenues, and other secular possessions of a church or benefice.

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