

PLAGIARISM IN THE SACRED SCIENCES: THREE IMPEDIMENTS TO INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

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Abstract

This article diagnoses the problem of plagiarism in academic books and articles in the disciplines of philosophy and theology. It identifies three impediments to institutional reform. They are: (1) a misplaced desire to preserve personal and institutional reputations; (2) a failure to recognize that attribution in academic writing admits of degrees; and (3) a disproportionate emphasis on the so-called “intention to plagiarize.” A detailed case study provides an illustration of the need for institutional reform in the post-publication processes in the disciplines of philosophy and theology.

Acts of plagiarism in published works of academic philosophy and theology are somewhat rare, but severe cases appear intermittently. Following the best practices set by the natural and biomedical sciences, conscientious editors and publishers in philosophy and theology issue authoritative public statements of retraction for plagiarism that disclose to readers that previously published works are unreliable. These retractions mitigate the harm inflicted upon the various victims of plagiarism, who include not only the genuine authors (whose works have been misappropriated), but also readers (who have engaged the plagiarizing works in good faith). Recent accounts of plagiarism suggest, however, that this remedy of retraction is underused for demonstrably plagiarizing works in philosophy and theology (Dougherty and Hochschild 2021; Dougherty 2018, 2020; Dougherty, Harsting, and Friedman 2009; Hansson 2008). Writing from the perspective of medical sciences, one researcher has warned that “we should be highly critical and suspicious of those journals and fields in which papers are retracted very rarely, if at all” (Fanelli 2013). On this yardstick, the sacred sciences do not fare well. The natural and biomedical sciences retract papers at a much higher rate (Lu, et al. 2013).

Despite being informed about severe plagiarism in books and articles published under their aegis, some editors and publishers in philosophy and theology fail to retract. When retractions for plagiarizing books and articles are not issued, the defective works continue to contaminate the body of published research in the sacred disciplines. This article provides an etiology of persistent inaction on the part of some editors and publishers, focusing on three principal causes. They are: (1) a misplaced desire to preserve personal and institutional reputations; (2) a general failure to recognize that attribution in academic writing admits of degrees; and (3) an unusual tendency to over emphasize the so-called “intention to plagiarize.” A case study illustrates the need for institutional reform in the post-publication processes in the sacred sciences of philosophy and theology.

(i) Three Impediments

1. Concerns about reputation

Researchers whose books and articles earn retractions for plagiarism do not have their academic reputations improved. Since a retraction, in effect, strips an article or book from a researcher’s publication

profile, this instrument is the “nuclear option” for editors and publishers (Oransky 2020, 142). In today’s academic environment, having publications is a necessary credential for success in academic institutions in all disciplines. Paweł Kapusta has emphasized that possessing publications “forms an essential part of being a professional theologian” and that “academic promotions and one’s own academic reputation are dependent on publications” (2008, 868). Even though a retracted work typically remains physically accessible to the academic community, the published retraction authoritatively changes the work’s status by declaring publicly that it is no longer to be considered reliable. Wishing to spare a plagiarizing researcher a set of unpleasant professional and personal consequences that a retraction might bring, an editor or book publisher might decide to forgo a retraction in a case of demonstrated plagiarism. Reputational concerns are the first major reason why some editors and publishers omit to issue retractions in cases of demonstrated plagiarism.

In choosing to protect the (unwarranted) reputation of an unexposed plagiarist as a genuine author, such editors and publishers privilege the private good of a plagiarist over the common good of academic readers. Unretracted plagiarizing works masquerade as authentic products of research, misallocating credit from genuine authors and introducing unnecessary duplications in the body of published research literature. There are secondary harmful effects that an unretracting editor or publisher may not envision. A plagiarist’s façade of research productivity puts genuine researchers at a disadvantage. Plagiarists may be selected over genuine researchers during competitive evaluations for promotions, research grants, job offers, raises, and other academic privileges. Publications are the coin of the realm in the academic economy, and plagiarists are like counterfeiters who profit at the expense of authentic researchers. In short, the failure of an editor to retract plagiarizing work has far-reaching consequences that introduce substantial inefficiencies in the larger system of academic research. The right to a good reputation is not absolute but delimited; both canonical jurisprudence and Catholic moral theology recognize that “sometimes truths that harm reputation should be communicated” (Grisez 1993, 402; see *Codex Juris Canonici* §220).

The credentialing function of academic publications extends beyond the specific academic domain. In an ecclesiastical context, for instance, unretracted plagiarizing publications may serve as the basis for undeserved elevations to leadership positions. In a political context, they can assist a candidate for public office, especially in Europe (Tudoroiu 2017; Ertl 2018).

Protecting the apparent good name of the plagiarist may not be the only reputational concern of an editor or publisher. Some journal editors, for example, may loathe issuing retractions for plagiarism, believing that doing so would also harm the reputation of the journal. On such an outlook, retractions are considered as embarrassing permanent markers of failures in the journal’s pre-publication peer-review vetting. In the natural and biomedical sciences, however, those journals with highest reputations (judged by the metric of impact factors) issue the most retractions (n. a. 2014). This fact should not be seen as paradoxical; rather than harming a journal’s reputation, the issuance of retractions manifests a journal’s commitment to publishing integrity. Retractions register that stewardship over publications does not cease at the moment of publication but continues indefinitely. The best journal editors and book publishers issue retractions for all published works found to be plagiarizing, even when considerable time has passed between publication and the discovery of plagiarism. As a side benefit to issuing retractions, potential plagiarists may be deterred from submitting unoriginal work to those journals and book publishers that have a consistent record of retracting plagiarizing work.

In short, misplaced reputational concerns—both for the plagiarist and publisher—do not justify inaction on the part of editors and publishers when academic works are revealed to be plagiarizing. The failure to retract in cases of demonstrated plagiarism is a serious professional omission with deleterious consequences to the larger system of academic research and beyond (Teixeira da Silva 2016). Since research malpractice has enduring aftereffects, a key obligation of publishers and editors is “to block the production of noise” produced by fraudulent research (Casati 2010, 198). The principal mechanism for addressing academic plagiarism is the issuance of retractions that restore integrity to the body of published research literature.

2. *Degrees of attribution*

Some editors and publishers justify inaction in severe cases of plagiarism by noting that the plagiarist has referenced the source text in an oblique way somewhere in the plagiarizing book or article. Such a view is the second major reason used by some editors to justify inaction in cases of demonstrated plagiarism. Those holding such a view fail to recognize that attribution admits of degrees. Some degrees of attribution in published works are so minimal that a designation of plagiarism is warranted. Typical operational definitions of plagiarism state that “precise” attribution to a source text is required to avoid plagiarism in academic writing. In other words, severely deficient attribution still constitutes plagiarism.

Contemporary research literature on plagiarism is unanimous on this point. Research integrity scholarship uses the term “Pawn Sacrifice Plagiarism” to designate instances where “the source citation is either given in a footnote or only listed in the bibliography” but the author has “not made clear, however, exactly how much has been taken” (Weber-Wulff 2014, 10; see Lahusen 2006). A variation of Pawn Sacrifice Plagiarism occurs when there is “a proper attribution of a sentence, but then the text copy continues on, copying the source for additional sentences or even paragraphs without making clear that this is the author of the source speaking and not the purported author” (Weber-Wulff 2014, 10). Attribution should never be viewed as dichotomous or binary; it admits of degrees, and some degrees of attribution are inadequate. Plagiarism in published academic texts occurs when there is insufficient attribution for a reader to know that the text being presented is unoriginal.

The most extreme cases of Pawn Sacrifice Plagiarism occur when a researcher copies large swaths of text, forgoes the standard forms of precise demarcation (e.g., quotation marks) and only provides an oblique reference to the source text (e.g., an single entry in a large bibliography). By failing to designate which portions of the text originate elsewhere, in a plain way that a standard reader can understand, the plagiarist generates the illusion of being the author of a text produced by someone else. Burying an oblique reference to the source text in an extensive bibliography, or crediting only a small portion of a text while taking other parts without credit, still qualifies as straightforward plagiarism according to standard (and uncontroversial) academic practice. Nevertheless, some editors in philosophy and theology appear to succumb to the temptation to ignore these norms, treating any mention of a source text, however minimal, as an impediment to issuing retractions for plagiarism. The failure to issue retractions for cases of this kind ensures that the plagiarizing works continue to exercise a corruptive influence on readers. Readers of such plagiarizing texts are unwittingly led to believe that they are being presented with original research, when they are in fact encountering the insights of a concealed genuine author through the proxy of the plagiarist’s text.

3. *The intention to plagiarize*

A third reason used by some editors and publishers to avoid retracting plagiarizing books and articles concerns intention. According to some editors and publishers, a mere defense by the plagiarist on the lines of “I did not intend to plagiarize” is sufficient to defuse a charge of plagiarism. Such a focus on intention is mistaken for at least two reasons. First, as many theorists have pointed out, identifying the precise intention of an author of record for a deficient text is most often impossible (Wager 2014: 37; Weber-Wulff 2014, 14). Second, and more importantly, intention is entirely irrelevant to whether or not the published work reliably credits the original authors whose words appear in it. Those who exercise the roles of editor and publisher should concern themselves exclusively with the reliability of what they publish, and not be distracted by inquiries into the murky hidden processes by which defective books and articles are produced. Among mainstream plagiarism theorists, “there seems to be a clear majority for understanding plagiarism in a way that does not presuppose intention” (Helgesson 2016, 2241). In other words, “plagiarism does not necessarily involve an intention to deceive” (Helgesson and Eriksson 2015, 94).

In the context of maintaining a reliable body of published research literature, the proposition “it is plagiarizing” is a descriptor of a publicly verifiable state of affairs concerning a deficient text; it is not a

conclusion resulting from a descent into the personal history of an author of record. There is no need for editors and publishers to conflate the two orders in their roles of maintaining a reliable body of published research literature. Editors and publishers need not make any moral evaluation of the author of record of a plagiarizing published book or article.

Although it is true that plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional, on either account all published plagiarizing texts corrupt the body of research literature and require correction as a remedy. With regard to the need to correct defective works for the good of the research community, the precise intention of the plagiarist is immaterial. Retractions for plagiarism have been issued for defective publications even when the author of record is incommunicado and no special access to intention is possible. Academic plagiarism is best treated as a strict liability offense: when publications in themselves are defective, the “presence or absence of a guilty mind (*mens rea*) is irrelevant to the need to correct the scholarly record” (Dougherty 2018, 12). A retraction is no less required in cases where the plagiarism is the culmination of a malicious intent to steal than in cases where the plagiarism is due to negligence, carelessness, or even ignorance of academic attribution standards. Published retractions need not be blunt instruments, as some are accompanied by apologies or explanations that contextualize how the defective texts came to be published.

(ii) Secrecy and Post-Publication Peer Review

When readers of academic books and articles in philosophy and theology discover that a text is a product of plagiarism, what should they do? On a traditional route, whistleblowers would contact the editors and publishers privately (Fox and Beall 2014). However, widespread patterns of inaction on the part of some editors and publishers have occasioned a lack of confidence in the traditional whistleblowing route that privileges secrecy and confidentiality (Dougherty 2018, 117–195). A recent article calling for editorial courage and diligence observes that “editors are in the unique position to facilitate post-publication error correction” yet nevertheless concludes that “many journal editors do not fulfill this responsibility” (Vorland et al. 2020). Partly in response to the crisis of editorial inaction in cases of fraudulent and otherwise unreliable published research, PubPeer was founded in 2012 as a post-publication review website. This online platform allows anonymized researchers to post publicly verifiable evidence of research misconduct and error for all to see, and the platform enables authors of record to respond publicly to the evidence. This transparent airing of suspected evidence of research misconduct and error has occasioned many retractions in the natural and biomedical sciences. In responding to objections, the scientists who co-founded PubPeer have countered that that transparent post-publication peer review supports vigilance, not vigilantism (Barbour and Stell 2020). Another forum for a public examination of evidence of research malpractice is Vroniplag Wiki, a platform for crowd-sourced documentation of plagiarism in European dissertations. Numerous European universities fail to withdraw the degrees of those who have submitted plagiarizing dissertations (Weber-Wulff 2014, 31–36, 94–107; Dannemann 2018; Dannemann and Weber-Wulff 2015).

In a recent article titled “The Scandal of Secrecy,” Peter Lah argues that “greater transparency leads to greater accountability which in turns strengthens citizen’s trust in institutions” (2020, 421). Writing about secrecy in an ecclesiastical context, Lah carefully proposes that a greater scandal occurs when individuals in the church learn about secrecy around sins or crimes committed by church representatives than when individuals learn about the commission of the sins or crimes themselves. Analogously, the fact that editors and publishers fail to correct demonstrated plagiarism may be more scandalous than the fact that some researchers are plagiarists. The former fact is likely more damaging to the confidence researchers have in the system of research dissemination. In the words of one theorist, “the most effective means of plagiarism abatement and enforcement is public disclosure and discussion of cases of misconduct” (Lewis et al. 2011, 493).

The appropriateness of transparent post-publication peer review, rather than secrecy, can be considered from the etymology of the term “publish.” To publish (*publicare*) is to make public: when researchers present their findings by publishing them in books and articles, they set them forth for the

scholarly community to examine. The choice to place one's work into the academic public arena is an implicit authorization by the author of record to have the claims and integrity of the work examined by colleagues. That is, to make something public is to invite scrutiny. The publication of a journal article or academic book is not some private or clandestine affair. Publication by its nature is a public mode of communication to the academic community at large. Pointing out to the scholarly community that an already-published (and therefore *publicized*) book or journal article is plagiarizing is not the academic equivalent of reading aloud someone's private diary or breaking a confidence; the author of record's very act of agreeing to publication places the book or journal article in the academic public sphere. To be silent when faced with a published plagiarizing text would be the academic equivalent of pretending to see the proverbial emperor's new clothes.

(iii) A Case Study

The preceding discussion identified and evaluated three principal impediments to institutional reform for handling plagiarism cases in the sacred sciences of philosophy and theology. They were: (1) a disproportionate commitment to preserving individual and institutional reputations; (2) a failure to recognize that attribution is not binary but admits of degrees; and (3) a misplaced emphasis on the intention of the author of record when evaluating whether to retract a plagiarizing book or article. Furthermore, the public and transparent evaluation of evidence of plagiarism was emphasized as a counter to the temptation to secrecy. A case study complements these theoretical considerations, demonstrating in practice the challenges of dealing with cases of suspected plagiarism in publications from the sacred sciences.

1. The background

In early 2020, a nine-page journal article was published in the annual Cistercian studies journal *Analecta Cisterciensia* that examined a 2004 monograph by then-Fr. Stephen Robson (Schachenmayr 2019). Appearing at the end of the issue, the brief article was authored by Cistercian priest and church historian Alkuin Schachenmayr. Taking the form of an extended book review, the article considered both the content and the early reception of Robson's massive 2004 monograph. Robson's book had analyzed, over the course of 514 pages, the spirituality of Bernard of Clairvaux as present in the medieval saint's vast corpus of Latin letters. First accepted in 2003 as a doctoral dissertation in spirituality at Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Robson's work also received distinction as a recipient of the Jesuit university's *Premio Bellarmino*, which designated it as one of the best of that year's dissertations. Thereafter in 2004 it was published as the monograph by the university's academic publishing house, at the time called Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, under the *Analecta Gregoriana* series imprint (Robson 2004).

In his short review article in *Analecta Cisterciensia*, Schachenmayr questioned the laudatory reception of Robson's study. He noted that despite being a prize-winning dissertation, the early *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the book version included a pair of somewhat negative reviews in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* and *The Heythrop Journal*. Reviewers there had found portions of the book to be superficial, off-putting, and labored. Schachenmayr acknowledged one positive review that appeared in *Gregorianum*, but he added that the reviewer failed to present the title of Robson's book accurately.

The emphasis of Schachenmayr's critique, however, concerned not the book's reception but its originality. Although never using the word "plagiarism" or any of its cognates in his article, Schachenmayr argued that select portions of the book suffered from inadequate attribution to source texts. Using tables, Schachenmayr provided six examples of passages that overlapped verbatim and near-verbatim with books authored by established experts on Cistercian history, including the Benedictine editor of St. Bernard's works, Jean Leclercq. Schachenmayr summarized his concerns by stating that "there seem to be dozens of passages in Robson's dissertation which are apparently identical or remarkably similar to texts published by other scholars, yet the author does not attribute these sources" (Schachenmayr 2019, 421). The review concluded by noting that Robson had stated in the book that it

was the product of the interdisciplinary methodology at the Institute of Spirituality, and Schachenmayr questioned “whether the jury responsible for awards of excellence at the Gregorian succeeded in identifying one of the institution’s best dissertations of 2003” (Schachenmayr 2019, 428).

The review article in *Analecta Cisterciensia* is an example of public post-publication peer review, where evidence of suspected weaknesses in an item of published scholarship is presented to the relevant sector of the scholarly community in a publication. Although less common in the sacred sciences, examples of articles this kind exist in other disciplines. Since *Analecta Cisterciensia* is a well-established journal devoted to Cistercian studies, Schachenmayr’s findings were certain to reach researchers in the relevant subfield of historical theology.

2. In the public view

Schachenmayr’s short review article would likely have garnered the attention only of specialists in Cistercian studies but for one development. The author of record of the 2004 book, then-Fr. Robson, a former private secretary to Scottish Cardinal Keith O’Brien, was elevated to the episcopacy in 2012. Then in January 2014, he was installed as the Bishop of Dunkeld, Scotland, where he currently serves. The notion that Bishop Robson’s highest academic credential from the pontifical Jesuit university in Rome was being questioned made the news in the Catholic press.

On 15 January 2020, *Catholic News Agency* first published a story with the headline “Scotland’s Bishop Robson Accused of Plagiarism in Dissertation” (Flynn 2020a). Authored by JD Flynn, a canon lawyer and at the time the editor-in-chief of CNA, the story was re-issued within a day in other Catholic news venues, including *Catholic Herald* and *Catholic World Report*. Flynn’s story summarized the main points of Schachenmayr’s short article, but also included key responses by Robson, quoting the Bishop of Dunkeld as saying:

- “[T]here was never any intention to deceive or plagiarise.”
- “I am happy for the Gregorian to nullify my text if they think fit.”
- “The studies were never really important to me – simply a means to spending what would have been otherwise an uncomfortable few years in the heat of Rome.”

In his early response to the press, Bishop Robson emphasized the absence of any intention to commit plagiarism or to deceive others in his studies. Schachenmayr apparently made no statements to the press.

Two days later on 17 January 2020, the press office of Pontificia Università Gregoriana released a statement in Italian explaining that the university had become aware of an accusation of plagiarism concerning Robson’s 2003 dissertation and the 2004 version as the published monograph. It declared that because the university “considera il plagio una infrazione molto grave all’etica,” academic authorities had decided to proceed with a careful review following the “Norme di etica universitaria” (Ufficio Comunicazione e Stampa 2020a). This announcement created another cycle of newspaper reporting about the claims in Schachenmayr’s short article (Flynn 2020b).

Six weeks later, on 2 March 2020, the university issued a second press release, this time in English, titled, “On the Accusation of Plagiarism against Bishop Stephen Robson.” The document explained that a commission consisting of two patristic scholars and a medievalist had conducted an examination of both Robson’s dissertation and Schachenmayr’s article in *Analecta Cisterciensia*. Upon completing its work, the commission “unanimously decided that the dissertation of Bishop Stephen Robson did not include plagiarized material, and therefore no sanctions of any kind were required” (Ufficio Comunicazione e Stampa 2020b). In order to “to defend the good name and reputation of the accused” this conclusion of the commission would be communicated to various parties.

The press release summarized the findings of the commission in four points, noting that that (1) the material indicated in Schachenmayr’s article pertained more to the marginal elements of the dissertation rather than its central elements; (2) the source texts were listed in the bibliography and in footnotes; (3) Robson had used different editions than those indicated by Schachenmayr; and (4) the

single instance of a text from an unreferenced book “may have been a simple usage of text remembered verbatim” (Ufficio Comunicazione e Stampa 2020b).

The Catholic press quickly reported that Robson had been cleared of charges of plagiarism. In an article from *Catholic News Agency*, Flynn published a story with the title, “Gregorian University Clears Scottish Bishop Accused of Plagiarism” (Flynn 2020c). Another story appeared in *The Scottish Catholic Observer* with the headline “Plagiarism Claim Found False to Bishop’s Relief.” That reporting carried a statement from a spokesperson for the Church in Scotland that expressed, “Bishop Robson welcomes the decision and extends his thanks to the Gregorian University for conducting such a thorough investigation” (Ryan and McDougall 2020).

3. *The central elements*

With the documents of the case now in the academic public arena, a measured assessment of the situation is possible. These documents consist of (1) Robson’s 2004 monograph published by Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana; (2) Schachenmayr’s article in *Analecta Cisterciensia*; and (3) the commission’s findings promulgated in the press release of 2 March 2020.

The first point emphasized in the press release exculpating Robson of plagiarism introduced a distinction between “central elements” and the “marginal elements,” suggesting that alleged defects in Robson’s writing pertained only to the latter (Ufficio Comunicazione e Stampa 2020b). Since Robson’s book professes to be an original analysis of the epistolary corpus of Bernard of Clairvaux, it seems that an analysis of Bernard’s letters would fall under the “central” portions of a book that is subtitled “The Prophetic-Reforming Spirituality of Bernard of Clairvaux as Evidenced Particularly in His Letters.” Major portions of the 2004 monograph follow the format of presenting short extracts from Bernard’s letters interspersed with analysis, exegesis, and historical positioning. That is, many of the 514 pages of the book follow the structure of:

Commentary
Letter extract
Commentary
Letter extract
[...]

A typical academic analysis of the epistolary corpus of a major historical figure would likely employ some variation of this technique. Robson presents short extracts in English translation selected from Bernard’s massive body of letters and intersperses these extracts with commentary.

The problem, in the view of this author, is that much of *Robson’s selection, presentation, and analysis of Bernard’s letters has appeared in print in earlier works by authors who are not Robson*. This point seems to have been missed by those bearing an institutional relationship to Pontificia Università Gregoriana: first by Robson’s dissertation advisor and his reader, then by the 2003 committee for selecting the *Premio Bellarmino*, followed by the 2004 editorial staff at Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, and most recently, by the 2020 investigating commission. To outside observers, free from an institutional relationship to Pontificia Università Gregoriana, something seems to have gone awry.

An example of the monograph’s approach to Bernard’s letters can be found in a section of the third chapter of monograph, entitled, “Bernard’s Emerging Theology of Papal Ministry as Evidenced First in His Letters.” The right column of Table 1 presents a selection of Robson’s text. The left column presents a text from an 1983 article by Fr. Richard Ver Bust, published more than 2 decades prior to the publication of Robson’s monograph and titled “Papal Ministry: A Source of Theology, Bernard of Clairvaux’s Letters” (Ver Bust 1983). Both the 2004 book and the 1983 article exhibit the above-mentioned repeated pattern of commentary / letter extract / commentary / letter extract, etc.

Table 1 The Papal Ministry in Bernard's Letters

Robson 2004: 208-210	Ver Bust 1983: 57-59
<p>In Ep 49, again to Honorius, Bernard employs the scriptural image of the Church as Bride and refers to the Pope as guardian of the Bride and friend of the Bridegroom: (...) <u>We who are compelled, by reason of our sins to shelter in monasteries, pray without ceasing for you and for the Church committed to your care, rejoicing with the bride over such a faithful guardian, and with the friend of the Bridegroom over such fruitful labour (...)</u>⁸² Here, Bernard recognises that the Pope's function involves guardianship. Later, in 1134, in a letter to Pope Innocent II Bernard borrows ideas from the Old Testament about the need to care for orphans and widows. The care of the poor and marginalised, once the task of the King in Israel, has now passed to the Church, especially to the ministry of the Pope. Bernard wrote: <u>(...) For how long will the misery of the Church in Orleans appeal in vain to the heart of the father of orphans and the judge of widows? (...)</u>⁸³ In another letter to Innocent, Ep.158⁸⁴, dated August 1133, Bernard asks that the Pope be an effective judge. The judgements of the Pope, according to Bernard, would frequently have exemplary value and therefore would have a broader and more far-reaching effect than simply the application of the law to a particular case. In other words, Bernard realised the potential power and authority of these judgements and wanted the Pope himself to realise their influence in the universal Church. In Ep. 318 from 1139/1140, Bernard writes to Innocent again advising him to minister by healing: <u>'What remains but that the apostolic hand be held out to that afflicted Church and so apply to her wounds remedies and fomentations'</u>⁸⁵ Bernard clearly here describes a particular function of the Pope as unifier, and as such a healer of the divisions within the Church. However Bernard also recognises in Ep.198 dating from 1141, that the Pope has supreme authority within the Church: <u>(...) It is clearly one of the privileges of the Apostolic See that, in the last resource, men should have recourse to your supreme authority. Indeed it is the rescue of the poor man from clutches of the strong which among all the other notable marks of your primacy, has rendered yours a glorious apostolate (...)</u>⁸⁶ This authority must therefore be exercised for a cause, and in Bernard's eyes that cause is service. Bernard calls this service a mark of primacy, tying supreme authority and primacy to the ministry of service [...].</p> <p>⁸² Bernard, Ep. 49 (p. 140, lines 9-11) [...] (Tr. Ep. James, pp. 77-78).</p> <p>⁸³ See: Bernard, Ep. 156 [...] p. 363 [...].</p> <p>⁸⁴ See: Bernard, Ep. 158 [...] pp. 365-367 [...].</p> <p>⁸⁵ Bernard, Ep. 318 [...] p. 251 [...].</p> <p>⁸⁶ Bernard, Ep.198, 2 [...] p. 55 [...].</p>	<p>in another letter (49), when in writing Honorius he used the scriptural image of the Church as Bride and referred to the pope as the guardian of the Bride and friend to the Bridegroom: <u>We, who live in monasteries, compelled to be there because of our sins, constantly pray for you and for the Church of God committed to you, and we rejoice with both the Bride of the Lord about such faithful care and with the friend of the Bridegroom about such fruitful work.</u>³ [...] Bernard recognized that the pope's function was that of guardianship [...]. Later, in a letter to Pope Innocent II (156), Bernard [...] borrowed from the Old Testament [...] about the need to care for widows and orphans. The care of these people had once been the task of the king in Israel and now it had passed to the Church, especially to the person of the pope. Bernard wrote, <u>'How long will the misery of the Church of Orleans strike in vain the entrails of the Father of Orphans and the Judge of Widows?'</u>⁴ In another letter (158), Pope Innocent was asked by Bernard to be an effective judge. The judgments of the pope, as the pope should realize, Bernard admonished, would frequently set precedent and therefore have much broader and far-reaching effects than application to the particular case [...].⁵ Bernard indicated that he knew the potential power and authority of these judgments and wanted the pope to realize their influence in the universal church. In a letter written to Pope Innocent about 1139 he asked the Pope to minister by healing. <u>'What therefore remains except that the apostolic hand be held out to the injured Church, applying to her wounds healing care and politics?'</u>⁶ In this letter (318) Bernard clearly described a particular function of the pope as a unifier and as such a healer of divisions within the Church of God. [...] Bernard also expressed his understanding that the pope had supreme authority within the Church when he wrote: <u>It clearly stands out as one of the privileges of the Apostolic See that, in the last resort, we look to your most powerful, supreme authority and fullness of power. Indeed when you rescue the poor man from the hand of the strong, it is a singular mark of your primacy, making it noble and illustrious and giving renown to your apostolate.</u>⁹ This authority therefore must be exercised for a cause, in Bernard's view, and that cause was service. The abbot expanded the theology of previous letters and called service a mark of primacy, tying supreme authority and primacy to the ministry of service.</p> <p>3. Letter 49; 140 [...].</p> <p>4. Letter 156; 363 [...].</p> <p>5. Letter 158; 363. This letter dates from about 1133 [...].</p> <p>6. Letter 318; 251 [...].</p> <p>9. Letter 198; 54-55 [...].</p>

The difficulty is that Robson's analysis is very close to Ver Bust's. To display the similarities between both accounts, the verbatim identity between the two texts is highlighted in grey, and the identical extracts from Bernard's letters are underlined. The extracts of the letters are the same, except that Ver Bust has provided his original translation while Robson has inserted the 1953 English translation by Bruno James.

Admittedly there are some minor differences between the version of Ver Bust and the later version by Robson. Robson's version apparently condenses some of Ver Bust's commentary, yet significant identical verbatim strings of up to 15 consecutive words are still shared. What is not verbatim

is still very close to verbatim. Ver Bust's past tense verbs are rendered in the historical present in Robson's text (e.g., "referred" becomes "refers"); there are minor changes in propositions (e.g., "to" becomes "of"); some definite and indefinite articles have been inserted (e.g., "the", "a"); and new capitalization appears in the 2004 version (e.g., "Pope" instead of "pope"). Additionally, there is a change from passive to active: "Pope Innocent was asked by Bernard" becomes "Bernard asks that the Pope."

Ver Bust and Robson, working about 20 year apart, have managed to extract the same lines, of the same letters, from Bernard's vast literary corpus consisting of over 500 letters, many of them quite lengthy. Exhibiting that such textual parallels are not anomalous, Table 2 presents Robson's account of Bernard's Letter 238.

Table 2 An Account of Bernard's Letter 238

Robson 2004: 210-211	Ver Bust 1983: 59-60
<p>Finally in his Ep. 238 to Eugenius III dating from March 1145, Bernard returned to his familiar imagery of the friend of the Bridegroom. But he also added a new dimension, a concern that the Pope was to have no sense of having control over, or rather, ownership of the Church: (...) <u>It only remains for the bride of the Lord who has been thus entrusted to you, to benefit by the change and be called no longer 'Sarai' but 'Sarah'. Understand what I say, for the Lord has given you understanding. If you are a friend of the Bridegroom you should say not 'his beloved is my princess' but 'his beloved is a princess', claiming for yourself nothing of what is hers, save only the privilege of dying for her if necessary (...)</u>⁸⁸. Bernard thus informs the Pope's conscience, rejecting the idea that Eugene could speak of the Church as 'my princess'. Here more clearly than ever before Bernard wrote of the service that was part of the ministry of the Pope.⁸⁹ For Bernard, a helper is one who aids and cares for another. Quoting Peter, Bernard says: «(...) <u>Let the heir of Peter be able to say with Peter: 'We are come not to lord it over the household of God, but to be an example to the flock' (...)</u>⁹⁰. Since Bernard here places 'lord' and 'example' in contrast, Eugene was to be not a 'lord', but an 'example' in imitation of Peter. The letters of Bernard to the Popes he had known, then, were written in response to particular historical situations and were often an emotional reaction to that situation. [...] Thus, while Bernard shows he was aware of emerging 'post-Gregorian' thought regarding the papal ministry, he remains basically conservative. His letters contain many of the ideas that he was able to develop more deeply in <i>De consideratione ad Eugenium Papam</i>. But the patterns which begin to emerge in the letters are important to an understanding of the more theoretical <i>De consideratione</i>, while, in a sense, the letters represent the practice.</p> <p>⁸⁸ Bernard, Ep. 238 [...] p. 116 [...] (Tr. Ep. James, pp. 277-278).</p> <p>⁸⁹ Bernard, Ep. 238 (line 21); «(...) <u>Si Christus te misit, aestimabis te non ministrari, sed ministrare</u> (Mt 20, 28). (...)»; also Ep. 238 (lines 23-24); «(...) <u>Non quia dominamur fidei vestrae, sed adiutores sumus gaudii vestri</u> (2 Cor 1, 23) (...)».</p> <p>⁹⁰ Bernard, Ep. 238 (lines 24-25) [...].</p>	<p>Finally, in a letter to Pope Eugene III (238), Bernard returned to his familiar imagery of the friend of the Bridegroom. But he also added a new dimension, a concern that there be no sense of control or, rather, ownership. <u>It remains, that since this change has happened to you that she [the Bride of the Lord] who has been entrusted to you, benefit for the better and no longer be called Sarai but Sarah. Know what I say: The Lord gives you understanding. If you are a friend of the Bridegroom, then you should not call his beloved my princess but a princess, claiming nothing of her as yours, rather, if necessary, to give up your life for her.</u>¹¹ [...] Bernard did not allow for ownership, rejecting the idea that Eugene could speak of <i>my</i> princess. More clearly than ever before, he wrote of the service that was part of the ministry of the pope: <u>'If Christ sends you, then you should remember that you are not to be ministered to but have come to minister'</u>.¹² [...] <u>"We come not that we should rule over your faith but because we are helpers of your joy."</u>¹³ [...] A helper is one who aids and cares for another. Bernard, continuing in this same context but now quoting Peter, wrote: <u>'Let the heir of Peter say with Peter: "not dominating the household of God, but being an example for the flock of God"</u>'.¹⁴ Lord and example are placed in contrast. In imitation of Peter, Eugene was to be not a lord, but an example. [...] The letters of Bernard were written for a specific historical situation and were often an emotional reaction to that situation. [...] While Bernard shows he was aware of emerging thought he remains basically conservative. [...] The letters of Bernard contain many of the ideas which he was able to develop more extensively in <i>De consideratione</i> [...]. The patterns which began to emerge in the letters are important to an understanding of the more theoretical <i>De consideratione</i>, which, in a sense, the letters represent his practice.</p> <p>11. Letter 238; 116-117. 12. Letter 238; 116-117. 13. Letter 238; 116-117. 14. Letter 238; 116-117.</p>

This time parallel strings of words include up to 22 verbatim words. Portions that are not verbatim are near verbatim, with obvious synonym parallels (e.g., "extensively" becomes "deeply"). There is no historical, intellectual, analytical content in Robson's account here that is not already found in Ver Bust's

article. Again, the same extracts from Bernard are in both texts, but in the version by Robson they are given in James’s translation or presented in Latin rather than in Ver Bust’s original translation. There are some minor differences, but even these might suggest a dependency of the later text upon the earlier. At the beginning of the respective passages, Ver Bust refers to the pope in the anglicized rendering of “Eugene III,” but Robson uses the Latin “Eugenius III.” Halfway through the passage, however, Robson curiously resorts back to the anglicized rendering of “Eugene” used by Ver Bust.

A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 show that the respective analyses of Bernard’s letters on the theology of papal ministry are substantively identical. The theoretical exposition of the letters, down to the selection of the portions of certain letters from Bernard’s extensive epistolary corpus, is the same. Even the order of the extracts is the same. There are no quotation marks around the verbatim passages of Robson’s analysis that correspond to the analysis of Ver Bust. One must press the matter and ask wherein lies the originality of Robson’s account here. The major difference between the passages lies primarily in the substitution of James’s translation of the extracts of Bernard’s letters for the translation given by Ver Bust.

It is crucial to consider how Ver Bust’s 1983 article is represented in the 2004 monograph. There is no reference to it in the main body of the book nor in the footnotes. Only 275 pages later, as one entry in an extensive bibliography of 68 pages, does one find a listing for the apparent source text. Ver Bust’s name is rendered as “Verbust” and the title of the article is rendered incorrectly. To this author, it does not seem reasonable to conclude that a single, misnamed and mistitled bibliographical entry, buried 275 pages away in the back matter of the book, counts as attribution for the apparent undocumented interpolation of Ver Bust’s article to constitute the bulk of the body of pages 207–211 of Robson’s monograph.

To an unsuspecting reader, it looks like Robson has made a judicious analysis of Bernard’s letters, identifying those few (from several hundred) which pertain to the papacy, and then furthermore selecting from those letters certain key passages, arranging them in an order, and then interspersing an original commentary between the extracts. But the identification and selection of letters, along with the analysis, is substantially that of Van Bust’s from the 1983 article.

The apparent overlap with Ver Bust’s original research on Bernard’s letters is not an outlier. The most extensive overlap between Robson’s textual analysis of Bernard’s letters and the work of others is not with Ver Bust’s published research, but with a much older publication by Ailbe J. Luddy. A Cistercian priest, Luddy first published his *Life and Teaching of St. Bernard* in 1927, with a final reprinting in 1950 (Luddy 1950). The size of Luddy’s 774-page volume is due in no small part to the inclusion of translations of many of Bernard’s letters, which he situates seamlessly in his account, providing historical, textual, and theological analyses of them throughout the book. Table 3 displays how Robson and Luddy treat Bernard’s Letter 342.

Table 3 An Account of Bernard’s Letter 342

Robson 2004: 218-220	Luddy 1927 [1950]: 445-448
<p>Archbishop of Bordeaux had incurred the King’s displeasure by consecrating Grimouard in Angoulême without waiting for the customary royal Investiture [...]. Instead of addressing the King directly, Bernard wrote to the King’s chief counsellor Joscelin, Bishop of Soissons: [...] <u>If things should get difficult for him, he will have no lack of supporters in his trouble. See therefore, that no one pours oil upon the flames of the King’s wrath, but that it is extinguished before it has time to grow.</u> [...] ¹⁵ Bernard’s challenge succeeded. Louis was reconciled with the Archbishop and subsequently granted the temporalities of the See to the Bishop of Poitiers. But more serious trouble soon threatened the Church-State relationship. When the archiepiscopal See of Bourges became vacant on the death of Archbishop Alberic, the King proposed a favourite of his own, Cadurc, a relative of Cardinal Haimerich of the Roman Curia. Louis subsequently</p>	<p>archbishop of Bordeaux who had incurred the king’s displeasure by consecrating Grimouard, the new bishop of Poitiers, without awaiting the royal investiture [...]. Instead of addressing the king directly, Bernard wrote to his chief counsellor, Joscelin, bishop of Soissons. [...] <u>Should trouble arise, there will be many to espouse the cause. Beware then of adding fuel to the flame. Rather see to it that the fire be put out before it becomes a conflagration</u> [...]. The holy abbot’s intercession succeeded. Louis was reconciled with the archbishop and granted investiture to the bishop of Poitiers. But a more serious trouble soon began. The archiepiscopal see of Bourges becoming vacant, the king proposed a favourite of his own, named Cadurc, [...] a relative of Cardinal Haimeric’s; otherwise the election was free. In spite of</p>

<p>declared the election to be free. However, in spite of the royal veto, the Canons of the chapter of Bourges chose Pierre de la Châtre as Archbishop. Archbishop Pierre was subsequently consecrated in Rome by Innocent II himself and sent back to France with the apostolic mandate to take possession of his See. In addition, to punish the ambition of Cadurc, Innocent declared him incapable of holding any ecclesiastical benefice. Louis retaliated by publicly and solemnly forbidding the new Archbishop to enter Bourges, whereupon Innocent placed under interdict every city and town, village and palace in which the King might choose to live¹¹⁶. [...] Louis then made into a <i>casus belli</i>. Another event occurring at about the same time helped to complicate matters still further. Count Ralph of Vermandois [...] married Petronilla, sister to Eleanor of Aquitaine [...] Bernard promptly denounced this second marriage as a mockery¹²⁰. A Council held at Lagny on 20th June 1142 under the presidency of Cardinal Ivo, Papal Legate in France, declared the first marriage valid, ordered Ralph and Petronilla to separate [...]. Refusing to separate, Ralph and Petronilla were both excommunicated, and Ralph's territory was placed under interdict [...]. Louis offered to restore to Theobald the territory he had conquered and to withdraw his troops. However, all this was contingent on the condition that Theobald would endeavour through Bernard to have all ecclesiastical penalties removed from Louis' friends, Ralph and Petronilla. The count agreed [...].</p>	<p>the royal veto, the canons made choice of de la Châtre, who was consecrated at Rome by Innocent himself. And to punish the ambition of the king's candidate, the pontiff declared him incapable of holding any ecclesiastical benefice. Louis retaliated by forbidding the new archbishop to enter Bourges, whereupon Innocent placed under interdict every city and town, village and mansion in which the monarch might choose to dwell. Another event occurring at the same time helped to complicate matters still further. Count Ralph of Vermandois [...] married Petronilla, sister to the queen. Bernard promptly denounced the second marriage as a mockery and appealed to the pope. A council held at Lagny, under the presidency of Cardinal Ivo, papal legate in France, having declared the first marriage valid, ordered Count Ralph and Petronilla to separate. Refusing to do this, they were both excommunicated, and the count's territory placed under interdict [...]. This Louis made a <i>casus belli</i>. [...] He offered to restore to Theobald the territory he had conquered and to withdraw his troops, on the condition that the count gave a promise under oath that he would endeavor, through the Abbot of Clairvaux, to have all ecclesiastical penalties removed with the least possible delay from his friends, Ralph and Petronilla. The count agreed.</p>
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Although strewn across a few pages, the parallels between Robson and Luddy are extensive. There are some synonym substitutions (e.g., “palace” replaces “mansion”; “king” replaces “monarch”; and “live” replaces “dwell”). The hagiographical language in Luddy’s version is downgraded, as “the holy abbot” is paralleled by the more neutral term “Bernard” in Robson’s version. Luddy presents the entire letter from Bernard to the Bishop of Soissons, and Robson only presents an extract. Also, a line about a *casus belli* is moved to modify a different portion of the event. Verbatim strings of words of up to 18 words are common to both versions. Again, the translation by Bruno James has replaced the translation found in the apparent source text.

The content of the passages in Table 3 is primarily historical in nature. One may ask whether plagiarism is possible in historical writing, since presumably facts of history do not change. In considering this question, one theorist had argued that although one “must of necessity adhere to an accurate chronology of events, nothing compels a specific selection of facts, quotations, or vocabulary” (Anderson 2011, 119). One must consider also how Luddy’s book is represented in Robson’s 2004 monograph. Apart from being listed in the bibliography, it only receives a single mention in the body of Robson’s monograph, occurring as the 9th entry in a footnote that lists ten “standard monographs” on the “biographical history of Bernard” (Robson 2004, 75, with n. 2).

In light of the representative text parallels displayed in Tables 1–3, it would seem that to be in accord with the first finding of the 2020 commission of the Pontificia Università Gregoriana, one would need to conclude that the exposition of Bernard’s letters does not pertain to the central elements of the monograph. Another possibility, however, is that apparent inclusion of works by authors such as Ver Bust and Luddy in the 2004 monograph was unknown to the 2020 commission.

4. Bibliographical completeness

The second point emphasized by the 2020 investigating commission pertained to the exhaustiveness of citations and bibliographical entries in Robson’s monograph. The commission stated that texts identified by Schachenmayr “were, in fact, cited in the Bibliography and in footnotes” (Ufficio Comunicazione e Stampa 2020b). In one sense this is true; mention of the source texts discussed in five of the six of the tables in the *Analecta Cisterciensia* article did appear somewhere in Robson’s monograph, even though

they did not appear in immediate proximity with the passages discussed by Schachenmayr. Schachenmayr, however, indicated that his examples were not exhaustive but representative, having stated that “dozens” of unattributed passages taken from the work of earlier scholars were to be found in Robson’s book (Schachenmayr 2019, 421). In truth, it is not difficult to find instances of the kind suggested by Schachenmayr. One can consider, for example, Robson’s account of the textual editions of the *Ecclesiastica Officia* (EO). The text appears to overlap closely with the beginning of a 1999 article in *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* by Trappist priest Martinus Cawley (Cawley 1999). Table 4 presents the parallel.

Table 4 The History and Editions of *Ecclesiastica Officia*

Robson 2004: 143	Cawley 1999: 3
<p>[...] EO, as a major part of the corpus of Cistercian liturgical books standardised in 1184-1186²⁷² [...].</p> <p>²⁷² The Latin text of EO is available in the folio-sized <i>Nomasticon Cisterciense</i>, issued by Solesmes in 1892, and in the Latin/French edition of <i>Documentation Cistercienne</i> (see fn 240, p.116 vide supra). Both editions reproduce the text of the standard manuscript of 1184-86. The 1989 edition includes a vast critical apparatus, which offers access to earlier manuscripts and the possibility of reconstructing more primitive redactions such as would have been familiar to Stephen Harding (+ 1134) and Bernard (+ 1153).</p>	<p>[...] (EO), a major part of the corpus of Cistercian liturgical books standardized in 1184-86 [...]. The Latin text of EO is readily available in the folio-sized <i>Nomasticon Cisterciense</i>, put out by Solesmes in 1892,³ or in a splendid Latin-French edition, put out by <i>La Documentation Cistercienne</i> in 1989. Both of these editions reproduce the text of that famous standard manuscript of 1184-86, currently preserved in the Municipal Library of Dijon. The 1989 edition, however, adds a vast apparatus that offers access to earlier manuscripts and the possibility of reconstructing more primitive redactions, such as might have been familiar to Saint Stephen († 1134) or Saint Bernard († 1153).</p>

There are some minor differences (e.g., “might” becomes “would” and dagger symbols (†) become crosses or plus signs (+). Cawley’s article from *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* is not mentioned anywhere in Robson’s book: neither in the main body of the text, nor the footnotes, nor in the bibliography. The subject matter of the passages in Table 4 concerns how the early Cistercian liturgical books came to be regularized in the 12th century, complemented with a description of the principal differences between the 19th and 20th century Latin editions of *Ecclesiastica Officia*. Presenting this information can be helpful to readers and would evidence a personal facility with primary Cistercian liturgical documents. The passage, however, seems to be unoriginal to Robson’s monograph.

A different class of apparently undocumented source texts for portions of the 2004 monograph follows an unusual pattern and deserves mention and explanation. On several occasions throughout the book, passages that appear to be Robson’s original summaries of specialist books in medieval studies in fact overlap closely with catalogue copy from the relevant book publisher. That is, the promotional description of a book that accompanies a publisher’s advertisement, and sometimes appears on the dust jacket of a book, shows up in the main text of Robson’s monograph as if it were an original scholarly evaluation of the book. Table 5 presents a typical example of this phenomenon. The passage in the right column is the Stanford University Press catalogue copy for Martha G. Newman’s 1996 monograph, *The Boundaries of Charity* (Newman 1996). This official book description appears in various library catalogues and indexing services, as well as on the pages of online booksellers (including Amazon.com). The left column displays that this same passage, as is present in Robson’s book. It is not quoted as the publisher’s book description, but appears as Robson’s own original academic synthesis of Newman’s 387-page scholarly study.

Table 5 Stanford University Press Catalogue Copy for Newman 1996

Robson 2004: 190-191	Stanford University Press catalogue copy
<p>M.G. Newman in her recent study has explored how twelfth century Cistercian monks maintained their tradition of social withdrawal yet played a pivotal political role in the world outside their monasteries¹⁹. She also argues that the Cistercians’ political behaviour was neither a betrayal of their monastic ideals nor</p>	<p>This work explores how twelfth-century Cistercian monks maintained their tradition of social withdrawal yet played a pivotal political role in the world outside their monasteries. It argues that the Cistercians’ political behavior was neither a betrayal of their monastic ideal</p>

evidence of some inherent Cistercian paradox, but that their public involvement grew out of their conception of monastic life, notably the cluster of ideas associated with Christian love or <i>caritas</i> .	nor evidence of some inherent Cistercian paradox, but that such public involvement grew out of the monks' conception of their monastic life, notably the cluster of ideas associated with Christian love, or <i>caritas</i> .
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¹⁹ See: M.G. Newman, *The Boundaries of Charity*..., pp. 19f.

To the reader it appears that Robson is presenting his own scholarly digest of Newman's book, yet the differences with the catalogue copy are superficial. In Robson's version of there is a footnote to page 19 of Newman's book, but that note is largely irrelevant insofar as it does not identify the apparent source text for the words, which is the catalogue copy by the publisher.

Other notable instances of this phenomenon include the verbatim and near-verbatim overlap of pages 164–165 of Robson's book and Princeton University Press's catalogue copy for Conrad Rudolph's 1997 monograph, *Violence and Daily Life* (Rudolph 1997). Another instance involves Brill's catalogue copy for Mary Stroll's 1987 book, *The Jewish Pope: Ideology and Politics in the Papal Schism of 1130*, and Robson's account of the book on page 203 (Stroll 1987). A trusting reader of Robson's monograph, seeing that Robson begins the text there with *pluralis majestatis*, will take the "As we have said" to be introducing Robson's own scholarly account of Stroll's book, and not presenting text that overlaps substantially with catalogue copy from Brill (Robson 2004, 203).

5. Attribution

The 2020 commission and Schachenmayr appear to hold divergent positions on the relevance of "pawn sacrifice" in the 2004 monograph. Schachenmayr referenced the ubiquity of pawn sacrifice in Robson's work, and his examples, though presented as representative, were selective. The key issue of pawn sacrifice plagiarism is that there is some mention of the source somewhere, but it is insufficiently particular to allow the reader to know the presented text is unoriginal and copies from that source.

Table 6 presents a passage from the fourth chapter of Robson's monograph, alongside the apparent source text, which is an entry from *Dictionary of the Bible*, a massive encyclopedia-style solo-authored volume by Jesuit John L. McKenzie (McKenzie 1972). The subject matter under discussion is the act of Phinehas, an Israelite who killed two people engaged in pagan sexual rites as described in the 25th chapter of Numbers.

Table 6 Suspected Pawn Sacrifice (Example 1)

Robson 2004: 320, n. 24	McKenzie 1995: 674, col. b
Phinees was celebrated for his zeal; when an Israelite was having intercourse with a Midianite woman according to the rites of the god Baal Peor, Phinees killed them both with the thrust of a spear in the genital organs. For this demonstration of zeal he was promised an abiding priesthood [...]. This story validated the claim of the house of Phinees (See Ps 106, 30)	Phinehas was celebrated for his zeal; when an Israelite was having intercourse with a Midianite woman in the rites of Baal Peor, Phinehas killed them both with a single thrust of a spear in the genital organs (Nm 25: 17-11). For this he was promised an abiding priesthood. [...] this story validated the claim of the house of Phinehas; cf also Ps 106:30.

McKenzie's book consists of over 2000 entries spread across 954 double-columned pages, and the apparent source text for this passage in Robson's book is from the entry titled "Phinehas" that occurs on the second column of page 674. Will an average reader, or above-average one, be able to identify that the passage as it appears in Robson's book overlaps with an entry in buried in McKenzie's dictionary? The source text is mentioned in the back matter of the book, over 90 pages away, but the omission of quotation marks around the verbatim portions of the passage, and the lack of a footnote citation, will lead the trusting reading to believe that the words are original to Robson's book.

Perhaps someone might downplay the significance of the overlap displayed in Table 6 by pointing out that the passage in Robson's book occurs in a footnote and not in the main text. Table 7 offers an example of overlap between a portion of the main text and a different source text that again is only mentioned in the bibliography. It represents a typical example of Robson's apparent borrowing from previously published studies to discuss the historical context of Bernard's letters.

Table 7 Suspected Pawn Sacrifice (Example 2)

Robson 2004: 265	Richardson and Sales 1963: 288, 289
<p>It would therefore be legitimate for us to ask what meaning is to be given to the words in his so-called Second Charter, by which Stephen granted and confirmed to ecclesiastics and all clerics that they and their possessions should be subject to the justice and the jurisdiction of the Bishops and that control over ecclesiastical offices should be in the same hands? William of Malmesbury in the speech of Henry of Winchester at a Legatine Council reported in the <i>Historia Novella</i> claims that the King failed to honour his undertakings in almost every respect and, with the charter immediately before him he gives what we may presume to be the worst examples²⁶⁴.</p> <p>²⁶⁴ See: William of Malmesbury, <i>Historia Novella</i> [...]</p>	<p>[W]e may perhaps ask what meaning is to be given to the words in his so-called second charter, by which he granted and confirmed to ecclesiastics and all clerks that they and their possessions should be subject to the justice and jurisdiction of bishops and that control over ecclesiastical offices should be in the same hands.⁶ [...] William of Malmesbury, indeed, declares that the king failed to honour his undertakings in almost every respect and, with the charter immediately before him, he gives what we may presume to be the worst examples.</p> <p>⁶ [...] William of Malmesbury, <i>Historia Novella</i> [...].</p>

A typical reader of this passage, as it appears in Robson’s monograph, will assume that the words are original to Robson, rather than the words that have already been published by Richardson and Sales four decades earlier in their co-authored study of the politics of medieval England (Richardson and Sayles 1963). The overlap includes strings of 40, 30, and 17 verbatim words. Since the apparent source text is co-authored, the use of the first person plural pronoun “we” in the 1963 version reflects that dual authorship. But when the slightly modified version appears as “us” in Robson 2004, the typical reader will assume that Robson is just again employing the device of *pluralis majestatis*. The use of the majestic plural creates the appearance that the words that follow are those of Robson as author, offered in the mode of traditional scholarly exposition. There are some small differences between the two versions; for example, the word “clerks” is rendered as “clerics” in the 2004 monograph.

6. Footnote attribution

Tables 6 and 7 presented examples of passages from Robson’s 2004 monograph that overlap with previously published academic works, but were not credited by the use of standard devices such as quotation marks and footnote attribution. The only mentions of the apparent source texts were distant bibliographical entries in the back matter of the monograph. More typical examples of apparently deficient citation are those where the source text is mentioned in a footnote to the main part of the book, but not in the right place nor with attendant quotation marks. Table 8 presents an example from the opening of section 5 of the second chapter of the 2004 monograph, which appears to overlap closely with opening lines of a 1973 article by Bernard McGinn (McGinn 1973).

Table 8 Suspected Pawn Sacrifice (Example 3)

Robson 2004: 113	McGinn 1973: 161
<p>As a religion founded upon the expectation of the imminent return of the risen Lord, Christianity could not help but experience difficulties as that event failed to materialise. In this sense eschatology has always been a problem for the Church since at least the time of Saint Paul.</p>	<p>As a religion founded upon the imminent expectation of the return of the risen Lord, Christianity could not help but experience difficulties as that event failed to materialize. In this sense eschatology has been a problem to Christians at least since the time of Paul’s Thessalonian converts.</p>

McGinn, who like Robson is a degree recipient from Pontificia Università Gregoriana, has his article mentioned in the main part of the 2004 monograph on page 128, footnote 216. The problem is not only that the mention of this apparent source is textually distant, occurring 15 pages later, but that mention is to a different and unrelated part of McGinn’s article. There are no question marks around the passage in Robson’s book to indicate any dependency of the text on McGinn’s work. Furthermore, the footnote uses the formula “See: B. McGinn [...]” The citation signal “see” in scholarly writing is not generally used to indicate to a reader that a text has been presented verbatim from another source. According to *The*

Chicago Manual of Style, “see” is a mechanism “used to invite readers to consult further resources” (n. a. 2017, §14.42).

It has been noted above that the publisher’s catalogue copy for Newman’s 1996 book appears without credit to the publisher and without quotation marks in the 2004 monograph. Robson does mention Newman’s book frequently in footnotes, yet sometimes passages of her book appear verbatim and near verbatim and without quotation marks or clear acknowledgment in the 2004 monograph. Table 9 exhibits an example.

Table 9 Suspected Pawn Sacrifice (Example 4)

Robson 2004: 206	Newman 1996: 199 with endnotes on 333-334
<p>in his travels he further expanded the Cistercians’ networks of friends⁷⁶ and helped to create a web of Cistercian abbeys across Europe; these friends and abbeys then united in Innocent’s support.</p> <p>⁷⁶ In 1131 after Bernard had accompanied Innocent to Liège, the Archbishop of Mainz who was then present, asked the monks of Clairvaux to receive the community of Benedictine monks of Eberbach into their filiation. In 1132 after Bernard’s trip to Aquitaine with Joscelin, Bishop of Soissons, the monks of Clairvaux founded the house of Longpont in the diocese of Soissons. In August 1132, Clairvaux founded the abbey of Vaucelles in the diocese of Cambrai, which Bernard had passed through the year before on his way to Liege. Bernard also established some of these abbeys in territories whose leaders had originally supported Anacletus: William of Aquitaine (William donated the land for Grace Dieu in 1134), Roger of Sicily (Bernard sent a group of monks to Sicily in 1140, at Roger’s request), and the people of Milan (the Milanese established Chiaravalle in 1135) all founded Cistercian houses after they recognised Innocent as Pope.</p>	<p>In his travels, he further expanded the Cistercians’ network of friends and helped to create a web of Cistercian abbeys across Europe; these friends and abbeys then united in Innocent’s support.³⁰ He established some of these abbeys in territories whose leaders had originally supported Anacletus: William of Aquitaine, Roger of Sicily, and the people of Milan all founded Cistercian houses after they recognized Innocent as pope.³¹</p> <p>³⁰ In 1131, after Bernard had accompanied Innocent to Liège, the archbishop of Mainz, who was present at Liège, asked the monks of Clairvaux to receive the community of Benedictine monks at Eberbach into their filiation; Janauschek, <i>Originum</i>, pp. 21-22. In 1132, after Bernard’s trip to Aquitaine with Jocelin, bishop of Soissons, the monks at Clairvaux founded the house of Longpoint in the diocese of Soissons (p. 22). In August 1132, they founded the abbey of Vaucelles in the diocese of Cambrai, which Bernard had passed through the year before on his way to Liège (p. 24; <i>GC</i> 10: 111-12, <i>Instrumenta</i> 22).</p> <p>³¹ William donated the land for Grace-Dieu in 1134, the Milanese established Chiaravalle in 1135, and Bernard sent a group of monks to Sicily in 1140, at Roger’s request. See Janauschek, <i>Originum</i>, pp. 34-35, 39, 45; <i>GC</i> 2: 387, <i>Instrumenta</i> 8; Bernard of Clairvaux, Letters 134, 208-9, <i>SBO</i> 7: 330, 8; [...].</p>

This portion of page 206 of Robson’s book overlaps closely with a portion of the main text from page 199 of Newman’s book, plus her textually distant endnotes 30 and 31, which appear on pages 333–334 of her book. There are no quotation marks to indicate that the passage in Robson’s book is verbatim and near verbatim from Newman’s study. The principal difference is that Newman’s references to scholarly editions present in the footnotes to support her interpretations are not carried over into Robson’s version of the passage. The nearest reference to Newman’s book occurs two pages earlier on page 204 of Robson’s book, where a footnote there references pages 200-201 in an unrelated discussion of Newman’s discussion of *caritas* and canon law. It does not seem possible to consider a distant and unrelated footnote to constitute attribution for the passage displayed in Table 9. In sum: there is footnote reference to Newman’s book, but it is not at the right place nor to the correct page, and there are no quotation marks to indicate to the reader that Robson’s version of the text there appears to be an amalgam of (1) Newman’s main text interspersed with (2) content from a pair of her endnotes.

Tables 6–9 have been presented as examples of suspected pawn sacrifice where the source texts are mentioned somewhere in the course of Robson’s 2004 monograph, but the mention is textually distant and quotation marks have not been employed. Sometimes however, the source text is mentioned on the same page, but still clear attribution is not achieved. Table 10 offers an example.

Table 10 Suspected Pawn Sacrifice (Example 5)

Robson 2004: 386-387	Cunningham 1993: 481-482
<p>Christianity does not regard holiness merely as a state but also as a call. The NT not only calls the followers of Jesus a holy people, but also demands, in the imperative voice, that they become holy¹³. In other words, holiness may be understood as the outcome of the conversion process; a move away from that which is not God (aversion) towards that which makes us closer to God (conversion). To use a traditional vocabulary, the call is the urging grace of God, while our conversion to God is a response to the prompting of that grace. Holiness, then, involves both a condition and a choice in response to an offer. This turn to holiness involves decisions that are individual but are made in the context of the believing community. In the contemporary Church this call to holiness is most solemnly set out in Chapter Five of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church <i>Lumen gentium</i>, of Vatican II. Here, holiness is not the domain of an elect or cultic group within the Church but the universal vocation of all Christians¹⁴. It may be that people find themselves in many different circumstances of life. Nonetheless, everyone, though in diverse ways, is called to the one holiness that is rooted in the same bedrock of charity¹⁵. The holiness of the Church, then, is not some abstract quality that adheres to it but the actual presence of this divine love within its assembly¹⁶.</p> <p>¹³ See: 1 Cor 1, 2.</p> <p>¹⁴ See: Vatican Council II, <i>Lumen Gentium</i> 39-40</p> <p>¹⁵ [Wulf; <i>Lumen Gentium</i> 41]</p> <p>¹⁶ [Wulf]</p>	<p>Christianity does not understand holiness [...] only as a given condition but also as a call. The New Testament not only calls the followers of Jesus a holy people, but it demands, in the imperative voice, that they become holy [...] (1 Cor 1:2). In that sense, holiness may be understood as part of the conversion process: a move away from that which is not God (aversion) toward that which makes us closer to God after the manner of Jesus (conversion). To use a traditional vocabulary, the call is the urging <i>grace</i> of God, while our conversion to God is a response to that prompting of grace. Holiness, then, involves both a condition and a choice in response to an offer. This turn to holiness involves decisions that are individual but accomplished within the context of the believing assembly. In the contemporary church this call to holiness is most solemnly set out in the fifth chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (<i>Lumen Gentium</i>) of the Second Vatican Council. [...] Holiness is not the domain of an elect or cultic group within the Church but the universal vocation of all Christians [...] (LG 40). It may well be [...] that people find themselves in various circumstances of life; nonetheless, everyone is called to the same holiness that is rooted in the same bedrock of charity [...] (LG 42) [...]. The holiness of the Church, then, is not some abstract quality that adheres to it but the actual presence of this love within its assembly.</p>

This passage from Robson’s monograph is from pages 386–387, and it overlaps with sections on pages 481–482 of a 1993 article by Lawrence S. Cunningham (Cunningham 1993). Robson includes two footnotes (nts. 10 and 12) that mention other pages of Cunningham’s article and employ the “see” citation signal, but again no quotation marks or precise attribution is present for passage displayed in Table 10.

7. Errors in the use of apparent source texts

In themselves, the absence of quotation marks and precise attribution to apparent source texts generates problems for readers who engage the 2004 monograph, who are likely led to believe that the passages without quotation marks are original to the monograph. The reader apparently is placed at a disadvantage in not knowing the true authorship of the words in many passages, but the problem is compounded by an additional curious feature. In apparently copying others, Robson introduces errors that also affect the intelligibility and reliability of the text. Due to these errors, it appears that the reader is disadvantaged twice: first, in not knowing that credit should be allocated to the genuine author of the source text, and second, in being presented with introduced errors that corrupt the meaning of the text.

This twofold problem arguably affects the reliability of the 2004 monograph. Table 11 presents a text parallel involving Beverly Mayne Kienzle’s 2001 account of Bernard’s treatment of heresy (Kienzle 2001). (The first reference to Kienzle’s book appears in Robson’s book 13 pages later and mentions a different part of Kienzle’s book.) As displayed in Table 11, Kienzle’s account includes a quotation from Bernard’s sermon on the Song of Songs, in which Bernard compares contemporary heretics with the Manicheans, whom Bernard criticizes for their “insane manner.” In Robson’s version of the passage, Bernard’s characterization of the Manicheans is presented as “inane” rather than “insane”, a rendering that dramatically changes the meaning of the text.

Table 11 Bernard and Heresy

Robson 2004: 274	Kienzle 2001: 88-89
<p>Bernard also associates at least to some degree the continuity of the new heresy with old heresies³⁰⁴. Yet he adds that these new heretics have no professed leader, which makes them for him even more dangerous. He also criticises the dissidents' dietary abstinence, and compares them directly to Manicheans who in their 'inane manner' find God's creation unclean³⁰⁵. For Bernard, they are unclean like vomit and spewed out by the Body of Christ, which is the Church³⁰⁶. Again the emetic image implies the casting out of dissidents from the Church. Bernard also derides the heretics for their lack of learning [...]. In SC 66, 1, Bernard threatens that the heretics must not be dealt with negligently for their evil will escalate and grow like gangrene or cancer³⁰⁹, and must be stopped before it overcomes society. All these statements evoke fear [...].</p> <p>³⁰⁴ [SBO II, p. 177] ³⁰⁵ [SBO II, pp. 179-180] ³⁰⁶ [SBO II, pp. 182-183] ³⁰⁹ [SBO II, p. 179]</p>	<p>Bernard asserts to some degree the continuity of the new heresy with the old [...]³⁵ Yet he adds that these new heretics have no professed leader, which for him makes them more dangerous [...]³⁶ he also assails the dissidents' abstinence, and he compares them directly to Manicheans who in their 'insane manner' find God's creation unclean. [...] for Bernard, they themselves are unclean like vomit, and [...] are spewed out by the Body of Christ, which is the Church' (Sermon 66.7).³⁷ Again the image calls at a minimum for casting out dissidents from the Church. Bernard derides the heretics for their lack of learning [...]⁴¹. [...] In Sermon 66.1, he threatens that they must not be dealt with negligently, for their evil will escalate and grow like gangrene or a cancer [...] must be stopped before it overcomes society. All these statements evoke strong feelings of fear.</p> <p>³⁵ [Song, III, 181 and 188; SBOp, II, 173 SBOp, II, 177] ³⁶ [Song, III, 192; SBOp, II, 179] ³⁷ [Song, III, 198; SBOp, II, 182-3] ⁴¹ [SBOp, II, 179]</p>

Errors of this type sometimes involve the apparent copying of source texts that include words in Greek. Diacritical marks that are presented correctly in suspected source texts are often missing or presented errantly in Robson's book. Table 12 presents an example, displaying the overlap between page 29 of Robson's book, and the apparent source text, a chapter from a biblical encyclopedia (Krämer et al. 1968). The passage in Robson's book appears to be a compilation of sentences extracted from several pages (832–835) of the apparent the source text. That is, the passage appears to be an abbreviation or compression of the source text, where content from several pages is distilled to form a derivative text (see Dougherty 2020, 37–50, for a general discussion of this kind of plagiarism). To the reader of the 2004 monograph, the text seems to be original. On the next page, page 30, Robson has included a footnote mentioning a different portion of the article from the theological dictionary, but it is not an attribution for the portion of text on the preceding page that is exhibited in Table 12. As the table displays, the source text contains a Greek quotation from the Gospel of Matthew, but when it is rendered in Robson's version there are six errors involving missing breathing marks and errant or missing accent marks.

Table 12 Prophecy in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures

Robson 2004: 29	Krämer et al., 1968: 832-833, 834, 835, 831, 834, 835
<p>The OT prophets who appear in the NT [...]³⁵ [...] men who proclaimed in advance what was later fulfilled in Christ³⁶. In addition, the words of the prophets were cited to confirm important thoughts in preaching and to lend emphasis to proclamation. With surprising frequency, for example, the NT refers to the persecution and putting to death of the prophets by the Jews. The prophets are those who 'did not flee persecution'³⁷, but rather bore it patiently and are thus models also for the Christian community to follow (Jas 5, 10; Heb 11, 32-38).</p> <p>³⁵ Mt 1, 22 and Mt 2, 15 express this in a formula equivalent to the OT, 'Thus says the Lord' (or YHWH): i.e. «τὸ ρηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος».</p> <p>³⁶ Jesus, when he takes action against the merchants and moneychangers in the temple appeals to sayings in the prophets, Mk 11, 17 et para. Jesus also uses Is 54, 13 to elucidate and back up his own statement that God will teach any man (Jn 6, 45). It is proved from the words of the prophets that Israel is guilty of idolatry (Acts 7, 42), and that God does not dwell in</p>	<p>In the NT and the OT prophets are men who proclaimed in advance what was later fulfilled Christ [...] // The words of the prophets are thus adduced to confirm important thoughts in preaching and to lend emphasis to proclamation. 6. With surprising frequency the NT refers to the persecution and putting to death of the prophets by the Jews. // The prophets, who did not flee from suffering but bore it patiently, are thus a model for the community. Jm. 5:10 cf. Hb. 11:32-38. // Mt. expresses this in the formula: τὸ ρηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, 1:22; 2:15. This corresponds to the OT "Thus saith Yahweh," // Jesus when He takes action against the merchants and money-changers in the temple appeals to the sayings in the prophets, Mk. 11:17 par. Jesus also uses Is. 54:13 to elucidate and back up His own statement that God will teach any man, Jn. 6:45. It is proved from the words of the prophets that Israel has been guilty of idolatry (Ac. 7:42), and that God does not dwell in the temple (Ac. 7:48). All the prophets emphatically proclaim forgiveness</p>

<p>man-made temples (Acts 7, 48). All the prophets emphatically proclaim forgiveness of sins through the name of Christ for all who believe (Acts 10, 43), and James appeals to the authority of the prophets to justify the receiving of Gentiles into the community (Acts 15, 15). In Antioch, Paul warns the Jews that the word of the prophets is being fulfilled (Acts 13, 40).</p> <p>³⁷ See Lk 11, 49, in which we find a saying from apocryphal wisdom writing concerning the martyrdom of prophets, quoted by the evangelist, which is 'christianised' and referred to the contemporary situation.</p>	<p>of sins through the name of Christ for all who believe, says Peter in the house of Cornelius (Ac. 10:43), and James appeals to the authority of the prophets to justify the receiving of Gentiles into the community (Ac. 15:15). In Antioch Paul warns the Jews that the word of the prophets is being fulfilled, Ac.13:40. // Lk. 11:49 a saying from an apocryphal Wisdom writing concerning the martyrdom of prophets is quoted by the Evangelists, christianised in different ways, and referred to their own situation.</p>
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Other errors involving Greek appear in cases where a sentence from an unquoted suspected source text presents a Greek word in English transliteration, but when it shows up in Robson's book Greek letters are used. For example, the 1980 commentary in a Latin-English edition of the Rule of St. Benedict edited by Benedictine priest Timothy Fry contains the sentence, "On the one hand, the desert elder exercised the charismatic functions of word-bearer much as the prophets and *didaskaloi* did in the early church" (Fry et al. 1981, 331). This same 25-word sentence occurs verbatim, without question marks, in Robson's book on page 48, but with the Greek term misrepresented as "διδάσκαλοι" with an extra acute accent mark on the last iota. On the same page of Robson's book—page 48—is another instance of errant diacritical marks, again apparently taking from Fry's commentary and involving a transliteration of Fry's use of the word *pneumatophoros*. Aberrations such as these may seem inconsequential, but they are magnified when viewed in the larger context where texts without quotation marks are reappearing verbatim and near-verbatim in the 2004 monograph.

(iv) The Downstream Problem

When plagiarizing books and articles remain in the body of published literature, without being retracted by editors and publishers, they continue to exercise a corruptive influence in the downstream published research literature. Researchers unwittingly reference and quote the plagiarizing literature as genuine, not knowing that what they are engaging is unoriginal. The plagiarizing work misdirects credit away from the original authors, distorting the argumentative lines in the secondary literature.

The 2004 monograph has been frequently engaged in reviews and new works in the field of Bernardine studies. In 2007, a critical yet generally positive review of the 2004 monograph was published in *The American Benedictine Review*. The reviewer provides a quotation from page 43 the book, stating "Robson then studies the role of the abbot in the Rule of Benedict, who for Robson, as for Adalbert de Vogüé, is 'primarily a spiritual father to the individual monk'" (Feiss 2007, 88). Although the reviewer identifies a likeness between the Robson's account and that of Benedictine monk Adalbert de Vogüé, the text cited from Robson does not appear to be original to the monograph. Much of page 43 of Robson's monograph overlaps with text found in the abovementioned bilingual edition of the Benedict's Rule edited by Fry. That edition is indeed mentioned three times in the footnotes on page 43 with the citation signal "see:", alongside eight other works of secondary literature (including work by Adalbert de Vogüé). Yet without the use of clear quotation marks, the reviewer was prevented from recognizing that the quoted sentence from Robson's monograph apparently derives from Fry's edition, which states that "The abbot is primarily a spiritual father to each monk [...]" (Fry et al. 1981, 92). This example suggests that methods employed in the 2004 monograph makes it difficult for typical readers—as well as experts who publish reviews—to separate what is original from what is not.

(v) Conclusion

In this view of this author, it is crucial to discuss evidence of substantial plagiarism publicly and transparently, within the community of scholars, rather than keep such matters relegated to secret processes. The reprisals for whistleblowers in plagiarism cases are real, and it is an injustice to them and

to the larger body of scholars when the claims of suspected plagiarism are substantially correct yet unrecognized by relevant academic authorities. The theoretical considerations that began the paper, which outlined three main impediments to genuine institutional reform in the sacred sciences of philosophy and theology, show the need for transparent, post-publication review. A case study in the second half of the paper suggests that there is much work to be done in the areas of (1) transparent post-publication peer review; (2) support for plagiarism whistleblowers; (3) the retraction of plagiarizing work; and (4) the development an academic culture that rejects secrecy. At present, only a few academic journals in philosophy and theology permit analyses of unretracted plagiarizing work in philosophy and theology, and this fact is further evidence of the systemic problems afflicting the sacred sciences.

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