

Source Evaluation

I used Barber (1993) to gain an overview of the primary issues surrounding heresy; he covered theology, society and the inquisition, allowing me contextually place arguments and acknowledge the fundamental structure of the Cathar church and its place in society. He also provided an array of primary sources from chroniclers, the English translations being difficult to acquire. Yet the reliability of these sources should be taken into account: the Church destroyed the written works of heretics, limiting variety and leaving us with the one sided view of churchmen, whose motive would be to discredit heretics for the good of the church. Acknowledging this disadvantage, Catholic writings are still revealing, though they should be approached with scrutiny. Though covering a broad scope of issues, Barber lacked clear historical arguments; in order to thoroughly comprehend the historical debate, I needed to conduct deeper research.

Abels and Harrison (1979) was an excellent source for engaging in the historiography of the debate: they referenced scholars such as Koch and Oldenbourg, whose works I could not access in English, and summarised their arguments effectively. These sources could be used to embellish my argument and form the basis of further enquiry. However, though I could extrapolate these arguments from within the context of the participation of women in Catharism, and apply them generally to the question, the article's focus was too narrow and did not deal with the problem of heresy itself. The majority of statistical evidence presented would have been obtained under torture during the inquisition, and is therefore subject to doubt.

Grundmann (1995) provided both contemporary and interpretative sources, the range being indicative of his reliability. His book introduced me to the traditional argument that focused on the ideological explanations behind the rise of heresy, rather than the modern socio-economic interpretations, and the focus on the Vita Apostolica led me to read Morris (1991) for further information. Grundmann could be considered outdated, as he does not focus on socio-economic factors, and the book is a translation of the original, meaning that elements of his arguments could be misinterpreted. However, these weaknesses come to light only with the discovery of new sources in the 1990s, and the book enabled me to recognise how the debate has developed over time.

Roach(2005) presented an argument perhaps influenced by revisionist historians of the 1960s – he focused on the relationship between economic growth and religious dissent in the 11th and 12th centuries. This viewpoint forced me to reconsider my previous conclusion, as I found this argument convincing, and found suggestions of it in other sources, though not explicitly realised. Yet there are few contemporary sources referenced, perhaps accounting for the lack of scholarship on this particular view, as the consumers were predominantly illiterate. Consumerism and capitalism had been overlooked by historians, as these issues are considered to be a post-medieval concern. However, Roach offers a contrast to Grundmann, and refutes Moore's (2007) political ideas, again developing my argument overall.

The ambiguity of medieval sources makes them difficult to utilise, and often their clarity is lost in translation, the opinion of chroniclers being taken an absolute fact. Moore's (1975) *Birth of Popular Heresy*, a collection of documents tracing heretical movement from the 11th century, was therefore invaluable in that it allowed me to form my own conclusions independently of Moore's arguments and without a great deal of prejudice. It too has its limitations – the Waldensians are barely mentioned – but the consolidation of the variety of sources I have studied has allowed me to come to an informed and considered conclusion as to the influences on the development of heresy.