

CHAPTER 3

Politics and Persuasion, Bureaucracy and Behavior

A good portion of what is behind the writing of the *De curiae commodis* has to do with Lapo's attempt at self-advertisement and his longing to show that he could be a real curialist with a high position, instead of the liminal, curial outsider that he probably believed himself to be. Lapo the propagandist for the contemporary Council of Ferrara-Florence, Lapo the protester against curial vice, Lapo the insider who knows his way around the curia, and Lapo the practical man who realizes that wealth is necessary in the curial ambient—all of these facets are present in the dialogue.

The piece was written in the summer of 1438, at a time when the institution of the papacy was undergoing a crisis and when there was a great deal of uncertainty as to who held supreme power in the church.¹ On 3 March 1431, after the death of the Colonna Pope Martin V, Gabriele Condulmer, his collaborator, was elected pope as Eugenius IV. As we have seen from the cursory overview of Lapo's life, Eugenius was most probably the person whose patronage Lapo ultimately sought during the last two years of his life, when he was following the curia. It is thus no surprise that he dedicated the dialogue to Francesco Condulmer, given that Lapo was in Francesco's service at the time, and given Francesco's political power and prominence. Not only a nephew of Pope Eugenius, from 1432 to 1440 Francesco was also his chamberlain (*camerarius*), which meant that he was the head of the papal chamber, the curia's

1. See J.W. Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, The Council of Basel, and the Secular and Ecclesiastical Authorities in the Empire: The Conflict over Supreme Authority and Power in the Church* (Leiden, 1978); J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959); idem, *Personalities of the Council of Florence* (Oxford, 1964); K.A. Fink, "Eugene IV and the Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence," in *Handbook of Church History*, ed. H. Jedin (New York, 1970), 4:473–87 (the *Handbook* originally appeared in German [Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1968]); Hofmann.

financial bureau. And from 1437 until his death in 1453 he was also the *vicecancellarius sacre romane ecclesie* (vice-chancellor of the holy Roman church), which meant that he stood at the head of another major branch of the curia, the apostolic chancery, or *cancellaria apostolica*.² In a discussion of the curial bureaucracy (VI.6–7), Lapo shows that he was quite aware of the power that accrued to Francesco's positions. As he begins to develop the dialogue's general praise of wealth, Lapo has a chance here not only to flatter his dedicatee with a quick and accurate resumé of his power but also subtly to oblige him by reminding him of just how much money he has. This reminder would have been all the more pressing if the reader had in mind the dialogue's opening, where Angelo set forth the shortages of money and patronage that Lapo was suffering.

The name of the dedicatee, Condulmer, leads one inevitably to a consideration of church politics. From a political point of view, as with the other aspects of the dialogue, the outward expository aim of the piece is *au courant*. In fact the content of the dialogue indicates clearly Lapo's awareness of the contemporary political struggles in the church. In a time of self-definition for the ever evolving papacy, one of the main points of contention was the extent of power held by church councils.

With the decree *Haec sancta*, the fifth session of the Council of Constance had in April 1415 declared that church councils possess the highest power in Christendom in three crucial areas: heresy, reform, and settling schisms.³ According to this decree, all Christians, even the pope, were subordinate to the power and decisions of church councils in these matters. The decree *Frequens*, made by the same Council of Constance two years later (in its thirty-ninth session), stipulated that church councils meet on a frequent and regular basis.⁴ The Council of Basel com-

2. See D'Amico, 24–26; Hofmann, 2:69 (for *vicecancellarius*), 87 (for *camerarius*); N. del Re, *La curia Romana: Lineamenti storico-giuridici*, 3d ed. (Rome, 1970), 295–309 (for the development of the *camera*), 277–91 (for the development of the *vicecancellarius*). From the time of John XXII (r. 1316–34), the office of *vicecancellarius* supplanted the duties of the *cancellarius*. Francesco was also well connected in Venetian humanist circles; see M.L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton, 1986), *ad indicem*.

3. I have relied heavily in this section on the account presented in Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 10–57.

4. This was the reason, e.g., why the abortive, poorly attended Council of Pavia-Siena met in 1423–24. On the Council of Constance, see the study of P. H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 53 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1994); see also W. Brandmüller, *Das Konzil von Konstanz, 1414–1418*, 2 vols. (Paderborn and Munich, 1991–97).

menced in July 1431 on the order of Pope Martin V. He himself had died in February of that year, and in his last days he had appointed as his legate Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, who assumed the presidency of the council as it began.⁵ At the outset the council's leaders publicly renewed certain provisions from Constance, among them aspects of *Frequens*. Then, in its second public session, in February 1432, the council renewed parts of *Haec sancta*, including the important section where conciliar supremacy was announced. According to that section, the council "had power directly from Christ," and "to this power, everyone, of whatever status and worth, even if of papal status and worth, is held to be obedient in those matters that pertain to the faith, to the extirpation of the said schism, and to the general reform of the Church of God, in its head as well as in its members." Whoever contumaciously disobeyed any proclamation of a legitimately convoked general council was to be punished.⁶ This heated concern even led the Council of Basel eventually (and, ultimately, ineffectually) to depose Eugenius IV from his office in June 1439.⁷

The issue was obviously very alive in its day, and Lapo was no doubt sensitive to it. Toward the beginning of the *De curiae commodis*, his

5. On Cesarini, see Gill, *Personalities*, 95–103; Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV, ad indicem*.

6. Latin text cited in Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 405–6: "Et primo declarat, quod ipsa Synodus in Spiritu sancto legitime congregata, generale concilium faciens, et ecclesiam militantem repraesentans, potestatem a Christo immediate habet, cui quilibet cuiuscumque status vel dignitatis, etiam si papalis existat, obedire tenetur in his quae pertinent ad fidem et exstirpationem dicti schismatis et ad generalem reformationem ecclesiae Dei in capite et in membris.

Item, declarat, quicumque cuiuscumque conditionis, status, vel dignitatis, etiam si papalis existat, qui mandatis, statutis seu ordinationibus, aut praeceptis huius sacrae synodi et cuiuscumque alterius concilii generalis legitime congregati, super praemissis, seu ad ea pertinentibus, factis, vel faciendis, obedire contumaciter contempserit, nisi resipuerit, condignae poenitentiae subiiciatur, et debite puniatur, etiam ad alia iuris subsidia, si opus fuerit, recurrendo."

7. This is not to oversimplify. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, e.g., was himself a conciliarist during the Council of Basel and participated in that council—well before his accession to the papacy as Pius II. He defended the election of Prince Amadeo of Savoy as (anti-) Pope Felix V, who at the time of his election not only was a layman but also had a family, including children. He wrote, "So what is wrong with a Roman pontiff having powerful sons, who are able to come to their father's aid against tyrants?" See Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *De gestis concilii Basiliensis commentariorum libri duo*, ed. D. Hay and W.K. Smith (Oxford, 1967), 248, quoted and translated in P. Prodi, *The Papal Prince, One Body and Two Souls: The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. S. Haskins (Cambridge, 1987), at 13–14; see the entire study of Prodi for an invaluable discussion of the subtleties of the evolution of the papal monarchy.

interlocutors argued that the curia was a good place because it was a concentrated seat of religious activity. Within the argument, the interlocutor Lapo describes the curial hierarchy in a very general fashion. Lapo's position concerning the conciliarism controversy seems very clear (III.22–23): “there is the pope, who takes the place of God: after him we have no greater. He has been given power not by human counsel but divinely. . . .” The pun on the word *consilium*, “counsel” (so close to *concilium*, “council”) is not at all subtle and works as well in English as it does in Latin.⁸

To flesh out Lapo's awareness of political circumstances, a brief pause with Cardinal Cesarini will be helpful. In 1431 Cesarini had assumed the leading role in the Council of Basel, and in the ensuing years he and Eugenius increasingly came to find themselves on opposite sides of the conciliarism issue. They would only be reconciled in 1438, at the start of the Council of Ferrara-Florence. It is interesting that Lapo had appealed to Cesarini for patronage in 1436, two years before the writing of the *De curiae commodis*.⁹ So Lapo's first, vague appeal to Cesarini back in 1436 was made at a time when the cardinal was still at loggerheads with Eugenius IV. Yet two years later, with the beginning of the Council of Ferrara and the arrival of the Greeks, Cesarini had reconciled himself to the papacy.¹⁰ Indeed, at that council he would be one of the most important actors in the Latin cast of characters.

After the council was successfully underway in the summer of 1438 and Cesarini was obviously, actively working for papal interests, Lapo chose to dedicate to Cesarini his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Aratus*,¹¹ a work he claimed to have completed in October 1437.¹² If Lapo's own dating in the autograph manuscript can be trusted, he waited almost

8. Indeed both of these words can denote gatherings or assemblies of people. The word *consilium*, i.e., “counsel,” however, has an important secondary meaning of “advice,” or “wisdom.” The word *concilium*, “council,” was used to refer to church councils.

9. According to the dating of Rotondi: see Lapo's letter to Cesarini, 11 September 1436, in Rotondi, “Lapo da Castiglionchio,” 12; Fubini, 48.

10. The first, principal Greek delegation arrived in Ferrara on 4 March 1438; see Gill, *Personalities*, 4.

11. On 15 July 1438, precisely; see F, f. 18 (Luiso [275 n. 3] erroneously reports f. 19).

12. This dating is possible according to Lapo's Greek *explicit* formula at F, f. 46 (edited in Luiso, 276 n. 2, and in chap. 5 *infra*), where the translation itself ends.

a year to choose a dedicatee.¹³ His choice to appeal to Cesarini two years earlier had been unwise (given the opposition that existed at that time between Cesarini and the papacy) and probably reflected the desperation whose borderline Lapo was always on the verge of crossing. But his favorite virtue, prudence, must have guided him in 1438 in choosing Cesarini as his dedicatee, with the security of knowing that everybody was then on the same side. Yet again, however, things are not as clear as they seem: both the material of the translation—the choice of the life of Aratus, who was known, among other things, as a hater of tyranny—and certain parts of the dedication show that Lapo may very well have been trying to appeal to what he thought were continuing conciliarist sympathies on Cesarini's part.¹⁴

As the conciliarist controversy raged unabated, Lapo was writing the *De curiae commodis*, with the Council of Ferrara-Florence of 1438–39 already underway.¹⁵ The council's main purpose was to end the long-standing division between the Eastern and Western churches. The Greeks had arrived in Ferrara in early March 1438, at which time Lapo was employed by Francesco Condulmer to help in translating Greek docu-

13. Lapo alludes to an unspecified period of deliberation in choosing a dedicatee in his preface to the translation; see my edition of this preface in Celenza, "Parallel Lives," app. 2, sec. 1: "After I had translated into Latin Plutarch's account of the peacetime affairs and military deeds of the most famous leader Aratus the Sicyonian, I determined—in line with my customary practice—to send it to some prince. For quite a while I was in doubt and was wondering to which prince I would like most of all to dedicate this little lamplight work of mine. But both in terms of understanding, prudence, greatness, integrity, and constancy and in terms of the deeds of war and military glory, nobody really occurred to me whose life seemed to agree with the life of Aratus" [Cum Arati Sicyonii clarissimi ducis res domi militiaeque gestas ex Plutarcho latine interpretatus essem, easque ad aliquem principem—pro mea consuetudine—mittere stavissem. Dubitanti mihi diu ac deliberanti cuinam nostrorum principum potissimum dedicarem has lucubrationes meas, nullus sane occurrebat cui consilio prudentia cum magnitudine, integritate, constantia, tum bellicis rebus et gloria militari Arati vita convenire videretur]. Lapo goes on to say that Aratus appeared to him in a dream; after conversing with Aratus in the dream and later considering the dream encounter (as well as some choice words from a sermon of Ambrogio Traversari), Lapo decided on Cesarini as a dedicatee (for the mention of the preaching he heard "ab eruditissimo ac religiosissimo viro Ambrosio amicissimo tuo," see *ibid.*, sec. 32). Lapo received the Greek codex in which the *Vita Arati* was contained from Ambrogio Traversari; see Mehus, *Historia*, 8.

14. See Celenza, "Parallel Lives," 134–38.

15. See Gill, *The Council*; and see the criticisms regarding the issue of representation in Stieber, *Pope Eugenius IV*, 42 with n. 61. See also Gill, *Personalities*; Fink, "Eugene IV."

ments. Despite Lapo's dissatisfaction with his own position,¹⁶ Lapo makes ample mention of the council in the dialogue.

Throughout, he presents a best-case scenario, reflecting the somewhat propagandistic hopefulness by which the council must have been attended in its early phases. Lapo praises the fame of the curia under the direction of Eugenius and waxes enthusiastic about the council's historic importance, stressing that it will bring together East and West (III.26–27). He describes the council (III.27) as a “coming together of men that is so great, so variegated, so famous, so engendered by God, and such a great and admirable unanimity that the likes of it has never been heard of or read about before.” With this and other similarly rhapsodic descriptions, Lapo exercises his propagandistic talent to show what a good papal secretary he could be if only he were given the opportunity. The same tendency is evident later on, with the defense of wealth.

The council also later offers the opportunity for humor, as the interlocutors present a droll description of the Easterners' appearances (VII.6–7). In the description, Lapo uses literature—Plutarch and Virgil—that would have been familiar to his intended audience, and he creates descriptions that are both readable and perceptive. It is significant that this segment on the appearance of the Easterners is one of only two sections that anyone saw fit to print before the twentieth century.¹⁷

Lapo's realistic descriptions are especially forceful whenever he approaches matters that we would today consider psychological. These behavioral analyses are always closely bound with considerations about the effects of the curial environment on its inhabitants. While any analysis of the dialogue must take into account the overt intention of the work—that is, to praise the curia—along with this there is always a dynamic occurring between praise and blame, as if Lapo cannot let an advantage of the curia be expounded without also, almost in the same breath, flipping the coin.

In his discussion of the curial bureaucracy, we get a taste of Lapo's sharp insight into human motivation. A merit of this discussion is the manner in which Lapo documents the influence of the close-knit world of the curial bureaucracy on the behavior of its actors. One comes to universal conclusions after hearing the presentation of specific cases. In one

16. See chap. 1, p. 9 *supra*.

17. The other section, which Humfrey Hody (1659–1706) included in his monograph on illustrious Greeks, was Lapo's praise of Greek learning (V.4). See Hody, *De graecis illustribus*, at 30 and 136.

such case (VI.1–2) the preteritic tone could easily exemplify the spirit and literary methodology of the whole dialogue.

I am deeply concerned indeed by an attack that I have often heard made by many: that in the Roman curia influence, bribery, and corruption provide easier access in attaining office and rank than do learning, uprightness, and purity. Really, you have to look not at what is done there but rather at what was intended. [2] After all, our honored elders wanted these things [office and rank] to be not incitement to vice but rather ornaments of virtue. If sometimes fortunes are handed over to the unworthy or to those who are not so worthy as they might be, the whole business has to be ascribed to the age and the men, not to the vice of the curia.

Perhaps for the sake of achieving a measure of verisimilitude (and along the way maintaining adequate persuasive force), Lapo frankly acknowledges curial corruption. Lapo is not alone in the fifteenth century in offering criticism of the papal curia. In fact in the decades following his death, the number of treatises condemning various aspects of the curia, especially its extravagance, multiplied.¹⁸ In any case, Lapo argues, it is possible to gain great wealth at the curia (VI.2). Lapo praises the curia based on the potential it holds for upward mobility. But, as elsewhere in the dialogue, there is at the same time distaste for the people who are actu-

18. See J. Monfasani, "The Fraticelli and Clerical Wealth in Quattrocento Rome," in *Renaissance Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Eugene Rice, Jr.*, ed. J. Monfasani and R. Musto (New York, 1991), 177–95 (in Monfasani, *Language and Learning* as #XIV) at 178 passim. For background on early modern anticlericalism see P.A. Dykema and H. A. Oberman, *Anticlericalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 51 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1993), especially the study of Gordon Griffiths, "Leonardo Bruni and the 1431 Florentine Complaint against Indulgence-Hawkers: A Case Study in Anticlericalism," 133–43, and the letter of Bruni, 138: "Tacemus vero referre que sit vita, qui mores istorum qui hec profitentur, que prandia, que sumptuositas, que voluptates. Monstro quippe videri potest persimile hoc qui salutem animabus aliorum se profitentur afferre, ita vivere ut nichil unquam de salute propria cogitasse videantur." See also in that volume the important study of Silvana Seidel Menchi, "Characteristics of Italian Anticlericalism," 271–81, who describes "the most distinctive characteristic of Italian anticlericalism in the early modern era" as stark recognition of "the disjunction between words and actions, the contradiction between conscience and comportment." See also R. Fubini, *Umanesimo e secolarizzazione: Da Petrarca a Valla* (Rome, 1990), especially 303–38 for an edition and discussion of Poggio's 1417 oration to the council of Constance, in which Poggio protests against clerical vice.

ally being upwardly mobile and making use of the “benefit” under discussion. Lapo realizes that his “speech” might seem “malicious” if he were to recount the humble origins from which some of the curial higher-ups have sprung (VI.3).

Lapo mentions various curial offices as honorable and suggests that it takes learning and diligence to belong to these groups. The interlocutor Angelo responds in a passage that is revelatory and permeated with Lapo’s intense scrutiny of people’s motivations (VI.4–5). Angelo reveals that it is “characteristic of men of cunning, skillful, crafty, and tricky—as well as knavish—intelligence to know the natures of those whom they desire especially to win over. They perceive the deepest recesses of their spirits and minds; all of their intentions; their plans, longings, and desires.” Having thought about these things, the ambitious will “apply what amount to stratagems in order to capture them by storm, to be in their company, to flatter them; they try to take some of them in by feigned friendship, others by personal appearance, others by pandering, and still others with presents.”

Perhaps once again we see a mirror of Lapo’s melancholic state of mind. How unpalatable it seems to be compelled to investigate so carefully all of the habits, friends, and associations of one’s possible patrons. Yet this is exactly what the real-life Lapo must have been doing. It is accepted as a frank matter of fact that those persons seeking patronage must be solicitous of “those whom they desire especially to win over,” and in his own life Lapo had certainly made attempts in this direction. But at the time he wrote the dialogue he had achieved no success with which he had allowed himself to be satisfied, and thus in writing the psychology of curial seekers, Lapo writes also his own. The profound but implicit disturbance, the dissatisfaction with seeking patronage, is balanced at the same time by a fatalistic resignation to its necessity, showing that the mechanisms of Italian Renaissance patronage constituted an object of learned discussion in the fifteenth century as well as in the twentieth.

To delve more deeply into the question of the attainment of wealth at the curia, Lapo has his interlocutors engage in a discussion of the curial bureaucracy. In the course of the exposition, he mentions various offices and emphasizes the great wealth and power that is available to the holders of the offices. The protonotaries, the chamberlain, the vice-chancellor, the *referendarii*, the *cubicularii*, the keepers of the apostolic treasury—all these and more are mentioned (VI.6–8). Along with its function

as an expository aid to the presentation of curial wealth, this passage serves as a prime witness to the state of development that the curial bureaucracy had attained in the year 1438.

The interlocutors go on to suggest that the money the curia takes in as well as its ability to do so is common knowledge. In a passage whose irony cannot go unnoticed, Angelo concludes the discussion by suggesting that many curialists actually lack ambition for wealth but are indeed very desirous of “the allies and followers of wealth: pleasure and delight” (VI.11). In answering Angelo, Lapo makes the transition to the interlocutors’ discussion of the next “advantage” of the curia, that it offers sensory pleasures (VII.1).

They begin by addressing the visual pleasures that the curia has to offer, in a discussion whose centerpiece is the description of the Easterners then present for the Council of Ferrara-Florence (VII.2–11). The transition from visual to auditory pleasures is made, accompanied by Lapo’s typical *modus procedendi*. He has provided a brief sketch of the curial bureaucracy; now he tells how it really works. In this instance, as always, he starts with praise, this time for the abundance of news one can hear at the curia (VII.12). Then he begins to narrow things down by introducing the curia’s many wild gossipers, who tell of things that might be untrue but that “nevertheless give pleasure for a little while, under the guise of truth” (VII.13). Then the distasteful truth is revealed about curial praxis, as we learn that, during all this gossip, “dinner parties, tavern life, pandering, bribes, thefts, adultery, sexual degradation, and shameful acts are publicly revealed” (VII.14). Finally, Lapo once again offers an unvarnished, fatalistic half-acceptance of the necessity of engaging in these distasteful practices. At least implicitly, he chalks it up to the “advantage” of the curia already discussed, that is, the ability to acquire virtue (in this case wisdom) through experience (VII.15–16). One gains “utility” by having heard the gossip about others at the curia (VII.15).

... if you ever need a favor from these people, the result is that, almost like a learned doctor, you have your medications ready and prepared. You can apply them as if to some kind of illness, so that, if you know how to use your medications correctly, you are never turned away by anyone. I do not know if there can be any place better or more desirable than the curia for one who wishes to live opportunely among men.

Concessions to seemingly regrettable circumstances are expressed throughout the dialogue, but nowhere perhaps more baldly than here. Nothing of the curial denizens' habits lies hidden in their home. One turns this to one's advantage by using the knowledge one gains from probing into one's colleagues' affairs and applying it to one's own benefit. It is perhaps not the best thing to be considered crude and scheming, the argument goes on, but it is far worse to be considered a fool.

The advantages that relate to auditory pleasure are, as with the virtues, tied to volume. The more one hears, the better—the more “pleasurable”—it is, because one gains the experience necessary to succeed, win patrons, and acquire what one wants and needs. There is a parallel to this utilitarian *mentalité* in book 4 of Leon Batista Alberti's *Libri della famiglia*. There the interlocutor Piero avers to his fellows (252 Watkins trans., 270 Grayson ed.):

I shall tell you, therefore, first, of what means I made use in order to become an intimate and follower of Gian Galeazzo, the duke of Milan; then I shall tell you how I went about winning the good will of Ladislas, King of Naples; finally I shall recount to you what sort of conduct enabled me to preserve the favor and good will of Pope Giovanni. I think, too, that you will be pleased to learn of my various and different devices, my cautious and seldom used means, which have rarely been described. These are most useful ways to deal with men in civic life; therefore listen well to me. In order to arrive at the friendship of the duke, I saw that it would be necessary to make use of one of his old friends and present intimates. . . .

As Piero goes on in his account and expands on his dealings with these men, the parallels to Lapo's *De curiae commodis* VII.13–17 are obvious. There is a focus on a utilitarian morality and a kind of pride in the use of cleverness when dealing with others. It is accepted that in group situations, one must sometimes use a subtle web of obligation, deceit, and skillful rhetoric to achieve one's objectives.¹⁹

Two pleasures remain, gustatory and sexual. First, the sense of taste is praised as an innate part of us that does not wane with age (VII.19–20). It motivates all other desires, including sexual desire; it is “the mother

19. Grafton (*Commerce*, 75) argues that “Alberti's characters analyze human relationships as a game of manipulation, which one plays to connect and endear oneself to the powerful.”

and maker of the rest” (VII.20). Lapo quotes from the well-known line of Terence “Venus freezes without Ceres and Liber,”²⁰ perhaps thinking of Cicero, who had himself explained the Terentian passage in the *De natura deorum* and argued that “Ceres” stood for grain, “Liber” for wine.²¹ The curia is presented as a real paradise of gustatory pleasure, as the interlocutors set forth the variety and abundance of foods of all different kinds as well as the many banquets and other opportunities available to the curial gourmet (VII.21–36). Angelo (VII.22–24) mentions examples of curial excess, of “refined men, as well as those who live luxuriously and delicately,” who “squander their fortunes pointlessly [on] what pleases them at the moment,” making “their lewd desire the limit to their expenditures.” Their desires are all-consuming, and thus they seek out the best chefs as well as emissaries to procure these things for them. In addition they “zealously seek out beautiful servant boys to serve the meals, as well as catamites and men whose hair is done a little too finely.”

Angelo has expounded yet another of the dialogue’s condemnations of excessive curial luxury, this time with a sneaking criticism of “delicacy.” The curialists he criticizes are dandies, concerned only to sample the finest foods prepared in the most exotic manner. They wish to be served by beautiful servant boys, the flush of whose cheeks has not yet been marred by beard.²² Although he cites the custom of Alexander of Macedon (perhaps from Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus*), who would order his soldiers to shave so that the enemy could not get a hold on them, it is clear that Lapo considers the “delicate” cardinals to be akin to *erastai* and the boys to be their *eromenoi*.²³

Parenthetically, another implicit criticism of curial pederasty is perhaps to be noted when the interlocutors discuss education in the curia. Angelo mentions (IV.11) “young men who have advanced recently into

20. Ter. *Eun.* 732.

21. Cic. *Nat. D.* II.60–61.

22. This notion was itself an ancient literary topos. Cf. K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 86.

23. Whether we should take this as representative of reality is a difficult question. Lapo’s criticism of “delicacy” was also leveled in much the same sort of way and with very similar language at morally corrupt practitioners of the military arts. See Lapo’s epistolary treatise to Simone Lamberti, discussed in chap. 1 (for the criticism, see, e.g., Par. Lat. 11,388, ff. 6v–9). So perhaps this was just a stock criticism. However, it has recently been shown convincingly by Michael Rocke that homosexual contact between men and adolescent boys was, at least in the Florentine context, very prevalent. See M. Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford, 1996).

the curia and, while they had great natural ability, have come on teachers who were so skilled and diligent that in a few months they emerged as men, so that I think that not even Tiresias or Caeneus changed their form so swiftly or in such a great degree." Certain curialists, it is suggested (IV.12), are "endowed with a certain unaccustomed, marvelous, and unheard-of teaching system, one well suited for training very young men." Angelo adds, "I am impeded by scruple from revealing its name, as if it were the famous Eleusinian mysteries."²⁴

Tiresias and Caeneus were ancient mythological figures who were reported to have changed genders completely. Angelo does say that owing to their teachers' skill and "unheard-of" teaching systems, the "young men" emerged as "men." But the fact that this change is mentioned along with Tiresias and Caeneus, coupled with Angelo's "scruple" at mentioning this secret teaching system, leads one to suspect that Lapo was launching another attack on the sexual conduct of certain curialists.

To return to the banquets, for Lapo there is always a right way to do things and a wrong way. Banquets are no exception. Lapo outlines the results of the conduct of "those who, in the midst of the greatest wealth and luxury, live in such a way that they would come by nothing at all in a dishonorable fashion," who are sparing with themselves, and who "do and think nothing weak or shameful" (VII.25–26). They have into their homes only the most worthy of domestic and foreign guests (VII.27).

Yet Lapo still cannot allow himself to leave off here with praise alone, even of the virtuous curial banqueters. Concerning the banquets, the interlocutor Lapo comments (VII.28):

fear deters me from saying with what pomp, variety, and abundance they are carried out, lest I seem to reprove the extravagance of these affairs or seem myself to take excessive pleasure in this kind of thing.

Once again curial vice is uncovered through a preterition, a "passing over" of the extravagance of the banquets. But the undertone is that such excess is being practiced at the curia that it might seem unbelievable to

24. Renée Neu Watkins has noticed this passage in her "Mythology as Code: Lapo da Castiglionchio's View of Homosexuality and Materialism at the Curia," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992): 138–44.

one who was not there.²⁵ Angelo responds, unsurprised, that he has witnessed this sort of extravagance, and in his answer he opens another interesting window into the practice of everyday life at the curia, offering also a sense of what curialists talked about from day to day (VII.29).

In addition, in mentioning the “cooks, sausage makers, and gourmet food makers,” Angelo echoes the language of Terence, again from the Roman comedian’s *Eunuch*,²⁶ but it is no surprise that it is mediated by Cicero’s *De officiis*, in the same way that Lapo’s earlier quotation of Terence was mediated by Cicero’s *De natura deorum*. At the end of the first book of the *De officiis*, Cicero had quoted Terence in a section whose intention it was to discuss worthy and unworthy ways of coming by money.²⁷ Cicero argued that the trades that deal with people’s pleasures are the worst of all, and he quoted Terence to single out the trades that deal with food.²⁸ Lapo’s description of the cooks brings to the fore an already noticed tendency toward distaste for those who must work to raise themselves up in society, and this time, as we have seen, he is supported by Cicero, his favorite authority. Lapo contrasts the situation of the cooks, “covered with grease and grime in the middle of the kitchen,

25. This sort of curial excess was especially criticized later on in the century, so much so that certain curialists, such as Jean Jouffrouy, Niccolò Palmieri, and Fernando da Cordova, either took it on themselves or were asked by curial higher-ups (though, notably, not by popes) to provide defenses of curial life. Cf. the discussion infra and Monfasani, “Fratricelli”; “A Theologian at the Roman Curia in the Mid-Quattrocento: A Bio-Bibliographical Study of Niccolò Palmieri, O.S.A.,” *Analecta Augustiniana* 54 (1991): 321–81; 55 (1992): 5–98 (printed separately with continuous pagination, from which I cite); *Fernando of Cordova: A Biographical and Intellectual Profile*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 82, no. 6 (Philadelphia, 1992).

26. Ter. *Eun.* 257.

27. As one might expect, the question as to what was a worthy way and what was an unworthy way to earn money was especially interesting to a number of the leaders in the Florentine humanist movement. In a treatise written contemporaneously to the writing of the *De curiae commodis*, Matteo Palmieri, e.g., made use of this section of the *De officiis*, quoting Cicero practically verbatim. See Matteo Palmieri, *Della vita civile*, ed. F. Battaglia (Bologna, 1944), 157, cited in Martines, *Social World*, 31 with n. 48. On the question of wealth in the world of Florentine humanism, see Martines, *op. cit.*, 18–39.

28. Cicero *Off.* I.150: “Least of all to be approved are those trades that serve the pleasures: ‘fishmongers, butchers, cooks, sausage makers, fishermen,’ as Terence says. You can add to that, if you like, ointment sellers, dancers, and the whole gambling business” [minimeque artes eae probandae, quae ministrae sunt voluptatum: ‘cetarii, lanii, coqui, fartores, piscatores,’ ut ait Terentius. Adde huc, si placet, unguentarios, saltatores totumque ludum talarium].

embroiled in the smoke and stench,” with the station they can acquire: “Then, out of nowhere, you see them move back to their homeland, raised not only to the priesthood but even to the highest degrees of honor” (VII.30). The discussion concerning the cooks thus also reveals an interesting sociohistorical detail. The curia as a seat of patronage could not only in various ways endow its denizens with wealth. It could also confer prestige and, by extension, power, completing in its possibilities—to put the cart five centuries before the horse—the Weberian triad of power, prestige, and wealth. These foreign would-be priests used the possibility open to those living in the curia to their full advantage, entering and working as lowly cooks, leaving as priests.

After the interlocutors stress the internationalism of the curial gustatory scene, they go on to examine “the matters related to Venus” (VII.36). As the discussion begins, the sarcasm is only very barely disguised when it is suggested that at the curia “the pleasures of Venus are certainly most apparent” and that “the curialists indulge in them no less than in the others” (VII.37). Lapo continues:

What good is it to have fired up your sexual appetite if there is nothing with which you can release your sexual desire, where you can put out the fire that has been ignited? And so, prudent and diligent men have energetically provided for this sort of thing, so that nothing toward the end of filling the cup of pleasure to the full would be lacking in the curia.

Obviously the concept of diligence has its negative side, ethically considered. Earlier the interlocutor Angelo detailed the manner in which career-minded curialists behave, knowing everything about their colleagues and applying this knowledge as if it were a medicine. Based on their behavior, and even though it was obviously distasteful, they were described at the end of that monologue as “diligent” (VI.5). Here it seems that Lapo even wishes to mock the concept of “prudence,” to which so much attention had been devoted in the earlier discussion of the curia’s sapiential advantages. Now the “prudent” man who is seeking sexual experiences could not find a better place than the curia. As the discussion advances to a fairly detailed exposition of the behavior of the prostitutes who frequent the curia, with their “milk white little lapdogs, whom—people say—they use to lick up filth about your loins” (VII.39), it becomes clear that image

and reality at the papal curia are two different things and that the institution is far from the community of virtue it should be.²⁹

Christianity and the Defense of Wealth

When Angelo asks Lapo how it is justifiable that the popes and priests in the curia possess so much wealth, Lapo responds that only the foolish “disapprove of the luxury and opulence of the popes of this age, as they term it, and . . . earnestly long for the ancient fathers’ purity of life” (VIII.1). This longing for a return to paleo-Christian morality and behavior is an opinion that had indeed been held by thinkers or groups of thinkers as diverse as the Waldensians, the Franciscans in all their varieties, and Lapo’s contemporary and acquaintance Lorenzo Valla.³⁰ The interlocutor Lapo’s goal is to win Angelo away from this opinion.

Lapo must have considered this part of the argument important, as he placed it at the end of the dialogue and devoted quite a bit of time to it. The Socratic method of the earlier part of the work is brought back into more prominent use for this section. The first, obvious query that Lapo puts to Angelo is whether he thinks “that only the poor are respectable, chaste, and religious and that all of the wealthy are rogues, corrupt, disgraceful, and nefarious” (VIII.3). Angelo sees the point but still believes there are great temptations in wealth toward luring one away from a holy life (VIII.4).

Lapo’s first response is to offer a strained apologia for the curialists. He argues that high curial officials have a difficult time of it, owing to the

29. On medieval and Renaissance prostitution, see R.C. Trexler, “La prostitution florentine au XVe siècle: Patronage et clientèles,” *Annales* 6 (1981): 983–1015; M.H. Rosenthal, *The Honest Courtesan: Veronica Franco, Citizen and Writer in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Chicago, 1992); J. Rossiaud, *Medieval Prostitution*, trans. L.G. Cochrane (Oxford and New York, 1988); L.L. Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc* (Chicago and London, 1985); B. Schuster, *Die freien Frauen: Dirnen und Frauenhäuser im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt and New York, 1995); G. Masson, *Courtesans of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1975); L. Lawner, *Lives of the Courtesans: Portraits of the Renaissance* (New York, 1987).

30. See G. Leff, *Heresy in the Later Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Manchester and New York, 1967); M.D. Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from Bogomil to Hus* (London, 1977); idem, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of the Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210–1323* (London, 1961). For these tendencies in the thought of Valla, see Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla, umanesimo e teologia*; “Lorenzo Valla tra medioevo e rinascimento.”

fact that their lives are hidden from all—“barely anybody cares” what they do. On top of that, he adds, they often find themselves in situations where, for diplomatic reasons, they must conform to the shameful habits of their colleagues, so that they do not seem inhuman (VIII.5–6). But in the same monologue the interlocutor Lapo manages to assert that the high curialists have an easy time of it. This is both because they are secluded from the view of all and because the obligation of their office compels them, if only for the sake of reputation, to behave virtuously (VIII.6–9)—an argument that is similar to that of Valla’s *De professione religiosorum*. Moreover, they are protected from sinning not only because of the dignity of their office but also because they lack energy, owing to their dissolute lifestyles. The argument is intended outwardly to exonerate the curialists from the charge that they can be corrupted by wealth, but in a backhanded, enthymematic fashion, it points out viceful conduct. The curialists against whom Lapo here takes aim are so lazy that they do not even desire pleasure. This is why, it is argued, “men of this sort either end their life in a short time or come down with leprosy, gout, dropsy, and other incurable diseases” (VIII.14).

Angelo is willing to agree that wealth is not dangerous for high priests with the lifestyles mentioned. He does, however, think it is dangerous for others. In responding to this assertion, Lapo leads the interlocutors into a discussion in which they will employ a number of the classic Florentine Renaissance *topoi* in defense of wealth, *topoi* that have their roots in the Aristotelian tradition (including its Thomistic variety). But there is also quite a bit that makes Lapo’s argument in defense of wealth unique.

First, in an exposition designed to show the dangers of poverty, we see the manner in which the interlocutor Lapo once again fatalistically accepts humankind’s propensity to sin. Wealth is better than poverty because the sins of the wealthy are not as serious as those of the poor (VIII.20). The sins of the wealthy include “gourmandizing, sleep, idleness, and extravagance” and “ostentation, debauchery, and power,” which lead to “payoffs and bribes”; but poverty leads to “thefts, plundering, and robbery” and to “treachery, betrayals, slaughter, and destruction” (VIII.21). It is assumed that whatever the economic status, sins will be committed.

Lapo will admit, certainly, that poverty has been beneficial for many and that many have gained a great reputation owing to it (VIII.23), but it is clear already that he accepts the utility of wealth. Employing traditional Aristotelian (and Thomistic) arguments then current in Florence,

he argues that certain virtues, like liberality, simply cannot be practiced without wealth. As such, wealth actually helps priests fulfill their charitable duties, such as providing poor girls with dowries³¹ and building for the glory of god, and it helps cover the priests' diplomatic expenses, which, given the dangerous times, even include soldiers for use as bodyguards (VIII.27–28).

Lapo thus accepts and endorses many of the traditional positions in defense of wealth, mounting arguments equivalent in their reasoning, argumentation, and tenor (if not exactly equal in content) to those of contemporaries like Bruni and Matteo Palmieri. Still, Angelo will not relent completely, and in Lapo's concern to employ to its fullest potential the genre of rhetorical argumentation known as *sorites*—in which an overpowering “heap” of arguments is employed to persuade—he perseveres and offers an elegant concern for religious scruples balanced with a practical, historically situated acceptance of a world that circumstance has altered.

The interlocutor Lapo brings up the wealthy ancient Hebrew priests and uses them to support his notion that priests should be allowed to accumulate wealth (VIII.31). Angelo in turn objects that examples from the Hebrew tradition are not really valid and that Lapo had better turn his attention to the laws of Christ when it comes to poverty, since when Christ was born all the laws of the Hebrews were automatically repealed (VIII.34). This opens the door to Lapo's more original contribution to the Florentine Renaissance defense of wealth. If present-day priests are to engage in the *imitatio Christi* in all respects, should we not also ask them “to perform miracles, heal the sick, and raise the dead,” also “to be bound to a post, beaten with whips, crowned with thorns, and hung on a cross, and to descend into hell and fly out thence with the ancient fathers into heaven” (VIII.35)? Angelo replies simply that the priests are men whereas Christ was God; thus one could not require them to do the various things Christ had done. Lapo goes on to wonder why it is, then, that priests are required to be poor, if these other things are not asked of them. Historical circumstances change. Along with this, so does morality (VIII.38): “Do not, therefore, examine present times on the basis of former ones. Those times required one set of morals, these another.”

Lapo then discusses the reasons why Christ had to adopt the stance of poverty. Because of the wealthy environment in which he was situated,

31. On dowries in Florentine Renaissance life, see Martines, *Social World, ad indicem*.

Christ had to do something new to make the religion he was propounding appealing by making a radical break with traditional patterns of life (VIII.39). To establish the new religion, Christ could not use “force or fear” or “power” or even “reasoned arguments” to persuade his ancient audience away from their religion; Christ had to do something novel, so that people would be “so affected that no uncertainty or mistrust remained in their minds” (VIII.40). Had he done this with wealth, people would not have trusted in the new religion (VIII.41). In Lapo’s presentation Christ becomes a skilled rhetorician, exactly conscious of the manner of life, thought, and speech necessary to persuade his reticent audience. Born a pauper, he was so wise that he could refute the learned Hebrews, leaving them “mute and stunned in their astonishment” (VIII.42). Lapo’s eloquent argument continues with the ring of sincere religious belief and is remarkably free of his usual double-meaning preterition (VIII.42–43).

Shortly thereafter, he [i.e., Christ] gave his attention to spreading the new law, to educating men, to purifying them with the holy bath of baptism, and to forgiving the converted. He raised the dead and expelled incurable illnesses. With his voice alone he freed men disturbed by abominable spirits. [Because of all these things,] what else could they suspect, unless it was this (which was really true): that he was a divine man, or rather God, born of God, filled with the divine spirit and sent down from heaven for the benefit and liberation of the human race. . . .

The interlocutor Lapo goes on to suggest that the foundations of the religion of Christ have now been laid and that all ambiguities have been removed from Christianity.³² Lapo views Christianity as a religion natural and inborn in humankind. He argues that because of its success and greatness, “it should be adorned with riches and honored with wealth, so that it brings souls to itself not only by its power but also by deeply affecting the eyes with its magnificence and brilliance” (VIII.46).

32. This is somewhat disingenuous, especially given the debates regarding the *filioque* question then raging at the council as Lapo was writing. For the *filioque*, see Gill, *Personalities*, 1–14, 254–63. Directly thereafter in the dialogue (VIII.45), however, this statement is qualified in such a way that the *filioque* issue does not become a problem: “For about Christ everybody means the same; they say the same thing: that he is the truest and only son of God and the only God.”

Lapo has yet to explain, really, why this is so. When he does so in a Lucretianizing passage (VIII.46–47), his reasoning is crystalline and almost makes him a Machiavelli *ante litteram*. He suggests that “one should draw back a bit from that ancient severity and energy of Christ and add something new.” The very nature of humankind is asserted to be such that it grows tired of tradition, even if it is old and valuable. Implicitly, therefore, Lapo goes beyond one of the traditional arguments that had been used against wealth: that since some of the greatest heroes of the Roman Republic had been poor, poverty was to be praised over and above wealth.³³ Without naming the argument, Lapo accounts for it implicitly and offers an answer: “This is the state of all things: that the greatest things, born from humble beginnings, augment themselves and in growing reach their apex.”

According to Lapo, the custom of the present day is that wealth and opulence are respected to such an extent that a curialist would not be taken seriously if he were to conduct his life in poverty. Lapo even goes so far as to flirt with idolatry and praise the ancients because they made their images of gods out of gold, since they wisely “saw that the beauty of gold itself would impel the minds of men even more toward divine worship and religion” (VIII.49). In response to one more objection from Angelo, Lapo returns to traditional arguments, suggesting that Christ was really preaching not against wealth but against avarice and that wealthy curialists should practice the virtue of liberality (VIII.52–56).³⁴

Finally, Angelo confesses that he has been beaten and says that he is now ready to submit happily to Lapo’s opinion. But the author Lapo could not resist one final salvo against the arrogance and vanity he perceived among the curialists. What did it feel like to be snubbed at the curia? How did it happen? In a coda to the argument, which is in its positioning generally representative of Lapo’s style of discourse, Angelo vents his rage against arrogant and haughty curialists who are quick to take and slow to repay, who make one wait all day at their door and then give

33. See Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, 1:210–11 and chap. 8, sec. 3, *passim*.

34. The Florentine chancellor Benedetto Accolti would later make an argument defending curial magnificence; cf. R. Black, *Benedetto Accolti and the Florentine Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1985), 208. The notion that laws of governance and of wisdom change with the times is also present a bit later in the century in the work of two of Ficino’s scholastic mentors, Niccolò Tignosi and Lorenzo Pisano; see A. Field, *The Origins of the Florentine Platonic Academy* (Princeton, 1988), 143–44 (for Tignosi) and 166–67 (for Pisano).

one a brief and unsatisfactory hearing (IX.1–3). Angelo has been persuaded, he will admit, of the necessity of wealth for the curialists and even that the curia offers considerable advantages. But the inclusion of this passage in the work testifies to its nature as a kind of manifesto for a generation of itinerant intellectuals.

If the stars of the humanist movement found their places as chancellors, secretaries to princes, and papal secretaries, what about the rest of the qualified practitioners who were then interested in plying this new, literary trade? How did they go about it? Lapo was a highly qualified humanist translator, even at the young age of thirty-three, when this treatise was written. In reading the just cited burst of anger, one gets a glimpse into what it must have felt like—in the eyes of someone who was well qualified and knew it—to have to go, almost literally, banging on the doors of possible patrons to win support for one's humanistic efforts, and this in a society where there really was no fixed place for many able practitioners of this new and growing literary movement.

Certainly, it is necessary to consider the issue of patronage in evaluating Lapo's defense of wealth. Lapo, in defending the wealth of the curialists, is defending his own interests as well; and the outburst at the end of the *De curiae commodis* displays his frustration with the mechanisms of patronage, a frustration that simply could not be kept silent.³⁵ Keeping that in mind, it is also interesting to see where Lapo's argument in defense of wealth fits in the medieval and Renaissance tradition touching on this theme. First and foremost one recognizes that Lapo's presentation of the utility and necessity of curial wealth could have functioned as a powerful arrow in the quiver of arguments that were amassed and used to justify the development of the evolving papal monarchy.³⁶ The fact that it was not so utilized is probably due to its being embedded in a treatise that contained so many bits of negative information about the curia. But other questions suggest themselves. How original was Lapo's contribution? Where should it be set in the literary tradition discussing curial wealth?

Lapo's defense of wealth belongs to two different literary subgenres of

35. R. Weissman has argued that among those involved in Mediterranean patronage both in antiquity and the Renaissance, sometimes dissenting voices were to be heard and objections to the morality of the processes of patronage were made. See his "Taking Patronage Seriously: Mediterranean Values and Renaissance Society," in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. F.W. Kent and P. Simons (Oxford, 1987), 25–46.

36. On the papal monarchy, see Prodi, *Papal Prince*; Thomson, *Popes and Princes*.

the Renaissance defense of wealth. On the one hand, Lapo was a Florentine and was an admirer of Leonardo Bruni. He must have been affected by the thought of his immediate contemporaries who used Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition to defend the acquisition of wealth; Bruni, Palmieri, Alberti, and others come to mind.³⁷ In a despotic environment, Pier Candido Decembrio, whom Lapo knew and corresponded with,³⁸ also discussed the utility of wealth.³⁹ On the other hand, Lapo's positions also have a place in the tradition of arguments about the wealth and extravagance possessed by members of the Roman curia.

In fact the argument historicizing Christ's poverty bears a similarity to arguments that Roman curialists would use later on in the century, in the 1460s, against the branch of the Franciscan order then known as the Fraticelli *de opinione*.⁴⁰ These sectarians desired conformity to the early-fourteenth-century bulls of Pope John XXII taking away the Franciscan order's claim to propertylessness. They even went so far as to follow Michael of Cesena, the Franciscan rebel against Pope John XXII. With Cesena they maintained that this pope and all of his subsequent followers were heretics.⁴¹

In the papal Rome of the second half of the Quattrocento, the Fraticelli *de opinione* were already marginalized. But the curialists Jean Jouffroy, Niccolò Palmieri, and Fernando of Cordova were nonetheless impelled to write treatises in defense of curial wealth.⁴² This was owed to

37. For Bruni, see Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, passim; for Matteo Palmieri, see especially *ibid.*, 234–35. Matteo Palmieri was writing his *Vita civile* contemporaneously to Lapo's most active professional years, the late 1430s; see G. Belloni, "Intorno alla datazione della *Vita civile* di M. Palmieri," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 16 (1978), cited in Baron, *op. cit.*, 139–40 n. 13. On the problem of wealth, see also R.A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600* (Baltimore and London, 1993), especially 204–12; J. Onians, "Alberti and ΦΙΛΑΡΕΤΗ: A Study in Their Sources," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971): 96–114; A. D. Fraser-Jenkins, "Cosimo de' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 162–70.

38. See Lapo's two letters to Pier Candido in Luiso, 255–59.

39. Pier Candido Decembrio discussed the utility of wealth in his *De vitae ignorantia*, ed. E. Ditt, *Memorie del R. Istituto lombardo di scienze e lettere* 24 (1931), cited in Baron, *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, 1:241.

40. See Monfasani, "Fraticelli."

41. See *ibid.*, 180–84; and see the literature cited there.

42. See *ibid.*; Monfasani, "Theologian"; *idem*, *Fernando*. For Jouffroy, see M. Miglio, "Vidi thiam Pauli papae secundi," *Bullettino dell' Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 81 (1969): 273–96, reprinted in M. Miglio, *Storiografia pontificia del Quattrocento* (Bologna, 1975), 119–53, 245–49.

the memory and the sting of the earlier attacks of the Fraticelli on curial wealth, their trial in 1466, and three works attacking curial wealth that had not hitherto seen the light.⁴³ It will not be necessary here to go into extensive detail about the treatises of these curialists. It is sufficient instead to note some of their salient features that can help shed light on Lapo's earlier position.⁴⁴

First, these treatises of the 1460s were all directed against specific targets.⁴⁵ Because of this and because their authors belonged more to a scholastic than to a humanistic tradition, the style that their writers employed was akin to scholastic, *quaestio*-style argumentation. Jouffroy and Fernando both mounted extensive point-by-point defenses of the right of curialists to live in a well-appointed fashion.⁴⁶ Palmieri's self-collected corpus of treatises on evangelical poverty also has a scholastic flavor.⁴⁷

As Lapo had done, Jouffroy stressed that times had changed from the time of Christ.⁴⁸ Palmieri went so far as to refashion a traditional idea—possibly from an earlier confrere—concerning the ages of the world. Palmieri modified the Christian era into three distinct stages, or *status*.⁴⁹

43. Jouffroy acted on his own initiative; Palmieri and Cordova were commissioned. See Monfasani, "Fraticelli," 178–79 *et passim*.

44. For a wider context for the debates surrounding curial wealth, vice, and virtue in the second half of the Quattrocento, see the fundamental study of J.W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450–1521*, Duke Monographs in Medieval and Renaissance Studies 3 (Durham, N.C., 1979). Chaps. 5 and 6 of that work contain a wealth of valuable information and argument on this theme.

45. Monfasani, "Fraticelli," 185.

46. See Monfasani, *Fernando*, 83–88, for an edition of the preface to Fernando's *Adversus Hereticos*; see especially 86–88, for Fernando's statement of the ten *tractatus* contained in the treatise. For Jouffroy, see Miglio, "Vidi."

47. For information about the texts that comprised this corpus, see Monfasani, "Theologian," 75–76 (= Bibl. 1–8).

48. Monfasani, "Fraticelli," 187 with n. 52. Jouffroy also developed an elaborate defense of the papal use of gems and other precious things, stressing both their stupefying and their talismanic value: see *ibid.*; Miglio, *Storiografia*, 139–45.

49. Monfasani ("Theologian," 42) suggests that Palmieri was possibly dependent, in his *De statu ecclesie*, on the Augustinian theologian Jordan of Saxony (ob. 1327). For Jordan's treatise, see Jordanus de Saxonia, O.S.A, *Liber Vitasfratrum*, 3:2, ed. R. Arbesmann and W. Hümpfner (New York, 1943), cited in Monfasani, *op. cit.*, 42 n. 136. See also F.A. Mathes, "The Poverty Movement and the Augustinian Hermits," *Analecta Augustiniana* 31 (1968): 5–154; 32 (1969): 5–116, cited in Monfasani, *loc. cit.* As Monfasani notes, Palmieri may have picked up the idea for the stages of ecclesiastical history from Jordan, his earlier confrere; in no way, however, does he share Jordan's "desire to justify the evangelical poverty of the Augustinian order" (*op. cit.*,

In the first stage of the Christian period, Palmieri argued, Christ had been compelled to use poverty as a means of persuasion, as an aid in his quest to evangelize. Undeniably, this argument is similar to Lapo's earlier position, although Palmieri does not seem to cite Lapo verbatim.⁵⁰ It is not unreasonable to suppose that Lapo's treatise was known in the curial ambient of the 1460s. It was written among curialists, and, as we have seen, the Benedictine monk Girolamo Aliotti had taken an especial interest in the dialogue in the 1450s and 1460s.⁵¹

Yet Lapo's statement of the case is clearly different from the *quaestio*-type approaches of Niccolò Palmieri and Fernando of Cordova. Part of this is due to the fact that Lapo was not expressly responding to specific opinions against clerical wealth, as would Jouffroy, Palmieri, and Fernando. But what distinguishes Lapo even more is precisely what delimits the humanistic contribution to theological discussion in general, as Charles Trinkaus saw. When they approached questions that would have been handled in a technical way by their professional contemporaries, humanists felt compelled to present the issues in a way that was readable—readable, that is, in line with their standards of readability.

For an overall evaluation of the defense of wealth, there are other issues that must be considered. One of these is Lapo's subtextual but nonetheless transparent disdain for the extravagance of the curialists. Lapo's arguments were certainly not explicit attacks, but they were disguised in name only, under the rubric of describing the pleasures avail-

42). In addition, Jordan had many more stages than Palmieri's three (*ibid.*). But in Palmieri's first stage, as Palmieri himself says, "in order to eradicate the common opinion . . . that all human happiness was located in earthly goods, . . . it was expedient for Christ—who humbly sought to join man to God—to look down more than it was necessary on wealth." (The Latin text is cited at *ibid.*, 40–41 n. 131: "In hoc statu ad extirpandam opinionem communem, que eo tempore universaliter mentibus hominum inhibita erat, quod in bonis terrenis omnis foelicitas staret humana, cum de retributione finali eterne vite nulla penitus mentio feret, Christo, qui hominem deo coniungere venerat, expediens fuit magis quam oporteret divitias despiceret.") Could it be that for this argument—although certainly not for the formulation—Palmieri's source was Lapo's treatise?

50. At the time of this writing, I have not had access to the entire text, which is edited in M. Mastrocola, *Note storiche circa le diocesi di Civita C., Orte e Gallese*, vol. 3, *I vescovi dalla unione delle diocesi alla fine del Concilio di Trento (1437–1564)* (Civita Castellana, 1972), at 302–6 (cited in Monfasani, "Theologian," 75), but which is better read in the authoritative manuscript (which Mastrocola did not use), MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chis. A.IV.113 (= Monfasani's C), at ff. 7v–46v.

51. See chap. 1, p. 25.

able at the curia. The arguments revealing the excess of certain curialists had even more force because of their veiled quality. In describing the gustatory, sexual, and financial excesses of the curial dandies, Lapo could not help but reveal the extent to which behavior of this sort had permeated the everyday practice of curial life.

These sorts of arguments against clerical wealth—which various Fraticelli had mounted *nudis verbis*—were really the types of things against which Niccolò Palmieri, Fernando of Cordova, and others would later so strenuously argue. That these implicit arguments against wealth (or at least against its misuse) as well as a defense of the acquisition of wealth are present in Lapo's dialogue mark its personal, individual nature as well as a tacit refusal on the part of its author to conform to traditional approaches to then-current intellectual problems. For example, Lapo criticizes the use that many curialists make of their acquired wealth, yet he later defends the acquisition of wealth. In his defense of wealth Lapo rejects what has been characterized as a Stoic conception of the laudability of poverty, yet earlier on in the treatise he had accepted the Stoic idea of the absolute interconnectedness of all virtues. In a philosopher's world all of this would have made him simply inconsistent. But in the world of humanism his strategic acceptance and denial of various parts of different ideological schemata allowed him much. He was able to mount a persistent and consistent critique of curial life while at the same time defending his own interests.