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Language, Rhetoric and Reformation in Bernardino Ochino's *Prediche* ([Geneva, Jean Gérard], 1542)

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Bernardino Ochino is one of the most fascinating yet puzzling historical figures of sixteenth-century Italy, a man whose personality offers a unique mixture of charisma, longing for purity, worldly ambition and desire of freedom.¹ In order to study the language of his sermons published in Geneva in 1542, it seems useful to recall his life until that date, not only to remember its main turning points, but also because the period of his life spent in Italy – though judged not so interesting by Cantimori (1929: 10) – is crucial to understanding what developed in his Genevan years and later.

Born in Siena in 1487, Bernardino Tommasini was named «Ochino» for reasons that have not been completely clarified – perhaps because he came from the city quarter of the Goose, *oca* (Gotor 2013: 90). In 1503, at the age of sixteen, he became a Franciscan friar, entering the Order of Friars Minor. It was a difficult time for Franciscans, who were divided into different factions that disagreed on the correct interpretation of Saint Francis' rule. In 1517, the papal bull *Ite vos* sanctioned the formal separation between Observants, who interpreted the rule without gloss, and Conventuals, who tried to bring it up to date in accordance with the evolution of the Order. From the beginning of his vocation, Ochino had followed the former, moved by the belief, as he himself would write years later, that their way of life was the harshest, strictest and most severe, and therefore the best one and the most similar to Christ's life.²

Some years later, around the age of forty, he became one of the closest assistants of Paolo Pisotti of Parma, Minister-General of the Observants from 1529 to 1533. Pisotti «had a bad reputation in the Order for his worldly life and his heavy-handed and arbitrary method of procedure» (Iriarte 1982: 174). Moreover, he resisted every attempt to reform the Observants from the inside and was a fierce opponent of the Capuchins, the new Franciscan family founded in 1528 by Matteo da Bascio and Ludovico da Fossombrone. It is therefore rather surprising that, after having helped Pisotti against them, Ochino chose to become a Capuchin in 1534,

1. A first draft of this article was presented in 2017 at an international conference in Tours, where the official languages were French and English. This is why it is written in English. I'm grateful to Joshua Brown, Francesco De Toni, John Kinder and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions.

2. Ochino 1543: a2v: «Have(n)do adunque desiderio di salvarmi, [...] pare(n)domi che la vita de' frati di Fra(n)cisco nominati della Observa(n)tia fusse la più aspra, austera (et) rigida, però la più perfecta (et) a quella di Christo più co(n)forme, entrai infra di loro»; see Camaioni 2018: 15-27). Citing Ochino's works, I add accents and apostrophes, distinguish *u* and *v*, spell out abbreviations in brackets, change the use of capital letters and punctuation, and divide words that are graphically joined (*chel* becomes *ch'el*).



at the age of 47. Whatever the cause might have been - a deep conversion, the decline of Pisotti's power among the Observants, or something else - Ochino made a fundamental contribution to writing the Capuchins' constitutions and to the shift of the new order from an eremitic life towards one of study, work and preaching. After being elected Vicar-General of the Capuchins in 1538, he was appreciated for «his devotion to observance of the Rule, his austerity, his unaffected fervor, and his gift for government» (Iriarte 1982: 206).

He also had a special talent for preaching, to such an extent that he became the most influential preacher in Italy, gaining the praise and admiration of Emperor Charles V (presumably), Pietro Bembo, Vittoria Colonna and many other important personalities. He preached in Bologna, Ferrara, Florence, Mantua, Messina, Milan, Modena, Naples, Palermo, Perugia, Prato, Rome and Venice, to name but a few of the main places. It's worth remembering that, in those times, the task of a preacher often had practical consequences: for example, in Ferrara, Ochino founded a cloister for the Poor Clares of the Capuchin Order and in Perugia an institution to help poor children; in Lucca, his advice prompted the city to take measures against pauperism; in Naples, he promoted fundraising for charity purposes, collecting more than five thousand scudi (Bainton 1940: 28-38; Gotor 2013: 91-92; Camaioni 2013: 69-74).³ In these endeavours, he must surely have had the sense that he could make a difference.

Ochino preached in Naples in 1536, 1538, 1539 and 1540: from the first time, he began to frequent Juan de Valdés and was deeply influenced by his theology, which claimed the necessity of spiritual illumination to understand the Scripture and the irrelevance of external conventions for those who had been illuminated. His relationship with Valdés led Ochino to profess justification by faith alone and other Protestant theses; notwithstanding this, he continued preaching within the Catholic Church, attempting to convey Protestant views under the mask of a pretended orthodoxy. This conduct, known as Nicodemism, was perfectly coherent with Valdes' teachings; however, the Order of Theatines, founded by Saint Cajetan of Thiene and Giovanni Pietro Carafa, became suspicious of the content of Ochino's sermons (Ginzburg 1970: 188). On 2 July 1542, Pope Paul III created the Congregation of Inquisition; two weeks later, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese wrote a letter to Ochino inviting him to Rome to discuss some issues concerning the Capuchin Order. In all likelihood, the invitation was intended to put Ochino on an Inquisition trial and prosecute him for heresy. Ochino at first set off on a trip to Rome, moving from Verona to Bologna, where he met Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, who had attempted reconciliation with the Protestants some years earlier. Upon reaching Florence, Ochino met Peter Martyr Vermigli, another preacher and crypto-Protestant who was himself summoned to Rome. Vermigli convinced Ochino that facing the Inquisition would be a mistake and advised him to flee. Thus, in 1542, at the age of

3. See also Giombi 2001: 283, who, regarding Emilia Romagna, notes that social implications characterise Capuchin preaching throughout the whole sixteenth century. On the effects of preaching (in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance), see Muzzarelli 2014.

55, having been re-elected Vicar-General of his Order that same year, Bernardino Ochino took off his Capuchin habit and fled Italy, reaching Geneva in September.

He had barely settled in the Swiss city when he began to write a great volume of works: ten sermons were published by the Piedmontese printer Jean Gérard (or Girard) on 10 October 1542, soon followed by another ten, with continuous numbering of sermons and fascicles.⁴ The *Imagine di Antechristo* was probably printed in the same year, while in 1543 Ochino published the *Epistola alli Signori di Balìa della città di Siena*, the *Responsio ad Marcum Brixensem*, the one *ad Mutium Justinopolitanum* and four volumes of vernacular *Sermones*, followed by another two in 1544, when the *Epistola* and the *Imagine di Antechristo* were translated into French (Benrath 1892: 315-317; Nicolini 1939: 95-110; Rozzo 1985: 15, 171).

What is the reason for such a prolific stream of writings? Understandably enough, Ochino was eager to explain his conduct and the reasons for what had been an enormous scandal, not only for the Capuchins, but for the whole of Italy. Moreover, he had to prove to the city of Geneva and its leader John Calvin that he was a faithful Protestant. As Felici (2010: 19) notes, Ochino's *Prediche* deal with the main subjects of Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, even if, according to Miguel Gotor, the core of his theology consists in favouring freedom of thought and inner inspiration over religious forms and laws (ivi: 94). It was the tenth sermon of the *Prediche* that convinced John Calvin of the trustworthiness of the Italian refugee, as the Frenchman wrote to Pierre Viret in October 1542:

Bernardinus noster miris machinis impetitus est ut nobis abduceretur: costanter tamen perstat. Et magna ex parte ansam praecidit Antichristo, ne posthac de eo sollicitando cogitet. Scripsit enim volumen concionum in cuius fine palam profitetur se nostrum prorsus ac sine exceptione esse (Calvin 1873: 458).⁵

It may be worth recalling that, in that same tenth sermon, Ochino creates the myth of Geneva as the ideal Rome:

in Geneva, dove so', da più buon christiani ogni dì si predica la pura parola di Dio, si legano et expongano di co(n)tinuo le Scripture sacre et sopra esse si fanno publici ragionamenti dove a ognuno è licito dire quello ch'el Spirito sancto li suggerisce, al modo che si faceva nella primitiva Chiesa, sì chome Pau(lo) recita nella prima alli Cor(inti); si fanno ancho ogni giorno publiche (et) devotissime orationi, (et) così ogni domenica el catechismo, dove si instruiscono le persone che sonno di tenera età, (et) così li simplici (et) idioti. Qui non pur si nomina la biastema, qui no(n) sonno sodomie, sacrilegij, incesti, stupri, adulterij né ta(n)te spurcitie, sì chome sonno in molti altri luoghi dove so' stato; qui no(n) sonno ruffiani, né meretrici - in fin alla semplice fornicatione sarebe punita; qui no(n) si sa che cosa sia lisciarsi, (et) si vesta(n) tutti con purità gra(n)de, no(n) si può ancho giocar denari a gioco di fortuna; qui è tanta charità che li poveri no(n) vano mendicando; qui è somma iustitia, (et) si fanno le correctioni fraterne nel modo che c'insegnò Christo, (et) li litigij

4. The edition of the twenty *Prediche* altogether consists of fascicules A-L⁸, M⁴; the relative autonomy of the first ten *Prediche* seems arguable from the script «FINIS» on fol. F8v; see online at www.ville-ge.ch/musinfo/bd/bge/gln and www.e-rara.ch.

5. See also Nicolini 1963: 38-39 and no. 16; Fragnito 2011: 173.

sonno sba(n)diti da questa città, dove non sono ancho simonie, homicidij (et) partialità, ma quiete et pace. È ben vero che qui no(n) sonno organi (et) tanti suoni di campane, canti figurati, ca(n)dele (et) lampade acese, reliquie, idoli, imagini, drapeloni, paramenti, frasche (et) frede ceremonie: le chiese sonno purgatissime da ogni idolatria (Ochino 1542: F8r-v; see Solfaroli Camillocci 2000: 176-177; Felici 2010: 26).⁶

Apart from justifying himself to Italy and Geneva, there is a third reason that accounts for Ochino's great volume of writings after his escape from Italy, a reason that can be grasped if we do not put our own perspective before that of the people living at the time. As Nicolini (1963: 44-45) insightfully observed, Ochino most likely believed in an imminent breakthrough of Protestantism in Italy that would have permitted his comeback as the winner and defender of the true religion. This is why he exhorts his opponents to cease every persecution against the belief in justification by faith alone at the end of his second 1542 sermon:

Da poi adunque ch'el credere che siamo iustificati per Christo è cosa securissima, cessiamo di p(er)sequitare questa opinione, (et) humiliandoci a Dio, preghia(m)lo che ci doni q(ue)sta viva fede se bene ne siamo tanto più indegni quanto che li siamo stati più contrari (Ochino 1542: B1v).

A similar statement is expressed at the end of another sermon:

Da poi adunque che la fede della gratuita iustificazione per Christo è in sé sì divina che non dà occasione di pechare, imo ci ferma (et) stabilisce in Christo, non ci fa ociosi, ma ferventi, (et) ci fa operar con ricchi, nobili, potenti (et) felici stimoli a gloria di Dio, senza respecto a noi, cessi adu(n)q(ue) ognuno di più persequirla (et) calu(n)niarla a torto, imperò ch'el dirne male è un sepelir lo Eva(n)gelio, la gratia, quel gran beneficio che havemo da Christo quando morì per noi in croce, (et) un absconder al mondo la gran bontà di Dio, al qual sia sempre honor (et) gloria per Iesù Christo Signor nostro (Ochino 1542: B8r-v).

Ochino's sermons had been the tool with which the friar had deeply influenced Italian society while he was south of the Alps; they could also have been a way of making things different from Switzerland, trying to help a land that was about to change. After all, this view is consistent with the importance that reformers in general attributed to sermons: as Ford (2001: 66) puts it, they «were confident that the transforming power of the Word of God could bring sinners to repentance and lead them to a life of godliness». Moreover, Ochino's aim of writing for people living in the peninsula is clearly stated in the foreword to the sermons published in 1542: «Da poi adunque, Italia mia, che con la viva voce non posso per hora più predicarti, mi sforzarò scrivere, (et) in lingua vulgare, aciò sia più comune, (et) penserò che Christo habi così voluto aciò che io non habi altro respecto che alla verità» (Ochino 1542: A2v; see also Camaioni 2018: 486-490).⁷

6. The same subject is dealt with in a letter written by Ochino to a friend: see Camaioni 2013: 64-65.

7. It is nonetheless useful to bear in mind, as Pierno (2018: 10-16) notes, that it is impossible to attribute just one specific public to Italian Protestant writings published outside Italy: «questi testi, fruibili e trasportabili, attraverso ideali cerchi concentrici, erano adatti a svariati spazi geografici:

Thus, the *Prediche* of 1542 are a remarkable work in many respects: they are the first book written by Ochino after his escape; they express overtly his theological view about justification by faith alone; they are the beginning of a series of attempts to influence Italy from afar; finally, they are sermons that were never preached and would not have been in the future, although they were written by someone who was used to preaching before the public. Therefore, it may be interesting to take a closer look at their linguistic and rhetorical features.⁸

From the point of view of the discourse organisation, that is the *dispositio*, each of the *Prediche* is centred on a specific problem: justification by faith alone, confession, the value of human deeds, indulgences, Purgatory, and others. Ochino thus preaches on a single topic, leaving aside the distinctions and divisions used in the *sermo modernus* shaped by scholasticism that were aimed at identifying the many implications of a Bible verse.⁹

For example, discussing the doctrine of Purgatory in the sixteenth sermon (Ochino 1542: L5r-L8r), Ochino begins by showing that, after Adam, everyone is subject to sin and death and no one can purify even a single sin with good deeds or love. Christ's sacrifice is the only Purgatory, that is the only means of purification, and what all men ought to do is to believe in Him, because God is not going to punish those whom He Himself chose. The Old Testament does not speak of Purgatory, and the passage of the Book of Maccabees stating that it is good to pray for the dead [see 2 Macc. 12, 44-45] does not imply Purgatory, but the coming of Christ. Passages about Purgatory cannot even be found in the New Testament, because it is just a human creation through which priests and friars make money. If Purgatory had really existed, one of the Popes could have closed it and freed the souls by his own authority. After having answered some possible objections to this statement, Ochino ends by thanking God who showed us that Christ is the only true Purgatory: the whole sermon concerns one single subject and Scripture is cited to strengthen a solid and coherent argument that follows its own line. Such a method of preaching follows the same path of the best Catholic preachers of his time, but remains far from the one of Luther, who «saw preaching as a text-related art», sticking to the Biblical text, and letting it guide the movement of the discourse (O'Malley 1993: 8).¹⁰

Both the exegetic and thematic methods are found in Calvin's preaching: in his sermon on Job 21,13-15, for example, he comments on the text verse by verse, following its development, and at the same time places it in the broader context of

quello locale, quello italiano, quello internazionale e/o dell'esilio italiano in generale» (ivi: 13).

8. I benefited from the reading of two master's theses: the first, directed by me, contains the edition of some of Ochino's sermons and an analysis of their phonetic and morphological features (Bonali 2007); the second, directed by Marco Giola, consists of a syntactical and rhetorical analysis of Ochino's 1542 *Prediche* and provided me with useful data (Clerici: 2014).

9. Camaioni (2018: 93-94) notes that other sermons published after 1542 but written, or at least sketched, before, show some features of *sermo modernus*. On the difference between *sermo antiquus* and *modernus* see Colombo 2014: 279-284.

10. See also Edwards 2004: 295-296 and Wilson 199: 95 («for instance his (i.e. Luther's) three volumes of sermons on the Gospel of John, stay with the text verse by verse») - although they are books intended primarily for preachers rather than for scholars.

the Biblical message. However, in his sermon on 1 Timothy 3:16 («And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory», according to the King James Version), Calvin neglects the multiple themes offered by the verse and preaches only on the incarnation of God, explaining what it means «que Dieu a esté manifesté en chair» (Calvin 1895: 320; see Parker 1992: 131-138; see also Wilson 1992: 101).¹¹ It is not easy to say to what extent Ochino was influenced by Calvin, but the fact that he published his *Prediche* less than two months after settling in Geneva suggests that this possibility should not be overestimated. If an influence by Calvin can be seen in Ochino's *Prediche*, it is more appropriate to think of the *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, not only for the content (as noted above), but also for the way of addressing theological topics considered by themselves, as Calvin does in his work (with the exception of chapters containing the explanation of the Decalogue and Apostles' Creed – as far as the 1539 edition is concerned: Calvin 1863: LI-LVIII, 253-1152).

It is also worth noting, following Pierno (2012a: 13), that in the 1542 sermons there are no *exempla*, the stories often told by preachers to illustrate a moral point. This lack turns out to be in sharp contrast not only with the widespread practice, but with the very way of preaching used by Ochino before his escape (see, for example, Cargnoni 1991: §§ 5616, 5630, 5637).

But are Ochino's writings real sermons? In other words: do they belong to the same genre of sermons that were actually preached or is it more accurate to see them as essays, given the fact that they were just written texts? Some years ago, I identified three groups of phenomena that are typical of deliberative speech in general and preaching in particular (Colombo 2014), and that distinguish this genre from others: they can all be found in Ochino's *Prediche*, which thus fall within the category of preaching.

First of all, Ochino often uses personal deixis, referring to a generic second person singular:

A poco a poco, le persone incominciorno a dir tutti li peccati, (et) li confessori a non indurli più a andare a Christo; imo ti diranno, quando ti confessi, ogn'altra cosa excepto questa (Ochino 1542: H7v-H8r, predica 14)

Christo non è morto per te, satisfacendo alli tuoi debiti (et) meritandoti el Paradiso, perché ti stia in ocio, facci de' peccati (et) sia un gran ribaldo, ma perché, vedendo tanta sua charità, quanto li dispiacciano li peccati, da poi che volse morire per toglì dal mondo, tu non pecchi più, ma l'ami, honori, ringratij, in lui ponga le speranze tue (et) facci opere assai virtuose (et) buone, non da servo per fugir l'Inferno, havendotene liberato Christo, né per el Paradiso, da poi che lui te l'ha aquistato, ma da figlio, per gloria di Dio, mosso da impeto di fede, charità (et) spirito, non da prudentia humana, sensualità o interessi proprij (Ochino 1542: G3v-G4r, predica 11).

11. The sermon was preached after 1542 and should be viewed just like a generic example of Calvin's thematic preaching.

Secondly, Ochino often asks questions and exhorts:

Apresso può errar l'homo in sentir tropo humilmente di sé, le sue miserie (et) la sua in-potentia? in tropo humiliarsi, exinanirsi (et) anihilarsi in conpecto di Dio? in diffidarsi (et) desperarsi al tutto di sé, in non darsi se no confusione (et) a Dio ogni honore (et) gloria? (Ochino 1542: A8r, predica 2)

Ma non vedi che t'inganni im pensar che Christo solo non basti (et) che non habbi satisfacto a sufficientia per li peccati co(m)messi doppo 'l baptismo (et) pene a epsi debite, che no(n) ci sien perdonati solo per lui? (Ochino 1542: K4v-K5r, predica 15)

No(n) cerchiamo adu(n)que più di voler iustificarci da noi, aciò non siam confusi, sì chome quelli che volseno edificar la torre infin al celo nel Gen[esi] a l'11, ma humilia(n)ci a Dio, aciò che per sua gratia facendoci sentire quello che con ragioni humane non si può provare, a Dio rendiamo ogni honore (et) gloria per Iesù Christo Signor nostro. Amen (Ochino 1542: D5v, predica 6)

Ognuno adunque vada al tribunal della divina misericordia, et se siamo chiamati a quello della iustitia, apelliamo sempre alla misericordia, (et) nessun comparisca a quello della iustitia, se in prima per fede non si è vestito di Christo (Ochino 1542: F5v, predica 10).

Lastly, the *Prediche* show frequent repetition of words and clauses, a figure of speech used to attract attention and make comprehension easier for the listeners:

Ma io ò compassione a chi danna (et) persequita la *fede* della iustificazione per Christo: perché non l'hanno mai gustata né sentita, non credan si truovi altra *fede* che quella morta opinion che hanno di Christo, (et) visto che con quella *fede* fanno ogni peccato, sonno sforzati a dir che la *fede* non basta, (et) a giognere le opere alla *fede*; ma se una sola volta provasseno a credere vivamente in Christo, non predicarebeno poi se no *fede* (Ochino 1542,: B7v-B8r, predica 3, italics mine)

Solo Christo nel suo regno *ha possuto satisfacere* (et) *ha satisfacto* per noi alla divina iustitia, (et) perché lui *ha satisfacto* a sufficientia, imo superabondantemente, onde David dixè la nostra redemptione esser stata copiosa, però no(n) fa piccola iniuria a Christo colui che opera o pate alchuna cosa con intento di *satisfacere* da sé, etiam in una minima parte (Ochino 1542: K3r, predica 15, italics mine).

Obviously enough, saying that Ochino's sermons fall fully within the genre of preaching does not mean that their language closely reflects real speech. For example, a parenthetical period such as the following seems unfit for oral discourse, though it would not be impossible to say it:

Però, chi vivamente crede in Christo è sicuro in tutti li modi. Et se ancho Dio la volesse con noi, et dicesse: «Io no(n) mi conte(n)to della satisfacione facta per voi da Christo, voglio che satisfaciate voi proprij che havete peccato» – il che è impossibile, perché già ab eterno se ne è contentato (et) ha aceptato quel divino sacrificio dello immaculato agnello Christo Iesù, morto in su la croce per obedientia del Padre, sì chome Pau(lo) scripse alli Phili(ppesi) [Php. 2,8]; già la divina iustitia p(er) Christo è satisfacta più che a sufficientia, già siamo

con Dio reconciliati (et) suoi figlioli, però heredi, già ab eterno ci ha donato el Paradiso; (et) quando Dio dona una cosa, non se ne pe(n)te mai (alli Ro(mani) al 11), però la donazione, per essere Dio immutabile, è inrevocabile – niente di meno, se ben dicesse: «Io voglio che tu proprio satisfaci», responde e di' così: «Signore, se io fusse da te tanto amato quanto Christo (et) a tuo honor operasse (et) patisse con somma charità tutto quello che operò (et) patì Christo, in tal caso non ti teresti da me satisfacto?» (Ochino 1542: F4r-v, predica 10).

The same could be maintained for the many Latin quotations listed one after another without translation in the same tenth sermon, that would hardly be comprehensible to a common audience:

Hor li peccatori, se vogliono salvarsi, debano andar tutti al tribunal della misericordia a domandar pietà (et) non iustitia, gratia (et) non ragione, perché haviamo tutti li torti, (et) con tutte le nostre iustitie (et) buone opere non potiamo resistere alla divina iustitia; però dixit David: «Non intres in iudiciu(m) cum servo tuo Domine, quia non iustificabitur in conspectu tuo omnis vivens» [Ps. 143 (142),2], Signore nissuno si potrà iustificare in conspecto tuo, se la vorrai veder di ragione; (et) in un altro loco: «Si iniquitates observaveris, Domine, Domine quis sustinebit?» [Ps. 130 (129),3]; et Iob: «Scio quod non iustificatur homo, comparatus Deo» [Jb. 9,2] (et) in un altro loco: «Quid est homo, ut mundus sit? Coeli non sunt mundi» [Jb. 15,14-15]; (et) Ieremia: «Si laveris te nitro maculata es» [Je. 2,22]; et Isaia: «Quasi pannus menstruatae omnes iustitiae nostrae» [Is. 64,5]; (et) nelli Prover(bi): «Quis potest dicere “Mundum est cor meum”? “Purus sum a peccato”?» [Pr. 20,9] (Ochino 1542: F1v-F2r, predica 10).

In any case, the language is far from the literary one codified by Pietro Bembo and inspired by Petrarch and Boccaccio, as is shown on the one hand by the use of non-standard features like the definite article *el* (*el Padre* fol. A2r, *el pio*, *el prudente*, *el mio partirmi* fol. A2v, etc.) and the 6th person of the present indicative ending in *-ano* for verbs not belonging to the first class (*ricevano* fol. A3v, *possano* fol. A4r, *dicano* fol. A5v, etc.); on the other hand, by the occurrence of Sienese features such as *homo* instead of *huomo* (fols. A3r, A3v, *gentilhomo* fol. A3v, etc.), *so'* instead of *sono* or *sonno* (see the lines about Geneva quoted above), *potiamo* instead of *possiamo* (fols. A3r, A5v, A6r, etc.), *havam*, *havamo* instead of *habbiam*, *habbiamo* (fols. A3v, A7v, B6r, etc.), the future tense with *-ar-* instead of *-er-* for verbs belonging to the first class (*sforzarò*, *pensarò*, *incominciarò* fol. A2v, etc.) and others (compare Trovato 1994: 54-56 and Pierno 2012b: 134-142).

Rhetorically speaking, one of the most characteristic traits of Ochino's sermons is the frequency of correction, a figure of speech which consists in clarifying a concept either by proposing a better expression for it or by contrasting it with its opposite (thus creating an antithesis: see Mortara Garavelli 1997: 240-241).

Ma forse dirai: adu(n)que, no(n) bisogna che io mi affatighi più p(er) satisfare a li miei peccati né p(er) meritar el Paradiso. Potrò *star in ocio*, *imo far quanto male io voglio* con darmi piacere (et) buon tempo, che se è chome dici, in ogni modo mi salvarò (Ochino 1542: G3r, predica 11, italics mine)

Alhora si lassano [li peccati], si detestano, ci dispiacciano, ne havian tristitia, la quale *non nasce dal turbido (et) fangoso lago del proprio amore, ma dal limpido (et) claro fonte del divino amore* (Ochino 1542: H2r, predica 13, italics mine).

Both types are shown in the following passage:

Ma meglio, Dio ha ordinato che li peccati sien rimessi per Christo a quelli che con viva fede l'abbracciano per loro iustitia, (et) li apostoli (et) lor successori hebbeno auctorità *d'insegnare questo modo* da iustificarsi, *no(n) di trovar di lor fantasia nuovi (et) falsi modi* p(er) escir de' peccati; con *abscondere, imo et damnare* el vero modo della iustificatione p(er) la fede credi che possino mutar le cose essenziali alla salute? (Ochino 1542: I7r-v, predica 14, italics mine).

The idea that apostles and bishops received the authority to teach the justification of sins by faith alone is strengthened by contrasting it with the opposite, i.e. the action of imagining something new and false on their own; and the verb *abscondere* is corrected and reinforced by *damnare*. Moreover, the whole passage, which begins with *Ma meglio* is a correction of what Ochino had previously asserted. The *Prediche* are indeed full of corrections that are to be seen as a peculiarity of their style, while this figure of speech is quite rare in other preachers such as Cornelio Musso.¹²

Is this a distinctive feature of Ochino's sermons after his escape? Is the use of corrections a means that he employed to overtly contrast the Catholic faith that he had rejected shortly before? It would be tempting, but completely wrong, to think so. The few printed sermons pronounced by Ochino in the 1530s present a similar frequency of corrections, as in the following passage taken from the first of the sermons given in Lucca in 1538:

A fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos [Mt. 7,16]: dice il Salvatore nostro. Dai frutti si conosce un buon cristiano e non per la dottrina e cieca prudenza, né per fede morta, né solamente per l'abito religioso, né per cerimonie e operazioni morte, ma sì bene per li frutti della fede e del vivo spirito, i quali Paolo li descrive dicendo: «I frutti dello spirito sono pace, allegrezza, pazienza, longanimità, pietà, benignità, mansuetudine, fede, modestia, continenza, castità» [Gal. 5,22], e questi sono i frutti del cristiano vero, e non la dottrina e cieca prudenza, fede morta e operazioni morte, la fede de' quali¹³ certo gli è poltrona e oziosa (Cargnoni 1991: §5630; see also Camaioni 2018: 319-335).

Corrections can be also seen at the beginning of the second sermon in Lucca:

In tutte le infermitadi principalmente bisogna rimuovere la occasione, imperoché la rogn non si toglie via, né si rimuove del tutto con l'unzione, ma il perito e dotto medico che fa? Ordina e puone li remedi circa il fondamento per estinguere l'occasione, la quale occasione rimossa, subito la rogn casca; così certamente circa alla perfezione della vita cristiana: non

12. I borrow this observation from the bachelor's thesis of Benedettini 2013, which analyses Musso's *Prediche* printed in Venice by Gabriele Giolito and brothers in 1558.

13. The antecedent of the relative pronoun is unclear; note that the text of this sermon was jotted down by a hearer and not revised – as far as we know – by the author.

solamente per cerimonie, abito religioso, confessione e comunione, le quali cose certamente sono ottime se le sono congiunte con la carità, si conosce un perfetto cristiano, ma si bene in torre e levar via l'occasione, la quale si separa o si può separare dalla carità di Dio e del prossimo, la quale occasione è l'amor proprio (Cargnoni 1991: § 5633).

If the great number of corrections in Ochino's preaching has a meaning, this is linked to his way of viewing and presenting things, rather than to his overt rejection of Catholicism;¹⁴ it is a sign of his attitude to see white always contrasted with black, and to distinguish it from all the other colours of the visible spectrum. In my opinion, a speech directed to the students of Perugia University in 1536 or 1539 (the date is uncertain) is revealing:¹⁵ talking to an audience taken up with academic study, Ochino bases all his talk upon the verse of the first letter to the Corinthians (2,2) «For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified», contrasting the knowledge of Christ with all other subjects and rejecting any possible compromise, moved by a desire for purity that would have taken him all across Europe.

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14. Although in 1538 Ochino had already begun to break away from the Catholic Church, this does not seem to affect the point at stake here, because his rejection of the Catholic faith was not overt yet.

15. Cargnoni 1991: §§ 5615-5628; see also Camaioni 2018: 238-242.

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ABSTRACT – Bernardino Ochino of Siena, former Vicar-General of the Capuchin Friars, converted to Protestantism and fled Italy in 1542. After reaching Geneva in the same year, he published a book of *Prediche* (sermons) together with other works. These sermons were addressed to the Italian people (probably with the aim of promoting the breakthrough of Protestantism in Italy) and show some influence from Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. While never preached, Ochino's *Prediche* have all the features typical of the genre to which they are supposed to belong: personal deixis, questions and exhortations, and repetition of words and clauses. Moreover, Ochino's sermons show a distinctive rhetorical feature, the frequent use of corrections. Rather than being linked to Ochino's polemical view of the Catholic Church, this feature relates to his way of conceiving arguments, both before and after his conversion to Protestantism.

KEYWORDS – Preaching; 16th Century; Rhetoric; Protestant Reformation; Ochino.

RIASSUNTO – Bernardino Ochino da Siena, vicario generale dei frati cappuccini, aderì alla Riforma e lasciò l'Italia nel 1542. Dopo aver raggiunto Ginevra nel medesimo anno, pubblicò un libro di *Prediche* insieme ad altre opere. Le prediche sono indirizzate ai lettori italiani,

probabilmente nell'intento di promuovere l'affermazione delle idee riformate nella Penisola) e mostrano un certo influsso dell'*Institutio Christianae Religionis* di Calvino. Sebbene mai recitati, i sermoni di Ochino presentano tutti i tratti tipici del genere a cui dovrebbero ricondursi: deissi personale, frasi esclamative e interrogative e iterazioni. Mostrano inoltre un tratto retorico caratterizzante, l'uso frequente della *correctio*. Piuttosto che essere legata all'opposizione critica di Ochino alla Chiesa cattolica, tale figura dipende dal suo modo di argomentare, sia prima sia dopo il passaggio alla Riforma.

PAROLE CHIAVE – predicazione; Cinquecento; retorica; Riforma protestante; Ochino.