Chapter 6

Proclaiming the Message

The themes and arguments for taking the cross that were found in the papal bulls were communicated to the people by way of the sermons preached in order to recruit men and gather means for the crusades. Sermons were an obvious medium for proclamation of the spiritual rewards that could be gained. From the thirteenth century, a fair number of sermons and model sermons for the crusades have been preserved, and previous studies have shown that the indulgences played a central role in these. With regard to the twelfth-century sermons the evidence is more scant, but the reports of sermons that we do have allow for making a comparison with the message of the papal bulls.

Sermons were an important element in the campaigns to launch a new crusade, and the popes seem to have taken care to appoint skilled preachers, and to control the organization by naming legates for the purpose. As with the other institutions of the crusade, the organization developed substantially in the course of the twelfth century. For the First Crusade, Urban II himself travelled widely in the South and West of France in 1095–96 in order to preach and organise his crusade. In other areas it was undertaken by the bishops who had taken part in the council at Clermont, and by wandering evangelists such as Peter the Hermit, whose message was very different from that of Urban II, and whose recruitment of the poor was quite out of the control of the ecclesiastical authorities. None of the later popes are known to have made preaching campaigns on the same scale as Urban II themselves. For the Second Crusade, Eugenius III preached on some occasions in France, but otherwise he commissioned Bernard of Clairvaux to do the job, together with a number of unnamed preachers. Also the other great French abbot at the time, Peter the Venerable of Cluny (c. 1092–1156), embraced the cause of this crusade, and he composed a sermon on it which has actually been preserved – in contrast to Bernard's –

1 Paulus II pp. 52–60; Cramer pp. 186, 190–1; Christoph T. Maier, Crusade Propaganda and Ideology (2000), pp. 62–3 and passim.
4 Constable 1953, p. 263.
and the same is the case with a sermon by Bishop Peter of Oporto, who preached to gather support for the siege of Lisbon. Evidence suggests that papal legates were also sent to invite the kings and peoples of the remoter parts of Christendom. Thus, a Cardinal Hubaldus was received at the court of the Danish king Erik Lam in 1146.

The evidence for crusade preaching during the pontificate of Alexander III is very sporadic despite the repeated attempts to initiate crusades in this period. In 1181, however, Alexander instructed all prelates of the Church that his bull, *Cor nostrum*, should be read aloud, and that the necessity of the Eastern Land should be preached often and carefully to princes, dukes, and all other parishioners in order for them to take up the fight for this land, which had been liberated by the spilling of the blood of their ancestors. It was pointed out that the indulgence that was granted for this purpose should be explained and announced. In addition, Alexander declared that devoted preachers could expect an eternal reward themselves.

The preaching of the Third Crusade was characterised by the grand campaigns of individual preachers, much in the manner of the Second Crusade. Again, the Cistercians were fairly well represented, as in Henry of Albano, Garnerius of Clairvaux, who took over for Henry when he died in January 1189, Baldwin of Ford, archbishop of Canterbury, who toured in Wales, and Gerhard, archbishop of Ravenna, who gathered an army of crusaders in Northern Italy.

The principal preachers each appointed sub-delegates and co-preachers. Cardinal Henry sent envoys to Germany who preached before he arrived himself. Since he did not speak German, he preached through interpreters, but it appears that he was assisted by the local bishops Gotfried of Würzburg and Henry of Strassbourg, apparently more or less on their own initiative. Once again, envoys directly from the papal see were received at the royal court in Denmark, according to *De profectione Danorum in Hierosolymam*, which also

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Cramer pp. 55ff.


Cf. Cramer pp. 64, 88–92.