Giorgio Caravale

Preaching and Inquisition in Renaissance Italy: Words on Trial. Trans. Frank Gordon. Boston: Brill, 2016. Pp. xi + 274. Hb, \$150.

Historians of the religious upheavals in mid-sixteenth-century Italy traditionally have been presented with a methodological problem—being unable to track or analyze heretical preaching in Italian pulpits because of its inherent ephemerality, although such preaching clearly had a significant impact on the spread of heterodoxy. In this book, Giorgio Caravale has managed to “shed light on the darkness” of heretical preaching, to great effect (10). Through his creative examination of the mid-century inquisition trial of Ippolito Chizzola (begun in 1549) and its process, Caravale shows how this well-connected Canon Regular of the Lateran and preacher engaged in significant theological conflicts, both within the Catholic Church and with burgeoning Protestant movements in his all-too-public preaching. By explicating Chizzola’s Nicodemite preaching, his trial process and subsequent rehabilitation, and his post-trial career as an anti-Protestant controversialist, Caravale reveals how the hardening of orthodox boundaries and confessionalization affected what the laity heard pouring forth from pulpits in north-central Italian states in the sixteenth century.

To overcome the oral nature of sermons (and therefore their elusiveness for historians), Caravale looks to Chizzola’s trial records since during its course witnesses and Chizzola himself described aspects of sermons he had delivered mostly in the 1540s. Caravale uses these trial records to access “the slight contrasts and nuances [and] fine mutable boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy” (27), despite the inquisitors’ later interests in portraying those nuances as stark black-and-white differences. Chizzola himself was involved in theological circles that were sympathetic to, if not identical with, some mid-century Protestants ideas. Usually dubbed the *spirituali*, cardinals such as Gasparo Contarini, Reginald Pole, and Giovanni Morone, sought to hold a theological “middle ground” between more extreme hard-liners in both Catholic and Protestant camps. Chizzola, in his sermons therefore, avoided overt controversy, and often emphasized what *spirituali* hoped were neutral themes (such as faith in Christ and the benefit of his sacrifice) while avoiding points where Catholics and Protestants firmly disagreed (like sacramental confession and Lenten fasting).

Such conflict-averse preaching, within a decade, would come to be considered firmly heretical and a form of dissimulation, in large part due to the re-founding of the Roman Inquisition in 1542 and the election of Pope Paul IV (r.1555–59). Chizzola’s arrest and trial process, therefore, as Caravale demon-

strates, was an early harbinger of a distinctive shift in the religious controversies in Italian territories. Chizzola was called to Rome for trial, and the Inquisition devoted significant resources to pursuing witnesses who could produce evidence of his heterodox beliefs. Yet, Chizzola maintained that he had participated in *spirituali* circles “as a Catholic” (62), and his testimony concerning auricular confession demonstrates just how fine, and sometimes indistinguishable, a line there was between Catholic reform and Lutheran heresy. His questioners, the *spirituali*-friendly Egidio Foscarari and the more hard-liner Teofilo Scullica, often had to ask Chizzola about what he did *not* say, given the subtlety of Chizzola’s preaching. It was during the course of Chizzola’s trial that the Roman Inquisition issued a mandate requiring all preachers to explicitly denounce Protestantism in their public sermons, thereby removing the linguistic space for Chizzola, and preachers like him, to politely refrain from polemics while preaching what were at the very least Protestant-friendly ideas.

That Chizzola (and others like him) toed the hardening line of orthodoxy can be explained by his self-perception as always having been Catholic; though, in the end, he was sentenced as vehemently suspect of heresy and made a public abjuration of his errors in the same Venetian churches in which he had preached heterodoxy just a few years before. Any public crime had to be corrected publicly as well, especially to help any listeners who might have been led astray on Chizzola’s account. Chizzola himself, after laying low during Paul IV’s papacy, also was publicly rehabilitated during Pius IV’s reign (1559–65). His former colleagues who came to identify explicitly as Protestant lamented Chizzola’s decision to remain Catholic, often ascribing far more nefarious motives to it, but Chizzola’s embrace of a more strict form of orthodoxy does seem to have been genuine. He defended the Catholic Church’s decision to reopen the Council of Trent in 1562, and formulations of its doctrines, against Pier Paolo Vergerio, the former bishop of Capodistria who fled to embrace Protestantism fully; Chizzola even attended Trent at Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga’s invitation. Chizzola also became a prime informant for the Medici dukes while residing in Rome and, as such, attempted to convince several Catholic rulers to essentially start the Thirty Years’ War about seventy years earlier than 1618 in the effort to prevent a Protestant-friendly Maximilian Habsburg’s reign as Holy Roman Emperor (1564–76).

Caravale’s examination of Ippolito Chizzola portrays how the genuine ambiguity concerning what constituted Catholic doctrine gradually became hardened and clarified into a clear statement of orthodoxy from the 1540s through the 1560s in the Italian states. While previous scholarship has examined the results of heterodox preaching on the Italian peninsula, this work examines

how the Catholic Church and the Roman Inquisition shaped the theological content of what was preached to the avidly attentive laity. The new religious orders founded past the mid-sixteenth century, such as the Jesuits, came to be well-known for embracing the preaching tactics the Roman Inquisition helped shape through prosecutions like that of Chizzola. The construction of exactly what constituted the Tridentine orthodoxy that Jesuits so assiduously promoted past mid-century was very much a contested process. Translated into English from the Italian *Predicazione e inquisizione nell'Italia del Cinquecento* (2012), this volume makes an important contribution to sixteenth-century Italian religious scholarship available to an Anglophone audience. Caravale elucidates how one well-connected Italian preacher came to be caught up in the century's religious controversies, and through his inquisition trial process was forced to choose a side when Chizzola perhaps might have preferred that there be no "sides" at all.

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