

**“Do Not Scandalize Thy Brother:”
Scandal as Preached on by Jacobus de Voragine
and Other Thirteenth-Century Sermon-Writers¹**

Elena M. Lemeneva

In the light of the apparent interest in the concept of scandal in late twelfth- and thirteenth-century theological thought,² it is reasonable to expect thirteenth-century sermons to convey this concept to the masses. Defined as “a public speech whose purpose is to convince the audience of certain religious truths and either to convert or to instruct them in proper faith and morals,”³ a sermon would be the appropriate means to disseminate an important religious notion and to teach how to act upon it.

In this paper, I mainly concentrate on two late thirteenth-century texts that were widely used as models for preaching and, in all likelihood, reached an actual audience at least once. I assume that these texts to a greater degree than theologians’ compositions reached and/or influenced the notions of the rank-and-file public—recipients of moral instruction. I would like to see how these texts understood scandal, in what context they brought it up, and to what extent their idea of scandal matched that of theological treatises, primarily the ones of Thomas Aquinas.⁴

The Dominican Jacobus de Voragine (1228/29-1298) was a figure of considerable political caliber: twice elected provincial of Lombardy, by the end of his life he was appointed archbishop of Genova. Although in no way a theologian, he left an indelible imprint on both medieval and post-medieval devotion

¹ This paper was first delivered at the 43rd International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI, 11 May 2008) thanks to a grant from Wilfrid Laurier University (Waterloo, ON).

² See the paper by Lindsay Bryan in this volume; eadem, “Scandle is Heued Sunne,” *Florilegium* 14 (1995-96): pp. 71-86; “*Vae mundo a scandalis*: The Sin of Scandal in Medieval England,” PhDiss. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1998).

³ *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly M. Kienzle, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge occidental 81-83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), p. 151.

⁴ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* in 61 vols., edited in Latin and translated into English by Thomas R. Heath (London: Blackfriars, 1972), vol. 35 (2a2ae.34-46), q. 43.

due to his collections of model sermons. In conformity with the general Dominican effort to promote proper preaching, Jacobus started off with a collection of stories dedicated to the lives of the saints and to liturgical feasts. This legendary could be used as a concise and easily consulted source of moral examples to be incorporated in sermons or as a book for devotional reading. The *Golden Legend*, as it has become known later, was so successful that no other book, except for the Bible, could rival its popularity. Over 1,200 manuscripts of the *Golden Legend* in various languages have survived from the Middle Ages, not to mention multiple editions following the *editio princeps* (Cologne, 1470).⁵

Jacobus de Voragine belonged to the same generation as Thomas Aquinas and was, as a high-ranking prelate, most certainly aware both of the relevant statutes of the IV Lateran Council⁶ and of the theological views on scandal. Let us see whether his knowledge transpired in the *Golden Legend*.

Jacobus recounts that, at the approach of death, Saint Bernard bequeathed to his fellow monks three things which he had observed all his life:

I have sought to give scandal to no one, and if another fell, I tried to hide his fall; I ever entrusted my own mind less than the mind of others; being wronged, I never sought vengeance on the wrongdoer. Thus I leave you these three: charity, humility, and patience: these be my testament.⁷

In this passage Bernard (or Jacobus de Voragine in rendering Bernard's last words) equates 'scandal' with 'fall' and 'falling' and clearly endows it with a much more specific meaning than the Old Testament sense of the word, as

⁵ On manuscripts, translations and editions see "Legenda Aurea," in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 5 (Munich and Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1991), coll. 1795-1801; Alain Boureau, *La Légende dorée: Le système narratif de Jacques de Voragine (mort en 1298)* (Paris: Cerf, 1984), p. 7; Barbara Fleith, *Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der lateinischen Legenda Aurea* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1991).

⁶ E.g., #15 on clerics' drunkenness and keeping birds of prey and hunting dogs, #16 on the dress of clerics, #18 on the ban on clerical participation in the shedding of blood or duels. See *Constitutiones concilii quarti Lateranensis una cum commentariis glossatorum*, ed. A. García y García (Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1981).

⁷ I chose to quote *The Golden Legend*, tr. and adapted by W. G. Ryan and H. Ripperger (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941; repr.: Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer, 1991) (hereafter: *GL1*) over W. G. Ryan's more recent translation, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints* in 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) (hereafter *GL2*), because I find that the former more faithfully renders the meaning of the Latin text at least in the case of St. Bernard's testament. *GL1*, p. 477; Jacopo da Varazze, *Legenda Aurea*, critical edition in 2 vols. by G. P. Maggioni (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galuzzo, 1998) (hereafter: *LA*), p. 826, ll. 255-60: *Tandem beatus pater Bernardus morti feliciter appropinquans ait fratribus suis: 'Tria uobis obseruando relinquo, que in stadio presentis uite quo cucurri memini me pro uiribus obseruasse: Nemini scandalum facere uolui et si aliquando incidit sedauit ut potui. Minus semper sensui meo quam alterius credidi. Lesus de ledente nunquam uindictam expetii. Ecce, caritatem, humilitatem et patientiam uobis relinquo.'*

“nothing more than an obstacle,” a stumbling block of whatever kind.⁸ In Bernard’s use, this word definitely carries New Testament connotations of a *moral* lapse, thus making scandal a stumbling stone of a very particular kind: a spiritual obstacle on the road to salvation. Bernard opposes scandal to charity – another derivation from the New Testament – without, however, explicitly calling it a sin, and states that he neither tried to offend another nor to attract public attention to a scandalous incident. This is a fairly good description of scandal as treated in moral theology, for it includes Bernard’s own wrongdoings that may have offended or shocked the others, as well as his reaction to the acts of others. On the other hand, this description certainly does not operate with categories such as active or passive and direct or accidental scandal. Just as likely, Jacobus de Voragine did not have these categories in mind but instead appealed to the common notion of scandal. One may, thus, conclude that the general public addressed, just like the theologians, realized that it took (at least) two to make a scandal, that is, to cause a moral fall: the agent and the observer.⁹ Note that all three of Bernard’s mandates describe ideal ways to interact with others, thus scandal is viewed as the enemy of communal peace.¹⁰

The priority of communal peace in interacting with others is also stressed elsewhere. In the legend of St. Ambrose, St. Augustine’s mother was surprised to learn that in Milan one did not fast on the Sabbath. When Augustine inquired with St. Ambrose about the reasons for that, he answered: “‘When I am in Rome, I fast on the Sabbath. Do thou likewise, and when thou art in a diocese, follow what is done there, lest you scandalize anyone, or thyself be scandalized.’” Augustine adds that, thereafter, having turned over these words in his mind, he came to consider them an oracle of God.¹¹ This story echoes the apostolic debate as to whether one should do or not do something one considers appropriate when there is danger that it may offend the weaker ones (cf. Rom 14:13-21; 1 Cor 9:10-13). Scandal here obviously stands for the stumbling block, shocking behavior and, potentially, an unintended invitation to sin. Paraphrased in Thomas Aquinas’ terms, Ambrose counsels not to the occasion of indirectly passive

⁸ Bryan, “*Vae mundo a scandalis*,” p. 9.

⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 303: “For a sin to be scandalous, it must be committed before at least one other person; this is what constitutes ‘public’ for theological purposes.”

¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 13: “Every reference, particularly in the New Testament, reinforces the Christian obligation not only not to sin, but not to cause others to fall either, setting up a mutual responsibility for spiritual health among the community of Christians. In this sense, scandal is the opposite of charity.”

¹¹ *GL1*, p. 33 (cf. *GL2*, 1, pp. 237; *LA*, p. 390, ll. 207-11): *Ait Ambrosius: ‘Cum Romam uenio, ieiuno sabbato. Sic et tu, ad quam forte ecclesiam ueneris, eius morem serua, si cuiquam non uis scandalum esse nec quemquam tibi.’ Et subdit Augustinus: ‘Ego de hac sententia atque etiam cogitans, ita semper habui, tamquam eam celesti oraculo acceperim.’*

scandal in the observers. Keeping up appearances for the sake of peace in the community is the message of this little story.

Another example from the *Golden Legend* presents scandal, again a disruption of public peace, as slander or a misconstruction of someone's perfectly plausible actions due to the observers' weakness of faith and hasty judgment. An abbot named Vitalius wished to see if St. John the Almoner could be reduced to slander. Vitalius visited every common woman in town in turn, spending all night chastely praying for her salvation, but forbidding her to tell anyone the truth. He thus converted many and also placed many into a convent. One evening, after the vespers, he announced to whoever was there to hear that he was going to visit a whore. To the brothers' clamor he responded that monks were human beings just like anyone else and had bodily needs to take care of, and that he cared not if anyone was shocked by his deed: "Whoever wishes to be scandalized, let him be scandalized and beat his head against the wall!" When the uproar reached St. John, he steeled his heart and refused to believe the gossip. Meanwhile, Vitalius prayed that God would somehow make his good deeds manifest after his death to St. John and the others, so that slander would not be imputed as sin to those scandalized. On his deathbed, Vitalius quoted 1 Cor 4:5: "Judge not before the time."¹² His righteousness was publicly proven after his death by the women's confessions, and St. John the Almoner was the first to rejoice.¹³ I find Vitalius' deliberate provocation rather uncharitable, if not outright mischievous¹⁴, but this is not the point which Jacobus de Voragine was trying to

¹² English translations of the biblical quotes are from the Douai-Rheims Bible.

¹³ *LA*, pp. 191-192, ll. 61-64, 69-82, 91-93: *Monachus quidam nomine Vitalius, uolens sanctum Iohannem temptare si posset sibi uerbis persuaderi et ad scandalum facile inclinari, ingrediens ciuitatem omnes publicas meretrices conscripsit. Intrabat ergo ad illas per ordinem dicens cuilibet: 'Dona mihi noctem istam et noli fornicari.' Ipse autem domum eius intrans in angulo flexis genibus tota nocte in oratione stabat et pro illa orabat et postea mane exibat precipiens cuilibet ne alicui reuelaret. <...> Vespere autem facto dicebat predictus Vitalis cunctis audientibus: 'Volo ire quia talis domina expectat me.' Multis uero illum criminantibus respondebat: 'Numquid ego non habeo corpus ut omnes, aut monachis solum iratus est deus? Vere et ipsi homines sunt ut ceteri.' Dicebant autem quidam: 'Accipe tibi mulierem unam, abba, et muta habitum ut non scandalizes alios.' Ille autem fingens se iratum dicebat: 'Vere non audio uos, ite a me! Qui uult scandalizari scandalizetur et det de fronte in parietem. Numquid iudices constituti estis super me a deo? Itē et de uobis curam habete, uos pro me non reddetis rationem.' Hec autem cum clamore dicebat cumque ad beatum Iohannem querimonia deferretur, cor eius deus indurauit ne hiis fidem adhiberet. Deprecabatur autem deum ut post mortem suam opus suum alicui reuelaret ut non imputaretur in peccatum hiis qui in eum scandalizantur. <...> Vir autem dei morti appropinquans hanc scripturam reliquit: 'Nolite ante tempus iudicare.' Mulieribus autem confitentibus que faciebat, omnes glorificabant deum et precipue beatus Iohannes. Cf. *GL1*, pp. 120-21, *GL2*, 1, pp. 115-16.*

¹⁴ It also goes against the theologians' admonitions to keep transparent one's motives for potentially misconstrued actions: although scandal is not to be avoided at all costs in situa-

make: what he lays stress on is the readiness of the society to lend ear to unproven accusations.

In the story quoted earlier St. Bernard also advised to keep silent about another's fall, rather than spread scandal further. Nonetheless, with two other examples, Jacobus de Voragine shows what to do if someone or something actively incites you to sin. Julianus the Apostate, outraged that St. Quiriacus would not worship the idols, ordered his right hand cut off, with which the bishop had written many letters against idolatry. Quiriacus, however, thanked the emperor for this great favor, for it was with this very hand that before his conversion he had also written many letters to various synagogues telling them not to believe in Jesus Christ. Now Julianus rid him of that which had scandalized him.¹⁵ The words of the bishop undoubtedly allude to Mt 5:30: "And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell." The same precept is literally illustrated in the legend of Pope Leo whose hand was kissed by a female parishioner during mass, thereby terribly arousing him and leading him in temptation. Leo secretly chopped off his hand and threw it away.¹⁶ In both cases, *scandalum* is understood in the classical New Testament vein as the obstacle to salvation. In both cases the blame for the moral lapse is placed on 'the other' – the objectified limb, which is amputated in expiation for scandalizing its owner. In terms of Thomas Aquinas' theology, the hand then is the agent of active scandal, whereas the person to whom this hand belongs is the passive receiver of scandal, due to his weakness. How-

tions when a greater evil is likely to happen, one is advised to try and prevent scandal from happening. For example, while one ought not eat meat offered to idols unless the only alternative to this is committing suicide by starvation, even then the public should be made aware of the reasons for making this choice. Cf. Alexander of Hales as quoted by Bryan, "*Vae mundo a scandalis*", p. 84: "... If someone has nothing to eat except foods sacrificed to idols, he should eat; but he ought to do it, as much as he can, so that he not scandalize his neighbour. Whence it should be publicly stated that he will starve unless he eats, and then there should be no occasion for the ruin of another."

¹⁵ LA, p. 469, ll. 141-46: ... *Cepit Quiriacum inuitare ad sacrificia ydolorum. Quod cum ille renueret, dextram sibi abscidi fecit dicens: 'Hac manu multas epistolas scripsit quibus multos a deorum sacrificiis reuocauit.'* Cui dicit Quiriacus: '*Multum mihi, canis insensate, profuisti, quia priusquam in Christum crederem, sepius ad synagogas Iudeorum scribebam epistolas ut nullus in Christum crederet. Et ecce, nunc scandalum mei corporis abscidisti.'* Cf. GL1, p. 275; GL2,1, p. 283.

¹⁶ LA, p. 556, ll. 1-2: *Leo papa <...> in ecclesia sancta Marie maioris in die resurrectionis dominice missam celebrabat et dum fideles per ordinem communicaret et quedam matrona manus eius osculate fuisset, ex hoc in eum uehemens carnis temptation insurrexit. At uir dei in semet ipsum seuissimus ultor insurgit et eadem die manum se scandalizantem occulte penitus amputauit et a se reiecit.* Cf. GL1, p. 231; GL2,1, p. 339.

ever, there is no telling whether Jacobus de Voragine had these learned categories in mind or he merely exemplified the moral evangelical lesson.

These are all the occurrences of the word ‘scandal’ in the *Golden Legend*.¹⁷ In a voluminous work such as this, Jacobus de Voragine used the word rather sparingly. He did, however, seem to have used it as a technical term derived from the New Testament and the patristic exegesis. The notion of scandal that emerges from the *Golden Legend* is all about the flawed interaction between an individual and the society. More often than not, scandal is not a sin in itself, but a temptation to sin, a hindrance that arises from an imperfection of brotherly love on part of either the giver or the receiver of scandal. Since the onlookers’ construction of an individual’s behavior and motivations is prone to be incorrect, it is a must to observe propriety for the sake of charity so as not to confuse the weak. For charity’s sake one also ought to refrain from jumping to conclusions or from spreading gossip that will demoralize others and may turn out to be pure slander. A true stumbling block must, however, be mercilessly removed. In these three ways the spiritual well-being of the Christian community is ensured. The *Golden Legend* thus offers its readers or listeners practical moral instruction on the causes of scandal and on ways to deal with it. The scope of this instruction is of course very limited, as the stories just considered are for the most part simple illustrations of the relevant evangelical precepts. While certainly sharing with contemporaneous theology the understanding of scandal, as the opposite of charity,¹⁸ in no way do these legends reflect either the ramifications of a developing theological concept, or real-life behaviors that may have caused scandal, such as marital abuse or the excessive hospitality of nunneries.¹⁹ This is a concise summary of the moral theory of scandal, well-grounded in the traditional authorities that afforded the recipients of the *Golden Legend* just the basics they ought to know. Of course, we all know that the theoretical knowledge of the traffic rules is not the same as actual driving, but the *Golden Legend* offers no more than the basics.

Apart from the legendary, Jacobus de Voragine published four large collections of model sermons: *The Sermons on the Saints and the Festivals*; *The Sermons on the Temporal Feasts*; *The Sermons for the Time of Lent*; and a collection of sermons on the Virgin Mary. Over 1,120 surviving manuscripts of these collections and numerous re-uses by later preachers²⁰ attest to their

¹⁷ With the exception of the legend of St. Paul, where Jacobus de Voragine paraphrases 2 Cor 11:29, “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?” to illustrate the apostle’s compassion without, in any way, expanding on this verse.

¹⁸ Quite tellingly, Thomas Aquinas treats scandal in a section of the *Summa theologiae* entitled “Consequences of Charity.”

¹⁹ An ample variety of real-life examples from the late-medieval English bishops’ registers is discussed in Bryan’s “*Vae mundo a scandalis*,” ch. 3 and 4.

²⁰ For MSS see J. B. Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für*

popularity. I am turning to the Lenten sermons, the only collection to have been critically edited so far.²¹

In the 98 sermons, the word ‘scandal’ occurs nine times. Compared to the number of times this term was used in the *Golden Legend* – six times in 178 texts – this is almost twice as often. What is the context and meaning of these mentions?

In a sermon for the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, sinners are divided into three categories. One of these, the pliable ones, are those who easily lose faith and succumb to every adversity, just as predicted in Mk 4:17: “And then when tribulation and persecution ariseth for the word they are presently scandalized.”²² In terms of moral theology, these persons take the ‘scandal of the weak.’ It is due to their weakness in faith that they place a hindrance on their road to salvation with their own hands. Note in this passage the strong connection between scandal and sin.

A sermon for the Friday after Ash Wednesday talks about those who do good deeds out of inordinate love for themselves and in search of vain glory. Their love is inordinate because they ascribe to themselves the glory that belongs to God alone; for God wishes that from our good deeds we would obtain merit and our neighbors a good example; but glory is due solely to Himself. The vainglorious, therefore, lose merit and give scandal to their neighbors, and even then fail to achieve glory.²³ While not necessarily an effectual cause of the onlookers’ potential sin, in this passage scandal is understood as a shockingly

die Zeit von 1150-1350, 11 vols., Beiträge zur Geschichte des Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters XLIII (Münster: Aschendorff, 1969-1990), vol. 3, pp. 244-6; T. Kaepelli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi* 2 (Rome: Ad S. Sabinae, 1975), pp. 364-7; idem and E. Panella, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi* 4 (Rome: Ad S. Sabinae, 1993), p. 141. For later reception see, e.g., Stanislava Kuzmova, “Reception of Voragine’s Sermons in Central Europe – A Few Examples,” in *Thesaurus des sermons de Jacques de Voragine* (2007): <http://www.sermones.net/spip.php?article27>; Ottó Gecser, “The Pécs Sermones Dominicales and the Sermones de tempore of James of Varazze,” in *ibidem* (2007): <http://www.sermones.net/spip.php?article26>.

²¹ Jacobus de Voragine, *Sermones quadragesimales*, ed. G. P. Maggioni (Florence: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), (hereafter *SQ*), with a list of 309 manuscripts in the appendix.

²² *Feria quinta post Cineres* 2, 22: *Tales igitur homines sunt molles, qui omnis aduersitatis tentationi cedunt. Orta autem tribulatione et persecutione propter uerbum, scandalizantur continuo* (Mk 4:17). *SQ*, p. 23.

²³ *Feria sexta post Cineres* 1, 40-45: *Ille enim inordinate se diligit si bona que facit ad seipsum reflectit et inde gloriam querit. Magna enim inordinatio est quod aliquis sibi attribuat illud quod est proprium Dei, scilicet gloriam. Uult enim Deus ut de operibus nostris habeamus meritum. **Labores manuum tuarum, quia manducabis, etc.** (Ps 127:2). **Proximus habeat bonum exemplum. Sic luceat lux uestra coram hominibus, etc.** (Mt 5:16). **Et Deus habeat hanc gloriam. *Gloriam meam alteri non dabo*** (Is 42, 8). **Sed uane gloriosus meritum perdit et proximo scandalum facit, et tandem gloriam non inuenit.** *SQ*, pp. 29-30.*

bad example (or an indirect active sin in Thomas Aquinas' terms) and is the immediate consequence of vainglory, one of the seven deadly sins. Furthermore, isn't the misdeed of the vainglorious, who do good yet fail to do it adequately, just as fittingly described as "the less right in action giving the occasion of a fall"?²⁴

One of the sermons for the second Sunday of Lent is devoted to Jesus' meeting with the Canaanite woman. The preacher praises her virtue, saying:

There is no other woman of such patience or such sanctity who would not walk away perturbed and scandalized after she addressed some great man and he did not wish to speak to her as if she were excommunicated, and on top of that called her the devil's sheep and a dog and asserted that she was not worthy of bread. She, however, in spite of all the insults remained constant and patient.²⁵

Apparently, scandalized here means simply offended or shocked, just as this word had been used in the Old Testament and as we would understand and use it today. The great man Jesus in this encounter exhibited anything but charity, but the woman's behavior is lauded because she did not take offense and, in theological terms, resisted becoming victim of the passive scandal.

In a sermon for the Tuesday of the second week of Lent, scandal denotes the reaction of those exasperated penitents who had been assigned by priests too heavy a penance. As a consequence, they either give it up or, having carried it out for as long as they could, feel scandalized and proceed to sin ever more. Therefore, priests must bear in mind what John Chrysostomus had called a greater danger: that while trying to correct sinners, they inadvertently lead them to a greater sin.²⁶ Theologically, this behavior can be classified as Thomas Aquinas' indirect active scandal and, accordingly, the penitents as the victims of the

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, 2a2ae, q. 43, a.1. In the original, the definition extends to include "the less right in word" as well. Cf. also "What falls short of rightness has some element of sin. Scandal, therefore, is always with sin." 2a2ae, q. 43, a. 2.

²⁵ *Dominica secunda in Quadragesima* 1, 17: *Non est aliqua mulier ita patiens nec ita sancta, que si alicui quantumcumque magno uiro loqueretur et ipse sibi tamquam excommunicate loqui nollet et insuper illam ouem diaboli diceret et canem appellaret et indignam eam pane esse assereret, quod non recederet turbata et scandalizata Ipsa autem in omnibus constans et patiens semper fuit.* SQ., p. 114.

²⁶ *Feria tertia secunde hebdomade quadragesime* 1, 43-47: *Et istud est contra illos sacerdotes qui penitentias nimis graues imponunt. Quod tamen non debet fieri tribus de causis, secundum Chrysostomum. Prima est propter majus periculum, quia sepe talis homo penitentiam sibi datam proicit et tamquam desperatus ad peccata redit. Et ponit exemplum, dicens: 'Si enim fascem super humeros adolescentis quam non possit baiulare posueris, necesse habet ut aut fascem reiciat aut sub pondere confringatur. Sic homini cui graue pondus penitentiae ponis, necesse est ut aut penitentiam tuam reiciat aut suscipiens dum ferre non potest scandalizetur et amplius peccet'.* SQ., p. 137.

passive scandal; but in real-life language, I would call this particular type of scandal frustration.

A sermon for the Wednesday of the same week asserts that Christ often preached his forthcoming passion and resurrection to his disciples, either to demonstrate to them his divine nature (in that he could foresee the future) or because he wished to strengthen their souls with knowledge and hope so that, when the time would come, they would not be scandalized.²⁷ This time, scandal alludes to various places in the Gospels where Jesus predicted that upon his death his followers would be frustrated, ashamed of and offended by his humiliation.²⁸ Yet again, this use of the term falls under the category of the theological ‘scandal of the weak.’

A sermon for the third Sunday of Lent states that a sinner is mute because he is not using his tongue for either of the three designated purposes: to praise God, to edify one’s brother, and to confess one’s own sins. Failure to edify one’s brother scandalizes him, because it is just as well as speaking to him in the language of the devil and of perverse persons who seek disgrace and deception.²⁹ This equation of deficient charity with evil brings to mind the previously quoted instance of the shortcoming of do-gooders: in both cases scandal is understood not as what one does but what one fails to do well—the absence of goodness.

Continuing with the subject of fraternal correction, a sermon for the Tuesday of the third week of Lent is almost entirely devoted to a classification of another’s unseemly acts and appropriate reactions to them. Based on the verse from Mt 18:15, “But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone,” the sermon goes on to distinguish between another’s secret sins of which you alone are aware, troubles and injuries he inflicted upon you personally, and bad example his actions have given you. Not everyone is to be corrected in the same way. The humble and complacent are to be admonished with love and in private; the shrewd through reasoning and, if

²⁷ *Feria quarta secunde hebdomade quadragesime* 1, ll. 1-2: ***Ascendens Iesus Hierosolymam assumpsit duodecim discipulos suos secreto et ait illis: Ecce ascendimus Hierosolymam, etc.*** (Mt 20:17-18). *Sepe Dominus passionem suam et resurrectionem suam discipulis suis predicebat, siue ut ex hoc se Deum esse ostenderet, quia futura preuidebat, siue ut discipulorum animos roboraret, ne scilicet, adueniente passionis tempore, scandalizaretur, quia, sicut dicit Gregorius, minus enim iacula feriunt que preuidentur, siue ut, passionem eius uidentes, resurrectionem eius futuram sperarent.* SQ, p. 146.

²⁸ E.g., Mt 11:6, Mt 26: 31 and 33; Mk 14:27 and 29; Lk 7:23; Jn 16:1.

²⁹ *Dominica tertia quadragesime* 1, ll. 36, 41, 46, 49: *Secundo, peccator est mutus quia proximum non edificat, sed scandalizat. **Lingua tertia multos commouit et dispersit eos de gente in gentem*** (Sir 28:16). <...> *Tertia lingua est diabolica, et ista lingua est peruersorum hominum. Cuius est detrudere et mendacium dicere: **Cum loquitur mendacium, ex propriis loquitur*** (Jn 8:44). <...> *Qui proximum scandalizat, ille loquitur lingua tertia, scilicet diabolica.* SQ, pp. 191-2.

needs be, in the presence of witnesses; the conceited and presumptuous must be coerced to change their ways through fear; and, lastly, the obstinate must be compelled by force or excommunicated. In regard to the conceited, the listeners whose own efforts at correction have failed are instructed to seek help from the prelate whose job description includes the ability to control and to tame. As proof of that, Jacobus de Voragine quotes Ecclesiasticus (7:6), “Seek not to be made a judge, unless thou have strength enough to extirpate iniquities: lest thou fear the person of the powerful, and lay a stumbling block for thy integrity.” The sermon ends with an injunction to always forgive another for sins committed against you,³⁰ implying that it otherwise is your sacred duty to correct your brother’s other sins, whether private or public. Although the actual word ‘scandal’ occurs in this sermon only as part of the Old Testament quotation, the idea of scandal is obviously central to this text. The more entrenched and public the sin, the more likely it is to affect and demoralize the community. As an immediate consequence of publicity, the notion of scandal thus embraces two more meanings: as the sinful acts themselves (= active scandal) and the resentment of the public shocked by these acts (= passive scandal). Nevertheless, scandal, or publicity, is clearly not to be avoided at all costs, since in the case of obstinate sinners public pressure and threat to their reputation seem to be the only influence they would respond to. I doubt that the approach to scandal proposed in this sermon bears an immediate imprint of the moral theology. Indeed, Thomas Aquinas also discussed whether scandal was invariably to be avoided and ruled that “one ought not to forego that which is necessary for salvation, in order to avoid giving scandal” (Aquinas, *Summa*, 2a2ae, q.43, a.7). However, the Church had practiced assessing sins and assigning penance according to their publicity

³⁰ *Feria tertia tertie hebdomade quadragesime* 1, ll. 1, 5-9, 13, 18-22, 59, 61: ***Si peccauerit in te frater tuus, uade et corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum.*** (Mt 18:15) <...> *ostenditur qualiter fraterna correptio sit facienda, cum dicit: si peccauerit in te frater tuus, id est te solo sciente; uel in te, id est contra te, iniurias et contumelias irrogando; uel in te, id est contra te, malo scilicet exemplo corrumpendo: uade et corripe eum inter te et ipsum solum.* Ubi notat quod non omnes aequaliter et eodem modo sunt corripiendi. Quidam autem corripiendi sunt cum amore, sicut humiles et mansueti..<...> Quidam uero corripiendi sunt cum ratione, sicut astuti. <...> Alii sunt coercendi cum timore, sicut superbi et presumptuosi. Iste modus tangitur cum dicitur: ***Si non audierit eos, dic Ecclesie*** (Mt 18:17), id est prelato Ecclesie, ad quem spectat duos et presumptuosos castigationibus subiicere, et penis et flagellationibus coercere. Talis enim prelatus et iudex debet esse, qui possit superbos comprimere et domare: ***Noli querere fieri iudex, nisi ualeas uirtute irrumpere iniquitates, ne forte extimescas faciem potentis et ponas scandalum in equitate tua*** (Sir 7:6). <...> Alii sunt coercendi uel abiiciendi cum rubore, sicut obstinati, qui debent ab Ecclesia prescindi et excommunicari. <...> ... sicut igitur Christus totius humani generis deleuit culpas, sic et homo omnes suas dimittere debet iniurias. <...> Est ergo sensus: ‘Dimitte septuagies septies, id est uniuersas tibi factas iniurias et transgressiones’. *SQ*, pp. 211-12, 216.

for a long time before Thomas Aquinas,³¹ and continued to do so long after.³² Regardless of its obviously very traditional content, this sermon certainly offers a very detailed practical instruction on how to assess the gravity of a sin that has come to public knowledge (even when the public is just one person) and to choose the right remedy against it.

A sermon for the Thursday of the fourth week of Lent carries on in the same vein and with the same understanding of scandal distinguishing between private sins, which offend God alone, and public sins, which offend God and scandalize the community, as well as habitual sins, which offend God, scandalize the public, and distance the sinner from God. Respectively, private sins require private penance to assuage God; public sins have to be expiated openly, so as to please God and to edify the community; and habitual sins require not only public penance but also mediation of the saints, to help the sinner slowly return to God's presence.³³

Lastly, a sermon for the fifth Sunday of Lent compares those who scandalize, which is to say, tempt, or actually detract from penitence newly converted sinners to the Jews who wished to murder the infant Jesus at the time of King Herod. It is about those detractors, assures the preacher, that Jesus said:

But he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."³⁴

³¹ On the Carolingian distinction between grave public sins expiated through public penance and grave private sins expiated privately and on the late twelfth-century introduction of tripartite penitence see Cyrille Vogel, ed., *Le pécheur et la penitence au Moyen-Age* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1967), pp. 26-36, esp. 26: "La même faute est donc susceptible d'un double traitement, suivant la notoriété dont elle s'accompagne."

³² L. Bryan confirms, based on her analysis of the English bishops' registers and the English vernacular literature of the later Middle Ages, that "the degree of infamy or notoriety of a crime or sin had a direct bearing on its gravity, and the more public the transgression, the more scandalous and the more serious." "*Vae mundo a scandalis*," p. 305.

³³ *Feria quinta quarte hebdomade quadragesime* 1, 41, ll. 57-62: *Ubi notandum, quod Christus tres mortuos suscitauit. <...> Per puellam igitur in domo suscitata, intelligitur peccator occultus, qui Deum offendit; ideo debet facere penitentiam in occulto, ut Deum placet. Per puerum extra domum, intelligitur peccator manifestus, qui Deum offendit et proximum scandalizauit; ideo debet facere penitentiam manifestam, ut Deum placet et proximum edificet. Per Lazarum quattriduanum intelligitur peccator consuetudinarius, qui Deum offendit et proximum scandalizauit, et a Deo se nimis elongauit, ideo debet facere penitentiam manifestam et acquirere sibi sanctorum uirorum suffragia, ut sic placet Deum, edificet proximum, et paulatim possit appropinquare ad Deum. SQ, pp. 310, 311.*

³⁴ *Dominica quinta in quadragesima* 2, ll. 10, 15-19: *Iudei quattuor mortes Christum pati uoluerunt. Primo enim eum uoluerunt occidere, cum adhuc esset paruulus, scilicet tempore Herodis. <...> Multi autem sunt, qui hodie istis quattuor modis Christum occidunt. Primo cum est adhuc paruulus: Christus enim paruulus est in illis, qui de nouo ad penitentiam conuertuntur, de quibus dicitur: Filioli mei quos iterum parturio, donec formetur Christus*

What do these sermons show? First of all, they do talk about scandal, which shows that this concept was relevant to the moral instruction of the public. Secondly, they define the term in a much more nuanced way than the *Golden Legend*. We find here scandal not only as a communicative act and a hindrance to the well-being of an individual and the Christian community on the whole, but also as a loss of faith arising from frustration, ignorance, or weakness, a premeditated act of malice or an inadvertent bad example, or simple negligence in doing good. Here it is also different that scandal is not only defined as a consequence of sin, but a sin in itself, as well as a measure of penance and jeopardy to one's reputation. Even though it was apparently not Jacobus' de Voragine intention to pass on to the wider public the complexities of the theological concept, his use of the term and of the idea strongly suggests that he was aware of them. Why did he use his knowledge in the sermons but not in the *Golden Legend*?

Firstly, the season of Lent may have seemed especially suitable to preaching on scandal as having a lot to do with sins and penitence. To verify this, Lenten sermons by other preachers need to be examined.

Secondly, the *Sermones Quadragesimales* may reflect the special influence of Thomas' Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*.³⁵ After all, Jacobus was a member of the same order, although he is otherwise not known for his propensity to forward thinking.³⁶ Since scandal was discussed both in the *Golden Legend* and the Lenten sermons, it would seem that this moral category had always piqued Jacobus' de Voragine interest, independent of a stimulation by Thomas Aquinas.

in uobis. (Gal 4:19). Illi igitur qui de nouo ad penitentiam conuersos scandalizant, uel ab ipsa penitentia reuocant, Christum paruulum in eorum cordibus occidunt; contra quos dicitur: *Qui scandalizauerit unum de pusillis istis, qui in me credunt, expedit ei, ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo eius, et demergatur in profundum maris* (Mt 18:6). *SQ*, pp. 349-350.

³⁵ The second part of the *Summa Theologiae*, where the section on scandal is to be found, was composed in 1271-72; the first redaction of the *Golden Legend* appeared in 1267, but Jacobus de Voragine continued working on it until his death in 1298; the *Sermones Quadragesimales* were written some time between 1267 and 1286. Jean-Pierre Torrel, "Thomas Aquinas," in *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, ed. André Vauchez (2001, e-reference edition, Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxford-middleages.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/entry?entry=t179.e2820>), last access 12 November 2008; Alain Boureau, "Golden Legend," in *ibid.* (<http://www.oxford-middleages.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/entry?entry=t179.e1194>), last access 12 November 2008; *SQ*, p. XIV.

³⁶ Cf. Alain Boureau's remark in regard to the *Golden Legend*: "Il fut l'exact contemporain de cet autre prêcheur, Thomas d'Aquin, qui fut accueilli dans l'ordre la même année 1244. En pourtant, il rédigea ce recueil si fruste et si sommaire que n'éclaircit guère les feux contemporains et confraternels de la grande scolastique. À une époque où Thomas et bien d'autres adoptent les positions critiques et nuancées sur le martyre et le miracle, Jacques donne dans le merveilleux chrétien le plus archaïque." *La Légende dorée*, p. 8.

This may become clearer when eventually the other three of Jacobus' de Voragine sermonaries will be made available in critical editions. It would also be desirable to establish whether the Dominican preachers generally exhibited a special concern for scandal.

Lastly, sermons as a rule are more pragmatic and target more specific every-day needs and concerns of the audience than compilations of preachable matter usable in every which way. This, too, may explain why in his sermons Jacobus is more methodical and methodological than in the *Golden Legend*. Returning to my earlier comparison with driving, Jacobus' de Voragine Lenten sermons do not only teach the audience the basic traffic rules, but also offer step-by-step lessons on how to actually make turns, change lanes, and park for instance. Yet, just like the *Golden Legend*, the Lenten sermons' examples of scandal are for the most part still too schematic, too generalized, as is only reasonable to expect from model sermons addressed to 'whomever it may concern': they give a very vague idea of what exactly constituted scandalous conduct, and when and how this happened.

I have selected three contemporaneous examples – one by a Dominican, one by a Franciscan, and one by a secular preacher – to compare to Jacobus' de Voragine treatment of scandal. In a small published sampling of nine model sermons *ad status* composed sometime between 1266 and 1277 by the fifth Dominican Master General Humbert of Romans (c. 1193/4–1277)³⁷ and addressed specifically to women, the word 'scandal' does not occur at all. This is all the more significant because it would be extremely relevant in a speech addressed to female servants of the rich, where Humbert actually describes a variety of scandalous behaviors relevant to servants' condition and quotes canon law. There are those who sin (carnally) in private, especially with their masters; those who induce their masters into sin by serving them and their illicit lovers as go-betweens; and those who, while impeccable on the other two counts, fail, in as much as it is in their power, to admonish their masters for sinful conduct. The latter are held culpable as accomplices in their masters' crimes.³⁸ The term scan-

³⁷ *Prediche alle donne del secolo XIII: Testi di Umberto da Romans, Gilberto da Tournai, Stefano di Borbone*, ed. and tr. into Italian by C. Casagrande (Milan: Bompiani, 1978), pp. 1-60; on dating, p. 141; on the MSS, see Kaepelli, *Scriptores* 2, pp. 283-95.

³⁸ *Notandum autem, quod quaedam talium mulierum quandoque solent occulte se exponere carnalibus peccatis <...> O quot filii familias, et juvenculi, qui verecundantur ire ad publicas mulieres, cum istis mulieribus amiserunt virginitatem suam. Et ideo vae talibus mulieribus, quae postea committuntur per istos. Aliae sunt, quae etsi cum his personis non peccent, ita tamen procurant peccata huiusmodi in aliis, aut mala nuncia portando, aut opportunitatem ministrando, et sic infelices damnant animas suas peccatis suis communicando in illis. <...> Aliae sunt, quae etsi neutrum faciunt praedictorum tamen videntes, vel scientes hoc fieri, non impediunt pro posse, et ideo reputantur favere secundum Decretalem, quae dicit, quod illi fautores reputantur, qui cum possint, manifesto facinori desinunt obvi-*

dal does not appear either in any of the four model sermons to women by the Franciscan Guibert de Tournai (c. 1200–1284), close friend of Bonaventure and a highly popular sermon writer.³⁹ Just like Humbert, Guibert misses the opportunity to use the appropriate theological label when talking about how married women's bad choice of servants may reflect on their own reputation and affect their own morals.⁴⁰ Neither does Jacobus' de Voragine elder contemporary Federico Visconti, archbishop of Pisa (1253-1277), use the term 'scandal' in a sermon delivered in synod in 1258 on the occasion of Lent where he gave a lengthy rebuke to the improper conduct of the clergy and the lack of decorum jeopardizing the reputation of the church.⁴¹

* * *

Apparently, the notion of scandal belonged not only to the theological, but also to the domain of preaching. Further, preoccupation with scandal was neither Jacobus' nor exclusively a Dominican idiosyncrasy: other preachers as well discussed this multifaceted concept. To be sure, the concept was to an extent shared also by the preachers' audiences. Jacobus' de Voragine treatment of scandal in

are. Contra hos dicitur Matthaei 18, Si peccaverit in te frater tuus, id est te sciente, etc. In quo innuitur, quod tales sunt corrigendi, et revelandi, et hoc talibus, qui possunt prodesse. Prediche alle donne, pp. 50-51.

³⁹ *Prediche alle donne*, pp. 63-112. For bibliography on Guibert see D. L. D'Avray, "Sermons to the Upper Bourgeoisie By A Thirteenth-Century Franciscan," in *The Church in Town and Countryside*, ed. D. Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), 187-99, and *idem*, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris Before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

⁴⁰ *Ancillas inordinatas et procaces corripiant, maxime si fuerint inobedientes, vana loquentes, dominam aut filias seducere volentes. <...> Hec sunt ancille que venales proponunt dominas suas et ad luxuriam incitans eas. Unde benedicta sit quedam domina, cum enim quedam ex ancillis eius quondam diceret ei: 'Domina, talis miles diligit vos, qui multum probus est et pulcher et dignus amari.' Illa statim, vocatis aliis ancillis, fecit eam fortiter verberari et postmodum de fenestra domus, que super fluvium sita erat, in aquam precipitari et ita exemplum dedit aliis ut numquam talia verba suggerere auderent. Et ideo honesta domina et casta debet habere ancillas castas. Prediche alle donne, p. 95.*

⁴¹ *Item devote debent dici exterius duobus modis: primo, ut intrent ad altare ad celebrandum divina cum habitu honesto, cotta scilicet vel cappa sive camisia soprana; et quod existens in choro sit cum cappa vel cotta vel pellibus vel mantello extenso et cum tonsura congrua circa aures et corona condecienti, ut eius ordo et cura requirit; et non cum infula, quod pendalia appareant, vel guascappo sive etiam tabarro <...> Preterea debent etiam stare devote in choro, non tenendo unum pedem super sedile sive super sedio <...> Et quia huiusmodi devotionem seculares clerici non observant, ut in eorum ordinatione tacite promiserunt, habentur coram populo in contemptum. Les sermons et la visite pastorale de Federico Visconti archevêque de Pise (1253-1277), ed. Nicole Bériou et al. (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2001), pp. 334-5.*

the two works examined in this paper is unlike either that of the theologians or preachers. It actually falls right in between the two. His moral theory of scandal is not nuanced enough to match that of Thomas Aquinas and his predecessors; but through the disparate examples Jacobus supplies his addressees with an acceptably coherent system of views, a simple yet sufficiently precise and true to the doctrine technical language to speak about scandal and related issues, and a well-defined set of moral guidelines. In contrast, other preachers seem to pursue a different line: instead of confounding their listeners with terminology, a systematic outlook and a method, they censure a specific scandalous misconduct that is either in fact or in potential particularly threatening to their flock.

Whether the differences in approach depended on the preachers' respective education, religious affiliation, status, target audience, or circumstances of preaching, remains to be established. What they do have in common, so it seems, is that they mainly view scandal as a communicative act between at least two parties and as a breach of the norm that jeopardizes simultaneously the moral and the social order. Any other facets of this notion are subsidiary. Theological nuances, therefore, give way in the late thirteenth-century sermon literature to the preachers' primary pastoral concern: to teach people not to scandalize one's brother.

SCANDALA

MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

SONDERBAND XXII

SCANDALA

Edited by

Gerhard Jaritz

Krems 2008

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

niederösterreich kultur

Copy editors: Judith Rasson und Parker Snyder

Alle Rechte vorbehalten

– ISBN 978-3-901094-25-5
ISSN 1029-0737

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, A–3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist.

Druck: KOPITU Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, A–1050 Wien.

Table of Contents

Preface	6
Lindsay Bryan, From Stumbling Block to Deadly Sin: The Theology of Scandal	7
Elena M. Lemeneva, “Do Not Scandalize Thy Brother:” Scandal as Preached on by Jacobus de Voragine and Other Thirteenth-Century Sermon-Writers	18
Victoria Smirnova, Saint Faith’s Scandalous Miracles: A Quest for Novelty	33
Gerhard Jaritz, Varieties of <i>Scandalum</i>	44
List of Contributors	55

Preface

At the 43rd International Congress of Medieval Studies which met in May 2008 at Western Michigan University I organized a session on “The Meaning, Role and Construction of *Scandalum*.” This volume contains the revised papers from among those that were read there, those of Lindsay Bryan, Elena Lemeneva, and myself. We also convinced Victoria Smirnova to contribute to this ‘Sonderband’ of *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*.

The use of the term *scandalum* in medieval written evidence can be found regularly in different contexts following various patterns and representing differing meanings: as capital sin, incitement to sin, slander and defamation, public offence, and so on. Recent studies have not paid much attention to this phenomenon. Only a comprehensive analysis by Lindsay Bryan has contributed to this exciting field of research.¹ For this reason we were particularly happy that Lindsay was also willing to contribute to the session at Kalamazoo and to the present volume.

The four papers here will not provide substantial new findings concerning the occurrence, application and function of *scandala* in medieval society. What they are intended for, however, is to animate scholars to devote themselves more to researching phenomena which, as individual cases, represented exceptional circumstances of life in the Middle Ages; taken as a group, though, they can be seen as having been part of medieval quotidianity.

Gerhard Jaritz

¹ “‘Vae Mundo a Scandalis’: The Sin of Scandal in Medieval England” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1998).