



IRENÆUS OF LYON

ca. 130–202

Bishop of Lyon; the first heresiologist.

Simon Magus is the father of all heresies.

This man, then, was glorified by many as a god, and he taught that he himself was the one who had appeared among the Jews as the Son, but had come down in Samaria as the Father, and had visited the remaining nations as the Holy Spirit. And he said that he was the loftiest power, that is, the one who is Father over all, and that he allowed himself to be called by whatever name men call him. But Simon the Samaritan, from whom all heresies originate, has a sect of the following sort as his subject matter.

IRENÆUS OF LYON, *ADVERSUS HAERESES*, 1.23.1–2 (pp. 246–47)



CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

ca. 150–215

Head of the catechetical school at Alexandria.

Giving doctrine to the needy is a sacrifice, like giving money.

Does [the Christian] not also know that other sacrifice, the distributing of both teachings [δογμάτων, dogmatōn] and money to those in need? Assuredly he does.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, STROMATA, 7.7.49.5 (GCS 17, 37:7–9)



HERMAS

fl. 2nd century

A freedman of Rome; he names himself as the book's author.

A prophet who takes pay has an earthly spirit.

[The false prophet] 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. [...] He attaches himself to the double-minded and the empty, and prophesies to them in a corner, and deceives them, speaking to them all things emptily, according to their desires; for he answers the empty with empty things.



TERTULLIAN

ca. 155–220

African apologist; the first theologian to write in Latin.

Elders preside by good report, and pay nothing for the honor.

“Approved elders preside, having obtained that honor not by purchase but by testimony; for no thing of God is obtained by price.”

TERTULLIAN, APOLOGETICUM, CAP. 39 (P. 200); BASIL OF CAESAREA, EP. 53 (P. 339)



CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

ca. 200–258

Bishop of Carthage; martyred under Valerian.

Four scriptures forbid selling the grace of God.

That the grace of God ought to be without price. In the Acts of the Apostles: Thy money be with thee unto perdition, because thou hast thought that the grace of God may be possessed by money. Likewise in the Gospel: Freely ye have received, freely give. Likewise there: My Father's house ye have made a house of merchandise. Likewise in Isaiah: Ye who thirst, go to the water; and as many as have no money, going, buy and drink without money.

CYPRIAN, AD QUIRINUM, 3.100



BASIL OF CAESAREA

ca. 330–379

Bishop of Caesarea; father of Eastern monasticism.

The ignorant buyer is less guilty than the seller.

If this be true, let it not happen in future, but be corrected; for we must say to any who accepts this money what the Apostles said to the man who wanted to pay for participation in the Holy Spirit: “May thy money perish with thee.” For he who through ignorance wants to buy is less guilty than he who sells the gift of God.

BASIL OF CAESAREA, EP. 53 (P. 339)



APHRAHAT

fl. 337–345

The Persian Sage; earliest of the Syriac fathers.

Withhold what you were given freely and you lose it.

I received your letter, my friend, and when I had read it I rejoiced greatly that you had turned your mind to inquiries such as these. 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, I.I (PS I.I:6); IO.8 (PS I.I:460–64)

The knowledge of God is not lessened by being given away.

Whoever takes from [the treasure of the knowledge of God] grows rich himself and enriches others, and shows himself open and ready for everything he is asked. Even if many take from it, it is not diminished; and if they give away all they have received, what they hold only increases. What they have received freely they ought also to give freely, just as they received it, and not to sell it for a price, for there is nothing that can be made equal to it.

APHRAHAT, DEMONSTRATIONES, IO.8 (PS I.I:460–64)



AMBROSE OF MILAN

ca. 339–397

Bishop of Milan; Augustine's baptizer.

Every greedy man has Gehazi's leprosy.

Learn from the twofold teaching of words and deeds what you should follow. 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 the grace of God is not appraised by a price, nor in the sacraments is profit sought, but the priest's dutiful service. [...] Quickly does leprosy follow a shameful fee, and ill-gotten money defiles body and soul alike. "You have received money," it says, "and from it you shall possess field and vineyard and 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 inexpiable is the guilt of a sold mystery, and the heavenly vengeance for [selling] grace passes on to posterity. [...] Therefore all the covetous, all the avaricious, possess the leprosy of Gehazi along with their riches; and by an ill-gotten fee they have amassed not so much an estate of goods as a hoard of crimes, for eternal punishment and brief enjoyment.

AMBROSE, EXPOSITIO EVANGELII SEC. LUCAM, 4.52–54 (CSEL 32.4, 164:16–166:11)



JEROME

ca. 347–420

Translator of the Vulgate.

Nothing says Samuel accepted Saul's quarter shekel.

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” [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.

JEROME, IN PROPH. MIN. IN MICH. I, 3:9–12 (COLS. 471–72)

Prophecy given for money becomes divination.

[The prophets of Jerusalem] seemed to themselves indeed to be prophets, but because they were taking money, their prophecy became divination. The Apostle Peter [says] [Acts 3:6]: “Silver,” he says, “and gold I do not have”—he could surely have sold to Simon Magus what Simon sought [Acts 3:8]; nay, he could have feigned to sell (for the Holy Spirit can neither be sold nor bought)—but he condemned the money offered together with the one who offered it.

JEROME, IN PROPH. MIN. IN MICH. I, 3:9–12 (COL. 471)



JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

ca. 347–407

Preacher of Antioch, then bishop of Constantinople.

Whoever pays in flattery earns Simon's curse too.

Consider what Simon suffered! 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! It was said to that man, and to these it shall be said: Let your zeal go with you unto perdition, because you thought to acquire the gift of God by human intrigue. “But is there no one such among us?”

CHRYSOSTOM, HOMILIAE IN ACTA APOSTOLORUM, 3,5 (PG 60:41)



AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

354–430

Bishop of Hippo.

Those who sell the Spirit for honor are selling doves.

Who then are those who sell doves, brethren, but those who say, We give the Holy Spirit? And why do they say this, and at what price do they sell? At the price of their own honor. They receive as a price temporal chairs, 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)

Nothing in creation can buy the Word of God.

For all things can be subjected to the Word of God, because “all things were made through him”: yet they are not subjected as though they were the price of the Word, so that one might give something in order to receive it.

AUGUSTINE, SERMONES, 117, CAP. 1 (PL 38:661–62)

The people keep the preacher fed, and the Lord rewards him.

What one lives on, then, is a matter of necessity to receive and of charity to supply, not as though the gospel were for sale, as if its price were what those who preach it take in order to live. For if they sell it so, they sell a great thing for a trifle. Let them receive from the people the sustenance their need requires, and from the Lord the reward of their stewardship. For the people are not competent to pay the reward to those who serve them in the charity of the gospel. Let them look for their reward nowhere but where the people look for their salvation.

AUGUSTINE, SERMONES, 46, CAP. 2 (PL 38:273); THE ANATOMY OF SIMON MAGUS, 92FF



PATRICK

fl. 5th century

A Briton carried off as a slave; missionary bishop to the Irish.

He gave back the gifts laid on his altar.

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)

He baptized thousands and asked nothing of any of them.

Is it, perhaps, that when I baptized so many thousands of men I hoped for even half a scruple from any one of them? Tell me, and I will restore it to you. Or when the Lord ordained clergy everywhere through my humble self, and I distributed the ministry to them freely, if I asked of any one of them even the price of my shoe, tell it against me, and I will restore you more.

PATRICK, CONFESSIO, 50 (P. 22)



GREGORY THE GREAT

ca. 540–604

Recognized by the Reformers as the last true bishop of Rome.

Ordaining a man for money makes him a heretic.

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?

GREGORY I, EP. 5.63 (I, 379:9–19); GREGORY I, EP. 5.58 (I, 369:14–25)

Simony was the first heresy condemned, and still goes unguarded.

And, it being well known that this heresy [of simony] crept into the Church with a pestiferous root before all others, and was condemned in its very origin by apostolic detestation, why is it not guarded against?

GREGORY I, EP. 9.218 (2, 206)



PETER DAMIAN

1007–1072

Camaldolese hermit made cardinal-bishop of Ostia; scourge of the simoniacs.

The simoniac bishop is the sinner hardest to bring to repentance.

For that poisonous heresy [of simony], especially in the episcopal order, is so hard and so set against being converted—forever promising, forever putting it off from one day to the next and deferring it to a time still to come—that a Jew could sooner be brought to the faith than a heretical brigand could be fully roused to repentance.

PETER DAMIAN, VITA BEATI ROMUALDI, CAP. 35 (PL 144:987A)



HENRY III

1017–1056

Holy Roman Emperor; called the synod of Sutri in 1046.

Simony brings famine, plague, and the sword.

“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 [Matt. 10:8]. 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. [...] —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 own damnation; and, according to the Lord’s own word, in all things spiritual robbery is rampant.”

HENRY III, IN RAOUL GLABER, HISTORIARUM LIBRI QUINQUE, 5.5.25 (PP. 133–34)



GERHOCH OF REICHERSBERG

1093–1169

Augustinian canon, provost of Reichersberg; polemicist of the twelfth-century reform.

The fox in the vineyard looks like the vinedresser.

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?



ROBERT OF COURSON

ca. 1160–1219

English master at Paris; cardinal-legate.

Wisdom from the Spirit cannot be sold.

As to what Solomon says, “Do not sell wisdom, doctrine, understanding” [Prov. 23:23], 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); BALDWIN, MASTERS, PRINCES, AND MERCHANTS, 2.86N70



WILLIAM PERALDUS

ca. 1190–1271

Dominican of Lyon; author of the *Summa on vices and virtues*.

Simoniacs sell Christ worse than Judas did.

It ought to suffice for [those who sell holy things] that Christ was sold once for their sins. These sellers seem to be worse than Judas in these five [respects]. They sell him immortal and now glorified, whom Judas sold mortal and in a state of humility: hence an insult offered to a knight is greater than one offered to a squire. Nor do they sell him only once, as Judas did, but more than a hundred times; and they sell him at a smaller price than Judas did. 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 for which he had sold Christ; but simoniacs cannot be brought to penitence, so as to restore what they gained through simony.

WILLIAM PERALDUS, *SUMMAE VIRTUTUM*, 2.7 (P. 109); WYCLIFFE, *DE SIMONIA*, CAP. I (II:18–22; 8:24N)

Simony is spiritual sodomy, a sin against grace.

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, because he was an enemy of nature, which had made him—for as far as in him lies, 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.

JEROME, *LIBER INTERPRETATIONIS HEBRAICORUM NOMINUM*, DE GENESI, S (PL 23:828); WILLIAM PERALDUS, *SUMMAE VIRTUTUM*, 2.7 (P. 108)



ALBERT THE GREAT

ca. 1200–1280

Dominican master at Paris and Cologne; teacher of Aquinas.

The price does not have to be money.

To the argument, however, it must be said that “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)



WILLIAM OF SAINT-AMOUR

ca. 1200–1272

Secular master at Paris; chief opponent of the friars.

Only a man with charge of souls earns maintenance.

As if he were to say: if they do not hold these offices in the Churches of those from whom they receive, neither do they have the power of taking maintenance from them. For it is certain that maintenance from the Gospel is owed only to those who ordinarily preside in governance and teaching by the dignity of their office, and who are bound to the governance of souls by the duty of their office.

WILLIAM OF SAINT-AMOUR, COLLECTIONES, D. 4, SIGN. 41 (PP. 457–58)

Asking hearers for gifts looks like simony.

If therefore any Preachers (of whose canonical vocation or mission it is not established) should, as a regular practice, receive from their Hearers such gifts as have been described above, they seem to be in the occasion of avarice; they also seem to preach for the sake of gain, not for the salvation of souls. And if they should, as a regular practice, ask for such things or cause them to be asked, whether in their preaching, or before their preaching, or after it, hoping that on account of their preaching they will more easily obtain them, they seem to commit simony.

WILLIAM OF SAINT-AMOUR, COLLECTIONES, D. 4, SIGN. 41 (P. 458); SIGN. 40 (P. 456)



GEOFFREY OF POITIERS

fl. ca. 1210–1230

Master of theology at Paris.

A schoolmaster may charge, but a theologian may not.

It is asked concerning the master who teaches for pence, whether he incurs this curse [the curse of Jer. 48:10]. 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, 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; and in general no work is so privileged—such as celebrating, preaching, teaching theology (teaching, I mean, publicly)—that one may do it for a gift of the hand. Whence the Lord in Micah, recounting other sins, says: “Their priests taught for hire.”

GEOFFREY OF POITIERS, SUMMA, FOL. 39VA; BALDWIN, MASTERS, PRINCES, AND MERCHANTS, 2.86N69



BONAVENTURE

ca. 1217–1274

Franciscan master at Paris; minister general of the order.

Believing grace has a price is manifest heresy.

Neither sacred orders nor anything of the sacraments can be given for money without grave and enormous sin, inasmuch as [the simoniac] traffics in what is spiritual, which by reason of its dignity is to be given out of pure liberality, and makes it cheap; and again, because he puts under a price that which was priceless; which can in no way be done without insult being done to the Holy Spirit. And therefore that deed is not only evil in itself, but even of itself. But if you ask me whether it is a sin in faith or in morals: it must be said that he who buys or sells such spiritual things either believes that they can be valued at a price, and equated to the worth of an earthly thing, and possessed by money, and 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.

BONAVENTURE, IN SENT. IV, D. 25, A. 1, Q. 4 (P. 648)



THOMAS AQUINAS

1225–1274

Dominican master at Paris; author of the *Summa theologiae*.

No earthly price can match a spiritual thing.

A spiritual thing cannot be balanced against any earthly price: as is said of wisdom in Proverbs 3: “She is more precious than all riches: and all the things that are desired are not to be compared with her.”

AQUINAS, ST II-II, Q. 100, A. 1, CORP.

An act may be spiritual in its source, or only in its end.

An act is called spiritual in two ways. In one way, on the part of its principle—namely, when the act belongs to some person on account of something spiritual that is in him; as for a bishop to consecrate churches, and for a deacon to read the Gospel: and in such acts simony is committed if a man intends to sell his act. In another way, an act is spiritual not on the part of its principle, but on the part of its end only—as to teach the liberal arts, whose truth is spiritual; but such teaching does not belong to a man on account of any spiritual office, since even the heathen may lawfully teach such arts: and in these acts simony is committed if the end, which is spiritual—namely, the truth itself—is sold; but not if a man merely hires out his labor.

AQUINAS, QUODLIBET, VIII, Q. 6, A. 1 (P. 175)



PETER PALUDANUS

ca. 1275–1342

Dominican master at Paris; Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem.

In conscience even a small gift is simony.

If [the giver] is a stranger, who would not be giving except on account of the judgment, it must be refused, however small it be: whether it 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)

Teaching theology for pay seems to be simony.

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; regarding the other sciences it is not.

PALUDANUS, IN SENT. IV, D. 25, Q. 5 (P. 320B)

Whoever cannot sell his work cannot sell his labor either.

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, where they cannot lawfully sell their work: 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.

PALUDANUS, IN SENT. IV, D. 25, Q. 5 (P. 319A); Q. 5 (P. 320A–B)



PETER AURIOL

ca. 1280–1322

Franciscan master at Paris.

The whole world cannot pay for one sacrament.

The reason is that when that which cannot be compared or equalled is exchanged for something else, a sin is committed, and a sin indeed against justice; but when the sacraments, or other things of this sort, are exchanged for a temporal thing, the priceless and incommensurable is given for something that can never match it—take a sacrament, which the whole world cannot equal, nor even the least degree of spiritual things.

AURIOL, IN SENT. IV, D. 25, Q. UN., A. 2 (P. 166B)

Selling teaching, counsel, or testimony is a sin.

But if we take a freely given grace—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.

AURIOL, IN SENT. IV, D. 25, Q. UN., A. 2 (P. 166A)

Even the labor at the altar cannot be sold.

Not only can the aforesaid spiritual things not be sold, but neither can the labor which is expended in ministering at the altar.

AURIOL, IN SENT. IV, D. 25, Q. UN., A. 2 (P. 166B)



JOHN WYCLIFFE

ca. 1328–1384

Oxford master; proto-Reformer.

A simoniac infects himself, his ordainer, and his people.

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, 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, 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.

WYCLIFFE, DE SIMONIA, CAP. 5 (61:8–23)

The leprosy is white because the simoniac feigns holiness.

But the whiteness of the leprosy signifies the whiteness of hypocrisy, by which [simoniacs] feign holiness in the eyes of the faithful; and from the first simoniac pope 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.

WYCLIFFE, DE SIMONIA, CAP. 5 (62:1–9)

Wars will last as long as simony does.

But one thing I dare to prophesy: that wars shall continue by which nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, as long as this plague of simony endures.

WYCLIFFE, DE SIMONIA, CAP. I (9:24–26); CAP. I (10:4–6)

Simony throws away the seed of God's word.

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.

WYCLIFFE, DE SIMONIA, CAP. I (8:27–30)

Simony offends all three persons of the Trinity.

And so through this threefold character the whole Trinity is offended: through apostasy, God the Father, who according to religion pure and undefiled powerfully binds the bride of Christ to himself; God the Son, who, since he is the power of God and the wisdom of God, is daily blasphemed through the second heresy; and 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. I (1:3–20); HUS, O SVATOKUPECTVÍ, 2.A–B

Simony is a leprosy only a miracle heals.

Whence, since according to the testimony of the Truth the sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable both in this world and in the one to come, it seems fitting to begin with it, since simony is a leprosy which, from the nature of the disease and its continual hardening, cannot be healed except by an extraordinary miracle of God.

WYCLIFFE, DE SIMONIA, CAP. I (1:21–23); HUS, O SVATOKUPECTVÍ, 2.B

Selling the word is worse than selling a bishopric.

For thus to beg or to sell the word of God is a nearer and more hateful simony than to buy or to sell an ecclesiastical dignity.

WYCLIFFE, DE FUNDACIONE SECTARUM, CAP. 2 (P. 21); CAP. II (P. 56)

Simony is why so much of the Church lies dead.

Simony, therefore, is the cause why a great part of what is called the Church lies scattered and dead.

WYCLIFFE, DE SIMONIA, CAP. I (14:9–10)



WYCLIFFITE TEXTS

late 14th century

Attributed to Wycliffe, authorship doubtful.

Christ forbade his preachers simony, begging, and covetousness.

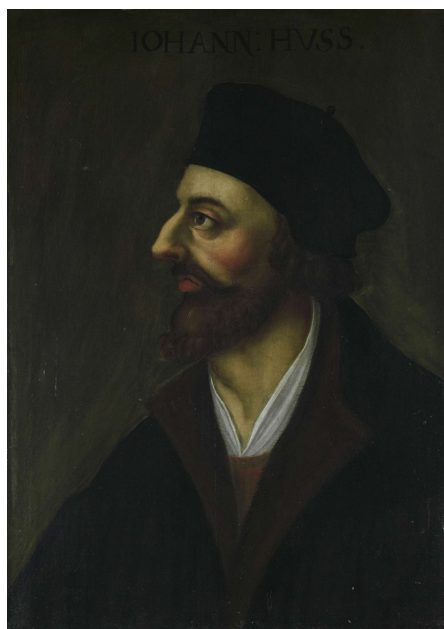
And so [Christ] bade that not lies nor fables be preached, but the truth of the gospel, for that is virtue; nor he bade not only preach to men that gave to them, but to all manner of men, without respect of persons. And so, in a quiet manner, Christ forbade simony and begging and covetousness to all his preachers. For as they freely took their knowledge from God, so should they freely deal it to the people.

OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS, CAP. 9 (P. 130)

They sell God's word as a man sells an ox.

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.

OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS, CAP. 3 (P. 123)



JAN HUS

ca. 1372–1415

Rector of Prague, proto-Reformer; burned at Constance, 1415.

Charging for the labor still sells the blessing.

But here [the simoniacs] 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 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!"

Preaching against simony makes enemies of pope and cardinals.

And in the end I did not appear at the papal court, lest I lose my life for nothing; for everywhere there are enemies in plenty, both Czech and German, who seek my death: the pope as judge is an enemy, the cardinals too are enemies, as I have found in their letters, who write me down a heretic, though they have never heard nor seen me; for it touches both the pope and the cardinals when one preaches against pride, against avarice, and especially against simony.

HUS, POSTILLA, II4.G; SPINKA, JOHN HUS AND THE CZECH REFORM, 38–40N62

The beast sells what it does not even have.

What greater abomination, I ask, is there than if a harlot, uncovering herself wholly below, were publicly ready for anyone who wished to fornicate with her? Yet greater still is the abomination of the beast, which is ready to be adored by whoever comes, sitting in the seat of dignity as though it were God, and standing ready to sell whatever anyone should wish to buy in spiritual things; and it sells that which it does not have.

HUS, KORESPONDENCE A DOKUMENTY, LETTER 52, P. 154



WILLIAM SWINDERBY

fl. 1382–1392

Lollard preacher at Leicester; tried for heresy at Hereford.

Priests may not take money for masses or preaching.

No priest owes to sell by bargaining and covenant his ghostly travail, ne his masses, ne his prayers, ne God's word, ne hallowings, baptism, ne confirming, order giving, for weddings, for shrift, for housel, or for anointing, any worldly men's reward to ask or take for these or for any of these, or for any ghostly thing, he errs and doth simony.

WILLIAM SWINDERBY, IN FOXE, ACTES AND MONUMENTS, 5.468



JOHN MAJOR

ca. 1467–1550

Scottish master at Paris and St Andrews; taught John Knox.

Simony existed long before it had a name.

This plague was in the church before it was called simony. This is clear: 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.

MAJOR, IN SENT. (RED. A), D. 25, Q. UN. (FOL. 145VB); METFORD, A GENERAL DISCOURSE OF SIMONY, 2–3



MARTIN LUTHER

1483–1546

Augustinian friar; Reformer at Wittenberg.

Simony is impossible in fact and common in pretense.

In reality simony is impossible, but in pretense it is most common. For the name of the LORD is prostituted and sold. Yet that very thing is nothing other than an empty sham.

LUTHER, VORLESUNGEN ÜBER I. MOSE, 23:3–4 (WA 43, 282:8)

Selling the word of God is true simony.

True simony, therefore, is commerce exercised in the word of God, in the sacraments, in the church, and in the saints.

LUTHER, VORLESUNGEN ÜBER I. MOSE, 25:31–34 (WA 43, 422:10–11)

He has taught free for thirty years.

When someone questioned the Doctor about a locus, the Doctor's wife replied in jest: "Lord Doctor, do not teach them for free! They are already collecting a great deal." 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?"

LUTHER, TISCHREDEN, NO. 5187 (WA TR 4, 704:19–23)

Lose justification by faith and everyone turns simoniac.

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 that has been obscured and extinguished, the whole world becomes simoniacal. So the Turks too strive to appease God with their works, and to buy spiritual things with money and with merits. Therefore simony exists in name, like the simony described in canon law. For they redeem nothing and obtain nothing by price and by merits; but that desire and that will has driven its roots deep into the human heart, by which every man is naturally a simoniac, by which he would want God to be such a one as could be appeased by human works and human merits, to whom he could throw up: 'I have done much, I have fasted much; look upon these things, and sell me salvation and eternal life.' [...] ... will in the apostolic doctrine: 'By grace and freely you have been justified, apart from all works.' Once that grace is taken away, there is no longer any difference between Turk and Pope, heathen and Jew: they are all simoniacs and goat-milkers, Bockmelker [buck-milkers].

LUTHER, VORLESUNGEN ÜBER I. MOSE, 25:31-34 (WA 43, 423:32-424:4)

Pastors teach, console, and absolve for free.

If I had that power, that no one could be absolved from his sins unless he had counted out a few gold pieces to me, in a single day I would rake together all the riches of the world. But this is not lawful, and the Pope with Satanic audacity established this trade. We are commanded to teach, console, 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 I. MOSE, 23:3-4 (WA 43, 282:21-26)

Christ forbids teaching for glory, gain, or favor.

[Christ] 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)

He never sold a lecture or a book.

Otherwise I had resolved, once I had married, to lecture for a fee, *but since God forestalled me* by way of the Elector, *I have all my life never sold a single copy 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.

LUTHER, TISCHREDEN, NO. 4690 (WA TR 4, 431:27-432:11); PETTEGREE, BRAND LUTHER, 279



WILLIAM TYNDALE

ca. 1494–1536

Translator of the English New Testament; strangled and burned at Vilvoorde, 1536.

Rome lets a benefice be sold by way of a pension.

The Pope for money will dispense with thee, both for thy coat and all thy obedience, and make a secular priest of thee: likewise as 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. Oh crafty jugglers and mockers with the word of God.

TYNDALE, OBEDIENCE OF A CHRISTIAN MAN, FOL. 27R

Men not called to the office preach anyway, and live off the poor.

Likewise doeth a Christian man give to his brethren and robbeth them not as friars and monks do. But as Paul commandeth Eph. 4, laboreth with his hands some good work to have wherewith to help the needy. They give not but receive only. They labor not but live idly of the sweat of the poor. There is none so poor a widow, though she have not to find herself and her children nor any money to give, yet shall the friar snatch a cheese or somewhat. 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



HEINRICH BULLINGER

1504–1575

Swiss Reformer, Zwingli's successor at Zurich; author of the Second Helvetic Confession.

Peter's curse on Simon falls on the pope's indulgences.

We especially condemn the pope's lucrative doctrine of penance, and, against his simony and his simoniacal indulgences, we set the judgment of Simon Peter upon him: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money."

HEINRICH BULLINGER, SHC 14; SYNOD OF DORT, CHURCH ORDER, ART. 80



GIROLAMO ZANCHI

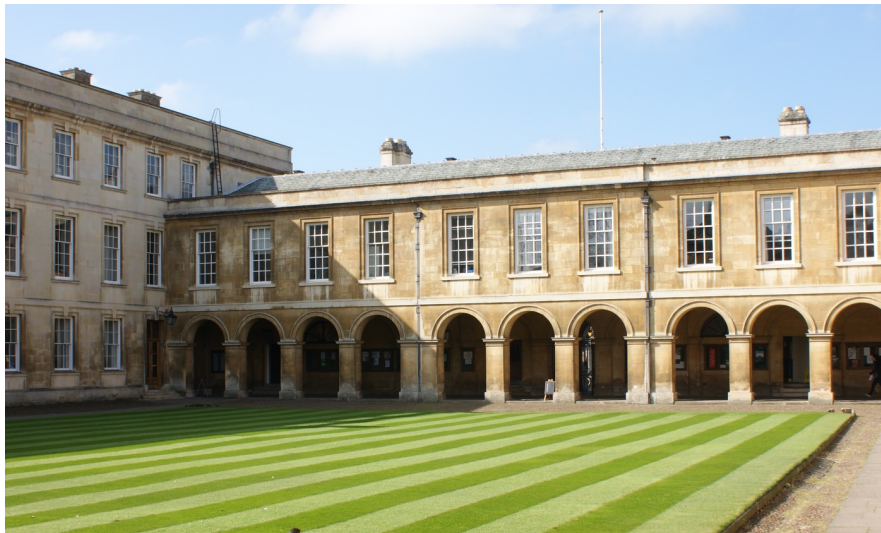
1516–1590

Italian Reformed theologian at Strasbourg and Heidelberg.

Wages for spiritual gifts overthrow divine worship.

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.

ZANCHI, TRACTATUS DE REDEMPTIONE, 1.17.4 (COL. 500)



RALPH CUDWORTH

1572–1624

Fellow of Emmanuel, Cambridge; he finished Perkins's commentary on Galatians.

No price can be set on preaching.

Because 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*, Act.

CUDWORTH, SUPPLEMENT ON GALATIANS 6, 537

Rome sells pardons and heaven for a small sum.

Because that which God hath given freely, ought not to be sold basely: seeing by that means, that is made saleable, which God would have free, which kind of merchandise is used in the Church of Rome at this day, in their Indulgences, wherein they sell pardons for remission of sins, and set even heaven itself to sale, for a small sum of money.

CUDWORTH, SUPPLEMENT ON GALATIANS 6, 537

A steward cannot sell his master's goods.

Because it is not in man's power to sell them, seeing he is not lord over them, but steward and dispenser of them, 1. Cor. 4. v. 1.

CUDWORTH, SUPPLEMENT ON GALATIANS 6, 543



WILLIAM AMES

1576–1633

English Puritan casuist, exiled to the Netherlands.

Putting a price on holy things profanes them.

Hence it is a sin of simony, to buy or sell, or any way change a holy and spiritual for a temporal; the reason is, First, because holy things ought to be used as holy, not polluted, and profaned, which then they are, when they are brought down, as worldly things, into temporal contracts, being it is against the religion and reverence which is due to holy things. Secondly, because it is injustice to sell those things which are to be bestowed on free cost, Matt. 10:8.

AMES, CONSCIENCE, 5,229

A gift of pure gratitude, or the redeeming of vexation, is no simony.

Neither is it properly simony, when somewhat is given out of mere gratitude, not by any agreement tacit, or expressed, direct, or indirect. Neither if any thing is given by him, which hath a certain and undoubted right to the spiritual function, for the avoiding of unjust troubles. Howsoever in these we must beware of deceit, and the very appearance of evil is to be avoided.

AMES, CONSCIENCE, 5,230



HENRY BURTON

1578–1648

London Puritan; author of *A Censure of Simonie*.

Simony is the mother of every mischief in the church.

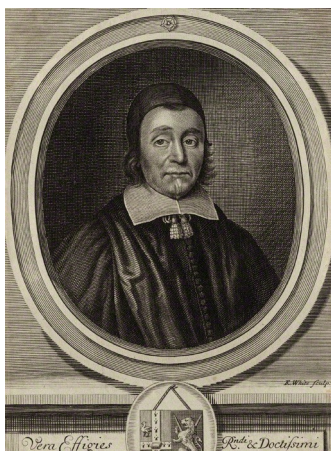
Of the miserable fruits and effects of simony. The effects and fruits of simony are no less miserable, than the censures are grievous, and the punishments thereof intolerable. For as Simon is the father of all simonists, so simony is the mother of all mischiefs in the church.

BURTON, *A CENSURE OF SIMONIE*, 93

A small price shows small esteem for the calling.

Concerning simony committed in ordination, although haply the money given for a simple ordination be but small [...] yet of all other kinds of simony, this is the most pernicious and damnable: yea, the less a man giveth or receiveth in this respect, it is an argument of the less esteem he makes of so holy and excellent a calling. As the Lord saith of Judas his selling of Christ for thirty pieces of silver: “A goodly price that I was prized at of them.”

BURTON, *A CENSURE OF SIMONIE*, 47



ANTHONY TUCKNEY

1599–1670

Master of Emmanuel, Cambridge; Westminster divine.

God lends the minister his gifts for the church's service.

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 putttest 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 [...] 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.



JOHN TRAPP

1601–1669

Puritan vicar in Warwickshire; commentator on the whole Bible.

The Canaanite of the prophecy is the simoniac.

“There shall be no more the Canaanite” [Zech. 14:21]—the merchant, saith the vulgar after Aquila, and the Chaldee; that is, the simoniac, the church-chopper, such money-merchants as Christ whipped out of the temple.

TRAPP, COMMENTARY ON THE MINOR PROPHETS, 605



JOSEPH CARYL

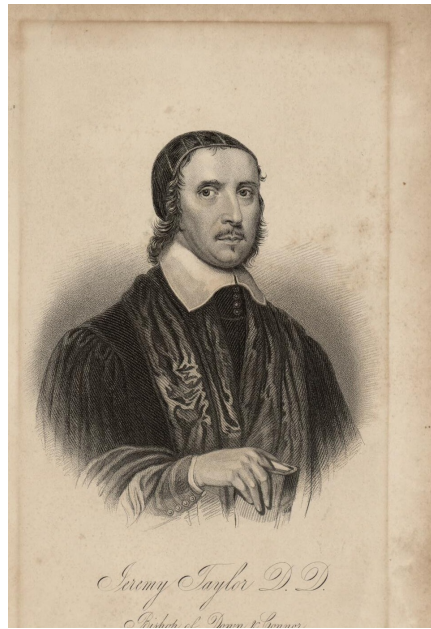
1602–1673

Independent, Westminster divine; expositor of Job.

Buying God's favor with works is the worst simony.

We read how dreadful the issue was to Simon Magus, when he offered money for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and yet those gifts were such as a man may have, and go to hell with them, for they were but gifts of miracles and of healing, and the like: but this gift, of the favor and love of God and pardon of sin, is such a gift as whosoever hath it is sure and safe for ever. And therefore (the gift being much more precious than that of Simon Magus) take heed of offering this kind of money for it, your works and doings. To do so is the worst simony in the world. 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)



JEREMY TAYLOR

1613–1667

Anglican divine; chaplain to Charles I.

Christ's command to give freely never expired.

Thus it was also in the first mission of the disciples 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, 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.

TAYLOR, DUCTOR DUBITANTIUM, 2.542; AMES, CONSCIENCE, 5.229



THOMAS MANTON

1620–1677

London Presbyterian; ejected in 1662.

Hypocrites pray and preach for esteem and gain.

Religion is one of the best commodities in [the hypocrite's] way of trade and commerce; therefore carnal men make ordinances to lackey upon their private ends; they pray and preach for esteem and gain to set off themselves; they use the holy things of God for some base ends of their own: 2 Cor. 2:17, “We are not of those that corrupt the word of God, καπηλεύοντες.” This is the true simony, to huck out the gospel, and sell our holy things.

MANTON, SERMONS UPON THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER, 13.456



BENJAMIN KEACH

1640–1704

Particular Baptist of Southwark; signatory of the 1689 confession.

The minister may not demand his portion, nor the church withhold it.

[The priests and Levites] 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. [...]

This may teach us two things. First, that Christ's servants ought to take heed they show all true and real zeal and love to Christ, when they undertake his work and service; and not to show such a servile and base spirit as to demand their portion that God has ordained for them, but leave it to the free-will offering of the people. Secondly, it may also teach churches to see they do neither withhold the ministers' portion from them, nor give it them grudgingly, or in an unbecoming manner, but to hand out to them what they need with due respect and honour, they being worthy of it, and are to receive it as their part and portion from God, and as they are his stewards and faithful labourers, by virtue of a divine and holy law.



THOMAS BOSTON

1676–1732

Minister of Ettrick; one of the Marrow men.

Taking a call for its stipend is simony.

Beware that thou close with no call upon the account of stipend. Lay that by when thou considerest the matter. See what clearness thou canst get from the Lord, when any call may be given thee, and walk according to his mind, and the mind of the church. [...] This is direct simony; selling the gift of God for money. 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.

BOSTON, A SOLILOQUY ON MAN-FISHING, 49; KEACH, THE GOSPEL MINISTER'S MAINTENANCE VINDICATED, 105–7