Bernard of Clairvaux's Preaching of the Third Crusade and Orality

Sylvia Schein

Preaching was one of the most powerful forms of communication in the Middle Ages. It was certainly the most important tool employed by the Church for transmitting the *Vox Dei*. The main goal of preaching was the manifestation of *Vox Dei* and its teaching. In the first chapter of his *Summa de Arte Praedicatoria*, Alain of Lille (c. 1199) defined preaching as "the teaching or religion and custom at the service of the believers, based upon logic and rooted in an authoritative source."[1]

The preaching of the crusades differed from preaching in general. Although it also aimed at the *Vox Dei*, its main goal was an immediate one: to convince its audiences to take the Cross. These audiences were mixed. The message, however, was aimed exclusively at the European knighthood, whose culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was basically oral and vernacular.[2] It is the subject of this study to examine the preaching of the Second Crusade by Bernard of Clairvaux and identify those of its themes that were transmitted orally and rendered familiar to illiterate audiences whose culture was oral and vernacular.

In December, 1145, the crusader principality of Edessa was conquered by the *atabeg* of Aleppo and Mosul, Imad-Ad-Din Zengi. Native Christians were spared, but all the Franks of the city of Edessa were rounded up and killed and their women sold into slavery. Some historians of the crusade, such as Steven Runciman, claimed that the West was "horrified" at the news of the fall of Edessa.[3] So thought Pope Eugenius III. The response to his *Quantum predecessores of* December 1145, however, calling the West to recover Edessa, was feeble. Few in

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[1] Alan of Lille [Alanus de Insulis], *De arte praedicatoria*, in *PL*, 210, col. 111. Sophia Menache and Jeannine Horowitz, "Rhetoric and Its Practice in Medieval Sermons," *Historical Reflections*, 11 (1996), pp. 325-326. See also, Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei. Communication in the Middle Ages* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 22-23.

[2] For crusade preaching see P. J. Cole, *The Preaching of the Crusades to the Holy Land, 1095-1270* (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy Books, 1991); Christoph T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades. Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); idem. *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for Preaching the Cross. Edition of Latin Texts. Translation and Introduction* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[3] Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952; reissued in Pelican Books, 1971), II, p. 248. On the Second Crusade, see Virginia G. Berry, "The Second Crusade," *A History of the Crusades*. ed. Kenneth Setton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), I, pp. 463-512; Giles Constable, "The Second Crusade as seen by Contemporaries," *Traditio*. 9 (1953), pp. 213-279.

the West knew or cared about Edessa.[4] This situation bears similarities to the First Crusade, when hardly anyone cared about the fate of Byzantium and the Eastern Christians. It was the genius of Pope Urban II who, by establishing the Holy Sepulchre as the final aim of the expedition, turned it into such a great success.[5] And indeed, the man who knew better than Pope Eugenius III and who made the Second Crusade a mass movement, was Bernard of Clairvaux. Eugenius III granted Bernard a license "to preach and to move the hearts of everyone." The success of his preaching was tremendous. In Vézelay in March, 1146, as told by the chronicler Odo of Dueil, "when the heavenly instrument had poured forth in his accustomed manner the dew of the divine word, from everywhere men began to shout and ask for crosses." Bernard was not prepared for such a massive response. The eager crowd very quickly depleted the supply of crosses that he had brought for distribution, and he was compelled to tear up his own clothing in order to provide for more crosses.[6]

Bernard de Clairvaux himself wrote to the pope in May 1146: "I opened my mouth, I spoke, and soon the number of crusaders multiplied. Villages and towns are empty. You would have difficulty in finding one man for seven women. One sees only widows where husbands are yet living."[7] And indeed the success of Bernard's preaching turned many women in Europe into real widows, since the Second Crusade was a fiasco and involved a high rate of mortality among its ranks.

The *Historia miraculorum S. Bernadi in itinere germanico patratorum* describes the crowds that turned out to see him as large, disorderly, threatening and animated. Members of Bernard's entourage claimed to have witnessed his numerous miracles and to have recorded them as they occurred. As Bernard most probably preached in Latin, a language unknown to the crowds, but sometimes enforced his message by the use of what little German he knew, what mattered was not so much what he said but his body language and his reputation that had preceded him as a living saint who performed miracles. The success of his

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[4] Cole, *The Preaching*. ppp. 37-41. John G. Rowe, "The Origins of the Second Crusade: Pope Eugenius III, Bernard of Clairvaux and Louis VII of France," in *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians*, ed. Michael Gervers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 79-89. For *Quantum predecessores* see P. Rassow, "Der Text der Kreuzzugsbulle Eugens III," *Neues Archiv*. 45 (1924), pp. 302-305; eng. trans. Louise and Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades. Idea and Reality 1095-1274* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp. 57-59.

[5] J. Cowdrey, "Pope Urban II's Preaching of the First Crusade," *History*. 55 (1970), pp. 177-188. J. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia and London: The Athlone Press, 1986), pp. 13-30 *et passim*. Cole, *The Preaching*, pp. 3-36. Sylvia Schein, "Jerusalem. Objectif originel de la première croisade?" in *Autour de la Première Croisade. Actes du Colloque de la "Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latine East" (Clermont-Ferrand, 22-25 juin 1995)*, ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996), pp. 119-126.

[6] Odo of Jueil, *De profectione Ludovici VII in orientem*. ed. and trans. Virginia Gingerick Berry (New-York: Columbia Unviersity Press, 1948), pp. 8-11. Cole, *The Preaching*, p. 42.

[7] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera*, ed. J. Leclercq et al. (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957-1978), VIII, p. 141. Cole, *The Preaching*, p. 43.

preaching was summed up by another preacher of the crusades. According to Gerard of Wales, who preached the Third Crusade in Wales (1188), a crusade sermon that did not inspire men to take the Cross was a failure; what was said in a sermon was not as important as how it was said. The arousal of strong emotions, manifested in universal weeping and the presence of miracles, was the precondition for taking the cross.[8]

Moreover, Geoffrey of Auxerre, his biographer, while discussing Bernard's preaching ability described him as someone who was able to adjust what he said to his audience. He praised Bernard as a preacher who used language appropriately and who used the Bible in his speech. The first of these skills had been emphasized for a preacher since at least the time of Gregory the Great.[9] Bernard's second skill, namely, the usage he made of the Bible, was particularly important while addressing audiences of illiterates, whose spiritual world was deeply influenced by the Scriptures transmitted to them through various audio-visual means, such as prayers, liturgy, sermons, ecclesiastical art, etc. Robert of Basevorn in his *Forma Praedicandi* of 1322, included Bernard among the five greatest Christian preachers (the others being Christ, Paul, Augustine, and Gregory the Great); he argued that Bernard "more than all the rest, stresses the Scriptures in all his sayings, so that scarcely [there is] one statement of his own which does not depend upon an authority in the Bible, or on a multitude of authorities. His procedure is always devout, always artful. He takes a certain theme or something in place of it and begins it artfully, divides it into two, three or many members, confirms it, and ends it, using every rhetorical color so that the whole work shines with a double glow, earthly and heavenly; and this it seems to me, invited to devotion those who understand more feelingly..."[10]

Additional factors that explain the success of Bernard's preaching were its two main themes. Close to the hearts of European knighthood, the Themes were presented in terms familiar to the knights. The central theme in Bernard's preaching was personal salvation. To him crusade was, like pilgrimage, a personal and liturgical gesture towards salvation, an exercise in personal penance; it was an opportunity granted to believers by the grace of God for the redemption of their souls. In his encyclical letter *Ad peregrinantes Jherusalem* (1146), he wrote:

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[8] *Historia miraculorum S. Bernadi in itinere germanico patratorum*, in *PL*, 185, cols. 377, 388, 390, 391, 397, 406. Gerald of Wales [Giraldus Cambrensis], *Itinerarium Kambriae*, ed. F. Dimock, *Rolls Series*. 21.6 (1868), p. 14; idem, *De rebus a se gestis*, in *Rolls Series*, 21 (i), (1861), p. 74. Gary Dickson, "Medieval Christian Crowds and the Origins of Crowd Psychology," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique*. 95 (2000). pp. 54-75, esp. p. 61. Watkins Williams, *Saint Bernard of Clairvaux* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), p. 273. It is known that another preacher of this crusade, Rudolph of Clairvaux, had with him a translator. See Constable, "The Second Crusade," p. 254, n. 170; Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita prima*, in *PL*. 185, cols. 307-308.

[9] Geoffrey of Auxerre, *Vita prima*. col. 306-308.

[10] James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 346-347.

> Has the hand of the Lord been shortened or has it been made powerless to save, just because he has called poor little worms to guard his inheritance and restore it to him? Can he not send "more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53) or simply say the word and the land will be set free? It is completely within his power to do so when he wishes it. But I say that the Lord is putting you to the test ... For the Lord has pity on his people and is providing a salving remedy for the gravely fallen. Consider how much skill he uses to save you and be astonished... He does not desire your death, but that you should turn from your way and live, because this is way of offering you a favorable opportunity, not of destruction but of salvation... Now, strong soldier and man of war, you have a battle you can fight without danger in which to win will be glorious and to die will be gain... Take the sign of the cross... If it is worn on a faithful shoulder it is certain to be worth the Kingdom of Heaven.[11]

The second theme was the fate of Jerusalem. For Bernard Jerusalem was the Lord's territory,

> His land... where he was seen and in which he lived among men for more than thirty years. His land, which he honored by his birth, embellished by his miracles, consecrated with his blood and enriched by his burial. His land, in which the voice of the turtle-dove was heard when the Son of the Virgin praised the life of chastity. His Land, where the first flowers of His resurrection appeared...[12]

The crusade was aimed to defend it. For Bernard, fighting for Jerusalem, unlike other kinds of warfare, that were evil, was a path to the Kingdom of Heaven; an opportunity for the knighthood to enter the Heavenly Jerusalem, not by abandoning their profession, but by applying it to the right cause, Earthly Jerusalem. He thus exhorted the European knighthood: "You should not desist from your earlier militarism (*militia*), but you should resist from your malice (*malitia*), with which you are accustomed to kill one another, destroying one another in such a way you are bringing one another to ruin..."[13]

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[11] Leopold Grill, "Die Kreuzzugs Epistel St. Bernards *Ad Peregrinantes Jerusalem*," *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktiner Ordens.* 67 (1956), pp. 237-253. For Bernard's concept of the crusade, see J. Prawer, *Histoire du Royaume Latin de Jérusalem* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1969), I, pp. 347-363.

[12] Bernard of Clairvaux to the duke and the people of Bohemia, 1147. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera.* VIII, p. 435. For Bernard's attitude to Jerusalem, see, e. g., Thomas Renna, "Bernard of Clairvaux and the Temple of Solomon," in *Law. Custom and the Social Fabric in Medieval Europe. Essays in Honor of Bryce Lyon,* eds. Bernard Bachrach and David Nicholas (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1990), pp. 73-88. Peter Raedts, "St. Bernard of Clairvaux and Jerusalem," in *Prophecy and Eschatology,* ed. M. Wilks, Studies in Church History. Subsidia, 10 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994), pp. 169-182.

[13] Bernard to Eastern Franks and the Bavarians, 1146. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera,* VIII, p. 315. See also A. Grabois, "Militia and Malitia: The Bernardine Vision of Chivalry," in *The Second Crusade,* pp. 49-56.

The tactics used by Bernard while preaching the crusade, aimed mainly at the redemption of souls, and are described in his *Vita,* i. e., when he attempted to convince the hesitant King Conrad of Germany. During the mass of 24 December 1146, in Speyer he was suddenly inspired to preach to him "not as a king but as a man"; adducing the motif of the Final Judgment, he then envisaged Conrad standing before Christ, who asks: "O man, what ought I to have done for you and did not?" and enumerated his God-given benefits. At this point Conrad became visibly agitated and cried out: "Truly, I do acknowledge the divine gifts of grace; moreover, that I may not be found ungrateful before him, I am ready to serve him in as much as I am enjoined to do so on his behalf ."[14] He took the cross, and following his example his nephew Frederick and other German princes who were present took it as well.[15]

The main themes of Bernard's preaching became extremely popular during the twelfth century, being orally transmitted through vernacular crusader songs. "Popularity" in the Middle Ages does not mean quite what it means today. Restricted literacy meant restricted diffusion. "Popular" in the Middle Ages meant being trendy in the aristocratic courts. Literature in the twelfth century mainly meant whatever an educated man would write for his audience to listen to. Dealing both with crusader songs and crusader preaching we are concerned with what people listened to, additionally saw performed, and considered as entertainment, although the possibility of other functions, such as instruction, exhortation, and propaganda should not be excluded.

Vernacular crusade songs ("songs of exhortation and polemic") come to us almost entirely from the repertoires of the troubadors and trovéres, that is, from secular, vernacular monophonic (single line) song. The songs reflect lay aristocratic views; although the composers and singers were not necessarily all nobles, they are to be associated with the landed noble and his entourage, with what elsewhere has been called the courtly circle.[16]

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[14] Philip of Clairvaux, "S. Bernardi abbatis vita," ed. Jean Mabillon, in *Sancti Bernardi opera omnia* (Paris: J. Grigard, 1839), cols. 2289-2290; Cole, *Preaching,* pp. 44-46.

[15] See on the entire subject Cosack, "Konrad III. Entschluss zum Kreuzzug," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung,* 35 (1914), pp. 278-296. Berry, "The Second Crusade," pp. 472-474.

[16] For the discussion regarding this genre see William Chester Jordan, "The representation of the crusades in the songs attributed to Thiband, Count Palatine of Champagne," *Journal of Medieval History,* 25 (1999), p. 29 n. 13. See also Richard L. Crocker, "Early Crusade Songs," in *The Holy War,* ed. Thomas Patrick Murphy (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), pp. 78-98. Margaret Switten, "Singing the Second Crusade." in *The Second Crusade,* pp. 67-76; Michael Routledge, "Songs," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades,* ed. Jonathan Riley-Smith (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 91-111. Already the contemporaries of the Second Crusade were aware of the importance of the song in shaping public opinion. Gerhoh of Reichersberg commented that: "In the mouth of the laity who fight for Christ the praise of God is growing, because there is nobody in the whole Christian realm who dares to sing dirty songs in public, but the whole land rejoices in the praises of Christ, in songs in the vernacular as well, especially in German – which is a particularly good language for singing songs in," in *Kreuzzugsdichtung.* ed. U. Müller, (Tübin-

There are a few common *topoi* in the preaching of Bernard and in the crusade songs of the twelfth century, thus pointing to the same oral tradition. Both presented the crusade in feudal terms. Indeed, from the very beginnings of the crusade movement, to the crusaders Christ was a king and Lord who had lost his inheritance, his *haereditas* or *patrimonium*, to the Moslems. It was the duty of Christ's subjects to fight for the recovery of Christ's heritage as they would for the domains of their own lords. Thus, popes, crusade preachers, and poets used those terms familiar to the European knighthood.[17] Similarly, Bernard presents the relations between the crusaders and Christ in feudal terms. Writing in 1147 to the duke and people of Bohemia, he argued that

> our king is accused of treachery; it is said of him that he is not God, but he falsely pretended to be something he is not. Any man among you who is his vassal ought to rise up to defend his lord from the infamous accusation of treachery; he should go to the sure fights, where to win will be to be glorious and where to die will be gain.[18]

The earliest French crusade song, "Knights, you are indeed fortunate" (*Chevalier, mult estes guariz*), an anonymous composition from about 1145-1146, composed precisely at the time when Bernard preached the Second Crusade, echoes the themes of Christ as a feudal lord and of salvation: "Knights, you are indeed fortunate that God has issued his call for help to you against the Turks and the Almoravides who have perpetrated such dishonourable deeds against him. They have illegally seized his fiefs/We must indeed lament this/for it was there [in the Holy Land]/that God was first served and acknowledged as lord."[19] The message is hammered home in terms of feudal duty, in images of God as a *seigneur* and knights as owing him the kind of protection that they owed to their suzerain. The poem also translated another idea of Bernard into terms that could be easily accessed by the knights: "Whoever goes with Louis now/Need never fear the devils' horde/His soul will go to the Paradise/With the Angels of the Lord."[20] In an

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gen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1979), no. 7, pp. 8-9. Collin Morris, *Medieval Media. Mass Communication in the Making of Europe* (Southamptom: Collin Morris, 1972), p. 7.

[17] Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Crusading as an Act of Love," *History*, 65 (1980), pp. 178-182. Jordan, "The representation," pp. 29-31. For papal crusade bulls as inspiration source for crusade songs see G. Wolfram, "Kreuzpredigt und Kreuzlied," *Zeitschrift fur Deutsches Alterthum*, 30 (1886), pp. 89-132.

[18] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera*, VIII, p. 436.

[19] Joseph Bédier et Pierre Aubry, *Les Chansons de Croisade avec Leurs Mélodies* (Paris: Hirsch, 1909; repr. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1974), p. 8. Feudal terminology is used also by other poets. Fulk of Marseille warned in 1194 Richard I of England that if he delayed any further his departure to the East the emperor would receive all the credit: "What then are our barons doing and the English king whom may God preserve? Does he think that he has accomplished his task? There will be a very ugly deception if he has borne the expense and another takes the price. For the emperor is making efforts that God may recover his land [and] he will indeed be the first to bring help to it." See in Elizabeth Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading 1095-1274* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 63.

[20] Bédier and Aubry, p. 9.

undated poem, "For the perfect joy in Paradise" (*Par joie avoiz perfite en Paradis*), a crusader laments leaving his beloved in order "to attain perfect joy in Paradise."[21] Feudal vocabulary appears also in the "Ahi, amors" of Canon of Bethunie who, writing on the eve of the Third Crusade, claimed that "God is besieged in His inheritance/And we shall see how people will respond ..." It is the duty of the people, the poet – who became a participant in the Third Crusade – argued to recover for Christ His inheritance.[22]

Both Bernard and the crusader songs use similar parables and quotations from the Scriptures. The use of the Scriptures, their images and metaphors in the propaganda of the crusades, was effective, as the Scriptures were the most commonly used book in the Middle Ages. Their content was known even to illiterates (*idiotes*) through various audio-visual means like prayers, liturgy, sermons, eccesiastical art, etc. A parable used by Bernard de Clairvaux appears on the eve of the Third Crusade. The poem copies almost verbatim some of Bernard's sentences in *Ad peregrinantes Iherusalem* (his encyclical letter of 1146). Composed ca. 1189, the ,You who love with true love' (*Vos qui ameis de vraie amour*), includes the following verses:

> I have heard, it said proverbially/A sensible merchant spends money from his purse/And he has a very fickle heart/Who sees what is good and chooses what is evil/Do you know what got promised to those who wish to take the cross?/God help me, a very fair wage!/Paradise, by firm promise![23]

This is again a popular interpretation, as Bernard himself argued in his letter to the Eastern Franks and the Bavarians (1146): "If you are a prudent merchant, if you are a man fond of acquiring this world's goods, I am showing you certain great markets; make sure not to let the chance pass you by. Take the sign of the cross..."[24]

Chroniclers and poets also provide some information regarding oral reactions to the main themes of Bernard's preaching. One of Bernard's chief arguments while exhorting believers to take the cross was, as already said, that God caused the fall of Edessa in order to give them an opportunity for salvation, for the redemption of their souls. He claimed

> the hand of God has not been shortened or made powerless just because he has called upon little worms to guard his inheritance and restore it to him. He could easily send more than twelve legions of angels or simply say the word and the land will be set free.[25]

The Minnesinger Albrecht of Johansdorf recorded (on the eve of the Third Crusade) in one of his crusade poems, the "Die hinnen varn,'" various opinions voiced in regard to this subject. He wrote:

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[21] Ibid., pp. 283-285.
[22] Canon of Bethunie, "Ahi, amors," in *Kreuzzugsdichtung*. no. 20, p. 33.
[23] Bédier and Aubry, p. 21.
[24] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera*. VIII, p. 315.
[25] Ibid., p. 313.

> Those who leave this country tell us ... that Jerusalem, the pure city and the country have never been in greater need of help. This appeal is greeted with derision by the simple ones. They all say 'If our Lord was offended, he could avenge himself without all the soldiers having to cross the sea.[26]

It seems the poet is recording here oral reactions to crusade preaching overheard by him. Following the failure of the Second Crusade, the chronicler of Würzburg accused the crusade preachers of propagating a gross deception in the name of religion. He calls them "pseudo-prophets, sons of Belial, witnesses of Antichrist". According to him:

> their preaching was so enormously persuasive that almost everyone, everywhere, came on account of harmonious agreement to offer up themselves voluntarily in, so to speak, to a common massacre; not only did the ordinary men do this but, indeed, even kings, dukes, marquises, and other potenates of this world, believed that they were offering themselves in the service of God and rushed into this with enormous danger to body and soul.[27]

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To sum up, like most of the preachers of the crusades who were churchmen and some of them theologians, Bernard of Clairvaux presented theological ideas in terms that were drastically modified and even popularized. He rendered these terms easily understood by the laity and particularly by the European knighthood. Many of his ideas found their way into popular songs transmitted orally, which, while reflecting the official teaching, translated it into the vernacular and into topical terms appropriate to the audience's mentality.

Bernard's sermons inspired crusade preaching for the next few centuries, including that of another abbot of Clairvaux, Henry of Albano. Equally influenced were Gregory IX, Henry of Strasbourg, Innocent III, and Jacques de Vitry, to say nothing of the various, often anonymous, sermons and crusade songs. It was against such preachers like Bernard de Clairvaux that a thirteenth century satirical poem warned the believers:

> If you go to hear the preachers,
> Do beware of clever teachers,
> Who can with their style and gloss,
> Make you captive of the cross.[28]

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[26] Albrecht von Johansdorf, "Dei hinnen varn," in *Minnesangs Frühling*, eds. K. Lachmann et al. (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel Verlag, 1965), pp. 117-118. Siberry, *Criticism*, pp. 192-193 and n. 20.

[27] *Annales Herlipolenses*, in *M.G.H.S.S.*, 16, p. 3; Constable, "The Second Crusade," p. 268.

[28] Quoted after Colin Morris, "Propaganda for War: The Dissemination of the Crusading Ideal in the Twelfth Century," in *The Church and War*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 86. For Bernard's reaction to the failure of the Second Crusade see Giles Constable, "A Report of a Lost Sermon by St. Bernard on the Failure of the Second Crusade," in *Studies in Medieval Cistercian History*, ed. Jeremiah F. O'Sullivan (Shanon: Irish University Press, 1971), pp. 49-54.

ORAL HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES
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MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

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CEU MEDIEVALIA

VOLUME 3

Oral History of the Middle Ages
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Krems and Budapest 2001

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER ABTEILUNG KULTUR UND WISSENSCHAFT DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

niederösterreichkultur

copy editor: Judith Rasson

Cover illustration: The wife of Potiphar covets Joseph: "... erat autem Joseph pulchra facie et decorus apectu: post multos itaque dies iecit domina oculos suis in Ioseph et ait dormi mecum." ("... And Joseph was [a] goodly [person], and well favoured. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me."), Gen. 39: 6-7 (KJV). Concordantiae Caritatis, c. 1350. Cistercian abbey of Lilienfeld (Lower Austria), ms 151, fol. 244v (detail). Photo: Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit (Krems an der Donau).

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– ISBN 3-90 1094 15 6 (Krems)

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– ISBN 963 9241 64 4 (Budapest)
– ISSN 1587-6470 CEU MEDIEVALIA

Published by:

Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, A-3500 Krems. Austria,

and

Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Nádor utca 9, H-1051 Budapest, Hungary.

Printed by Printself, Budapest.

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Preface

Oral culture played an instrumental role in medieval society.[1] Due to the lack of any direct source evidence, however, research into the functions and importance of oral communication in the Middle Ages must confront a number of significant problems. Only indrect traces offer the opportunity to analyze phenomena that were based on or connected with the spoken word. The 'oral history' of the Middle Ages requires the application of different approaches than dealing with the 20th or 21st century.

For some decades Medieval Studies have been interested in questions of orality and literacy, their relationship and the substitution of the spoken by the written word.[2] Oral and literate culture were not exclusive and certainly not opposed to each other.[3] The 'art of writing' was part of the 'ars rhetorica' and writing makes no sense without speech.[4] Any existing written statement should also be seen as a spoken one, although, clearly, not every oral statement as a written one. Authors regularly wrote with oral delivery in mind. 'Speaking' and 'writing' are not antonyms.

It is also obvious that "the use of oral communication in medieval society should not be evaluated . . . as a function of *culture populaire* vis-à-vis *culture savante* but, rather, of the communication habits and the tendency of medieval man

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[1] For the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, cf. Willem Frijhoff, "Communication et vie quotidienne à la fin du moyen âge et à l'epoque moderne: réflexions de théorie et de méthode," in *Kommuniation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Hundsbichler (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), p. 24: "La plupart de gens vivait encore pour l'essentiel dans une culture orale et les procédés d'appropriation des idées passaient de préférence par la parole dite et écoutée, quand bien même on était capable d'une lecture visuelle plus ou moins rudimentaire."

[2] See Marco Mostert, "New Approaches to Medieval Communication?" in *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), pp. 15-37; Michael Richter, "Die Entdeckung der 'Oralität' der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft durch die neuere Mediävistik," in *Die Aktualität des Mittelalters*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Bochum: D. Winkler, 2000), pp. 273-287.

[3] Peter Burke calls the construct of "oral versus literate" useful but at the same time dangerous: idem, "Mündliche Kultur und >Druckkultur< im spätmittelalterlichen Italien," in *Volkskultur des europäischen Spätmittelalters*, eds. Peter Dinzelbacher and Hans-Dieter Mück (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1987), p. 60.

[4] Michael Clanchy, "Introduction," in *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. Marco Mostert (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), p. 6.

to share his intellectual experiences in the corporate framework."[5] Oral delivery was not "the sole prerogative of any socioeconomic class."[6]

For all these reasons, it is important to analyze the extent of and context, in which 'speech acts,' auditive effects, and oral tradition occur in medieval sources .[7] Research into the use of the spoken word or references to it in texts and images provides new insight into various, mainly social, rules and patterns of the communication system. It opens up additional approaches to the organization and complexity of different, but indispensably related, media in medieval society, and their comparative analysis.[8]

The spoken word is connected with the physical presence of its 'sender.' Speech may represent the authenticity of the given message in a more obvious way than written texts or images. Therefore, the use of 'speech acts' in written or visual evidence also has to be seen in context with the attempt to create, construct, or prove authenticity. Moreover, spoken messages contribute to and increase the lifelikeness of their contents, which may influence their perception by the receiver, their efficacy and success. Being aware of such a situation will have led to the explicit and intended use and application of the spoken word in written texts and images – to increase their authenticity and importance, too.

If one operates with a model of 'closeness' and 'distance' of communication with regard to the level of relation of 'senders' and 'receivers,' then the 'speech acts' or their representation have to be seen as contributors to a 'closer' connection among the participants of the communication process.[9] At the same time, however, speech might be evaluated as less official. One regularly comes across 'oral space'

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[5] Sophia Menache, *The Vox Dei. Communication in the Middle Ages* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 19.

[6] Ibidem, p. 21. Cf. also Jan-Dirk Müller, "Zwischen mündlicher Anweisung und schriftlicher Sicherung von Tradition. Zur Kommunikationsstruktur spätmittelalterlicher Fechtbücher," in *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Hundsbichler (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), p. 400: "Offensichtlich sind schriftliche und nichtschriftliche Tradierung von Wissen weiterhin relativ unabhängig voneinander, nachdem die Schrift längst dazu angesetzt hat, Inseln der Mündlichkeit oder praktisch-enaktiver Wissensvermittlung zu erobern. Die Gedächtnisstütze kann die Erfahrung nicht ersetzen, sondern allenfalls reaktivieren. Sie ist sogar nur verständlich, wo sie auf anderweitig vermittelte Vorkenntnisse stößt."

[7] Cf. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, ed., *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1995).

[8] See, esp., Horst Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen, Schrift und Bild. Kultur und Gedächtnis im Mittelalter* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1995), passim.

[9] See also Stefan Sonderegger, ">Gesprochen oder nur geschrieben?< Mündlichkeit in mittelalterlichen Texten als direkter Zugang zum Menschen," in *Homo Medietas. Aufsätze zu Religiosität, Literatur und Denkformen des Menschen vom Mittelalter bis in die Neuzeit. Festschrift für Alois Maria Haas zum 65. Geburtstag,* eds. Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde and Niklaus Largier (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 665: "Jedenfalls darf man sich bewußt bleiben, daß auch in den Texten des deutschen Mittelalters die Reflexe gesprochener Sprache eine bedeutende Schicht ausmachen, die besonders dann immer wieder hervortritt, wenn es um einen direkten Zugang zum Menschen geht, um einVerstehen aus unmittelbarer Partnerschaft heraus ..."

that has become institutionalized or more official by the application of 'written space.'[10] Simultanous employment of such different levels and qualities of messages must often have had considerable influence on their efficacy.[11]

The papers in this volume are the outcome of an international workshop that was held in February, 2001, at the Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest. Participants concentrated on problems of the occurrence, usage, and patterns of the spoken word in written and visual sources of the Middle Ages. They dealt with the role and contents of direct and indirect speech in textual evidence or in relation to it, such as chronicles, travel descriptions, court and canonization protocols, sermons, testaments, law-books, literary sources, drama, etc. They also tried to analyze the function of oral expression in connection with late medieval images.

The audiovisuality of medieval communication processes[12] has proved to be evident and, thus, important for any kind of further comparative analysis of the various levels of the 'oral–visual–literate,' i.e. multimedia culture of the Middle Ages. Particular emphasis has to be put on methodological problems, such as the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches,[13] or the question of the extent to which we are, generally, able to comprehend and to decode the communication systems of the past.[14] Moreover, the medievalist does not come across any types of sources in which oral communication represents the main concern.[15] Instead, she or he is confronted, at first glance, with a great variety of 'casual' and 'marginal' evidence.

We would like to thank all the contributors to the workshop and to this volume. Their cooperation made it possible to publish the results of the meeting in the same year in which it took place. This can be seen as a rare exception, at least in the world of the historical disciplines. The head, faculty, staff, and students of the Department of Medieval Studies of Central European University offered various help and support. Special thanks go to Judith Rasson, the copy editor of

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[10] This, e.g., could be well shown in a case study on the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela: Friederike Hassauer, "Schriftlichkeit und Mündlichkeit im Alltag des Pilgers am Beispiel der Wallfahrt nach Santiago de Compostela," in *Wallfahrt und Alltag in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, eds. Gerhard Jaritz and Barbara Schuh (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 277-316.

[11] Cf. Bob Scribner, "Mündliche Kommunikation und Strategien der Macht in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Kommunikation und Alltag in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Helmut Hundsbichler (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 183-197.

[12] Wenzel, *Hören und Sehen*, p. 292.

[13] Cf. Ursula Schaefer, "Zum Problem der Mündlichkeit," in *Modernes Mittelalter. Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, ed. Joachim Heinzle (Frankfurt am Main and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1994), pp. 374 f.

[14] Frijhoff, "Communication et vie quotidienne," p. 25: "Sommes-nous encore en mesure de communiquer avec la communication de jadis?"

[15] Michael Richter, *Sprache und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen zur mündlichen Kommunikation in England von der Mitte des elften bis zu Beginn des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1979), p. 22.

this volume, who took particluar care with the texts of the many non-native speakers fighting with the pitfalls of the English language.

Budapest, Krems, and Constance
December 2001

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