The Stylistics of Sermon

Marius Daniel CIOBOTĂ

Cette étude cherche à souligner la spécificité stylistique du discours de l'église à pupitre, montrant la formule génétique et les perspectives d'utilisation du langage homilétique. Comme un type de rhétorique, l'homélie chrétienne est un discours argumentatif et persuasif, basé sur la logique et l'expressivité verbale, deux attributs stylistiques représentatifs qui pleinement motive sa fonction. La vieille triade d'Aristote éthos - logos - pathos, l'entrelacement fonctionnelle-discursive de la moralité de l'émetteur, des idées et des sentiments, est le triple ferment de la persuasion, celui qui apporte le changement de l'état psycho-émotionnel de l'auditeur. Mais la principale contribution appartient, certainement, aux mots porteurs de grâce du sermon. Toutefois, le côté artistique du discours homilétique n'est pas exclu de notre analyse.

Mots-clés: homélie, style, language religieuse, discours de l'église.

As compared to other types of speech, much more "liberal" in relation to a well defined body of dogmatic principles, the pattern of the sacred rhetoric appears to provide less material to the stylistic analyses, concerned to identify, within an oral or written communication, the linguistic and argumentative expression of subjectivity. Truly, by conferring an undeniable preeminence to biblical-dogmatic data of the Revelation (the term was established by the Christian theology to refer to the contents of the message addressed by God to people), it would seem that the preacher remains in the background of communication, the personal element being very limited within the economy of the speech. Constrained to the objectivation of expression, he is, as one might say, a second issuer, a simple neutral messenger of the religious message, a perpetual biblical Aaron, impossible to be assessed for the originality of ideas. If in the extremely prolific field of literature, the novelty of verbal construction is, in the final analysis, the main source of the sustainable impact on posterity[1], in

[1] Principle that the literary critic Mihai Zamfir brilliantly supports in his *Scurtă istorie. Panorama alternativă a literaturii române*, Iași, Editura Polirom-Cartea Românească, 2011. Here is the programmatic statement of the work and the literary conviction of the one who undertakes such a demonstration: "... I relied on the fact that style only determines the ultimate value of a writer and that the stylistic originality only ensures his permanence. And the style of an author may ultimately be reduced to a linguistic formula. Everything that, apparently, belongs to a universe of infinite wealth (under the aspect of the portrayed worlds, the ingenuity of invention, the philosophical vision, the biographical experience etc.) is reducible to a language cipher and closes in it", p. 5.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

the field of preaching the referential plan limits the language creativity of the one who speaks or writes. The church literature "essentially turns out to be conservative by its dependency on fixed sources and sacred models"[2], which makes it, according to some, difficult to reconcile with the stylistic performance. However, it would be hasty and unjust to end the discussion about the style of the sermon here. In the rhetorical typology, the Christian homily is an *argumentative* and *persuasive* speech, based on both logic and verbal expressiveness, two representative attributes that fully motivate its stylistic function. The old Aristotelian triad *ethos - logos - pathos*, the functional-discoursive intertwining of issuer's morality, of ideas and feelings, is the triple ferment of persuasion, the one that brings change to the psycho-emotional state of the listener. But the primary contribution belongs, definitely, to the *grace-bearing* words specific to homiletic speech, to that "loads of energy, irreducible to the natural powers of the word, having its roots in the depths of the Godhead"[3]. This is the one that gives Christian sermon the spiritual substantiality that Jesus stated about His words addressed to humanity: "My words are spirit and life" (John 6: 63).

Complementary to this inherent divine breath, by virtue of personal adhesion, without which the authentic exercise of kerygmatic mission is inconceivable, it is impossible for the Christian preacher not to impress his feelings on the structure of the message spread from the pulpit, either in terms of global semantics, linking the ideas in a special way, dictated by his attitude towards the message, or in the manner of forging the expression, which would closely link his communicative intention and the ability of the public to receive it faithfully. The linguistic selection and the textual achievement results from the interference of the subjective plan with that coercion (undoubtedly positive in the given context) exerted by the dogmatic character of reference and, not the least, with the linguistic code used by the receivers of the sermonical message. Especially in direct homiletical communication, oral, the only one bearing in itself and updating the religious potencies of the act of preaching (in accordance with the kerygmatic principle of Saint Paul "Faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" - Rom. 10, 17), the inner world of the preacher enters, through the phonological dimension, in relation with the external reality, particularly with the inner worlds of the listeners. Through its spontaneous and emotional character, the spoken word owns this virtue, to create direct spiritual bridges. "In terms of faith, Peter Creţia writes, the speech is uttered for the purpose of *communion*, not that communication limited to a logical structure"[4]. The information, the referentiality makes way for a spiritual

[2] Maria Cătănescu, *Retorică românească medievală – Varlaam: Răspunsul împotriva catihismusului calvinesc*, în „Elemente de retorică românească: poezie, proză, text dramatic", Bucureşti, Editura ALL Universitar, 2001, p. 79.

[3] D. Belu, *Curs de omiletică. Momente din istoria predicii. Teoria predicii*, Editura InfoArt Media & Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2012, p. 377.

[4] P. Creția, *Luminile şi umbrele sufletului*, Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2011, p. 143.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

fellowship, which is not entirely alien to the incantatory effects of language. Therefore, aesthetic values can be revealed in the homiletic language too (after all, we know that there is no stylistic neutrality) and their essential merit is found in what an outstanding semiotic research called *language atmosphere*[5]. By its emblematic, sacred value, the religious language (meaning words, phrases, prosodic features, phonic contexts, implicitly the paraverbal attitude of the speaker) has a high evocative and stimulating role in terms of spirit. It does not serve to communication of information only, but creates a cognitive - spiritual condition specific to the mysterious bond between man and God, between the one who listens and the one who speaks, even if the the Latter One does it indirectly, through the priest's words. In the correspondences of this emotional function (inseparably grounded on the ethical one) sermon finds the source of its continuity in the axiology of humanity after Christ, which Dumitru Irimia justly revealed in one of his works: "The stylistic dimension of the religious text is rooted in its very semantic dimension by which the human being, framed in the profane world, enters into communication with the sacred world of divinity"[6].

Considering that the stylistic research has an important theoretical reference in Jakobson's theses, expressed in the famous conference from Indiana University in April 1958 and published in the well known volume *Style in Language*, Massachusetts, The Technology Press of M.I.T, 1960[7], by which the profound connection of linguistics with poetics was brought to light with the most solid arguments, the poetical fiber of verbality is the outbreak of any stylistic analysis. By default, as protochronic option of the elevated, literary language, the religious expression reveals its poetic character, which is impossible to ignore. It is the diachronic product of a lexical synergy claiming out of three directions: Bible, worship and theological reflection of the Fathers of the Church, all defining the specifics of Christian spirituality in a unitary manner. Over the ages, the Christian words and phrases have become a cultural symbol. The Bible is the written synthesis of communication between God and man, its spiritual authority consisting in the revealed character or "inspired"[8] by God, of the message it contains. The second source, the liturgical language, though seemingly distinct as verbal specificity, reveals a prevailing biblical component, on both semantic and lexical level, being in fact "a theological - poetic and musical commentary of the

[5] Mariana Neț, *O poetică a atmosferei. Rochia de moar*, Editura Univers, București,1989; in fact, the author establishes a dialectics of atmosphere - the atmosphere of *contents* (referential) and *language* - analyzing the generative modes of each of them, but also their level of interference. Starting from an *intermediate semantic world* of the participants of a communication act (written or oral), the construction of atmosphere goes together with their adaptation to its specificity.

[6] Dumitru Irimia, *Introducere în stilistică*, Editura Polirom, Iași,1999, p.166.

[7] See the Romanian translation of the conference in volume *Probleme de stilistică. Culegere de articole*, Editura Științifică, București,1964, p. 83-125.

[8] II Tim. 3, 16.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

Scriptures"[9]. Its structural factor is represented by the devotion manifested in the sacramental – public setting, where the Orthodox Liturgy easily reveals its conceptual and linguistic background of biblical origin, thus strengthening the internal, organic unity between the Revelation and the Church: "The language of the Church, the liturgical language is the language of the Bible, not only *literally* (more than half of the liturgical texts are biblical), but also in the sense that the entire *structure* of the worship, ritual, symbolism, images and the whole spirit of the cult are intimately joined with Scripture and deeply rooted in it"[10]. An additional testimony in support of the assertion that the church style of the literary Romanian language was born in oral form[11].

The patristic literature, the third element of the stylistic synergy we mentioned about, certifies that the great spirits of the early Church were committed, by the hermeneutic culture they created, to an innovative approach which decisively enriched the thought and public logos of Christianity. And here, if we refer to Chrysostomos pattern, we find a combination, as eloquent as possible, of stylistic influence directions mentioned above: the impeccable biblical knowledge of the orator of Antioch is found, once with his theological thought heated by ideals of morality, in the text of the Liturgy which the Orthodox Church currently practice and that bears his name. They are supplemented by the orant creations of the patristic spirit. The texts of prayers, especially composed of the great mystic authors of the Christian literature, bear a special spiritual expressiveness[12]. In a perfect conceptual organic structure, the three branches of Christian culture developed their own nuances of stylistic typology. But the biblical source of the religious language is dominant. It is this, in fact, that founded, almost entirely, the linguistic expression specific to the liturgical worship and, partly, the one of the patristic hermeneuts who, inseparable from the semantic environment of the biblical text, developed a personal thorough discourse, the pattern of the subsequent Christian theological discourse. These are, in brief, the formative, identitary coordinates, of the homiletic style[13].

---

[9] †Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church), *Comori ale Ortodoxiei. Explorări teologice în spiritualitatea liturgică şi filocalică*,Editura Trinitas, Iași,2007, p. 35.

[10] Al. Schmemann, *Liturghie și viață. Desăvîrșire creștină prin intermediul experienței liturgice*, traducere de Pr. Viorel Sava, Editura Basilica, București, 2014, p. 40.

[11] M.M. Deleanu, *Stilul religios al limbii române literare*, in „Limbă şi literatură", XLII (1997), vol. II, p. 31.

[12] See, in this regard, the famous collection (unique in the Orthodox spirituality) *Apanthisma* or *Rugăciunile Sfinților Părinți,* published by the editor of Philokalia, Nikodemos the Hagiorite, in Constantinople, in 1799, and translated into Romanian in Neamț Monastery in 1827. A revised version, with afterword, notes and comments published by the academician Virgil Cîndea, under the title *Cele mai frumoase rugăciuni ale Ortodoxiei*, Bucureşti, Editura Anastasia, 1996 (republished in 1998).

[13] I have to notice some attempts to set the terminology of the religious verbality (but not strictly homiletic) or even to postulate it as general stylistic matrix - "protero - the style of all functional styles of the Romanian language"; cf. Mihaela Secrieru, *Stilul religios – un arhetip al stilurilor*

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

From the lexical – grammatical perspective, the style of religious sermon acquires, "as spoken version"[14] of the church language, although not in the same proportions, aspects specific to the language used in biblical and liturgical writings, consisting of vocabulary items with archaic form and resonance (*tribe, blessing, temptation, feast, command, preaching, deliverance, prophet, salvation, sanctification, worship, good will, defilement, ascesis, interpretation, zeal, descent, threefold, damnation, primate, intercession, faithfulness, chosen (*meaning "special, distinguished"*), deposit, ground, dwelling place, uncleanness, helplessness, protector, paralytic, servant, lunatic, veneration, prefiguration, absolution* etc). We frequently find verbal forms and constructions which today's grammatical use keeps no more, but which, for the aspectual level and sonority specific to this stylistic pattern, remain the bearers of a considerable plasticizing force through that "charm of simplicity and evocation"[15]: the postposition of the demonstrative pronominal adjective (*the Parable of the Tenants, the Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete, of this righteous*), adjectives composed of adverbial elements and different verbal phrases directly descended from the "language of ancient sermons" (*the most merciful, the most beautiful, good very, to do obedience, to preach, to keep the commandments, to settle, to search* - meaning "to pay attention, to care", *to proceed, to accomplish, to count* - meaning "to name"[16], *to fulfill, to take care of, to bow knees, before-celebration, Beheading of...,walking on the sea, our salvation, of the saint hieromartyr, without silver, without sin, without will, with no beginning, victory bearer, all things visible and invisible, to become worthy of, to foretaste, together-work, service in commemoration, take heed that, consider, to come, in memory of, out of the depths, so we may* and so on), but also terms responsible, especially today, for a certain semantic risk (*limb* - meaning "member", *living women* - meaning "women living in a monastery", *to fight the good fight*- ascetic meaning),

---

funcționale ale limbii române. Prolegomene, in „Philologos", I (1), nr. 1-2, iunie 2005, p. 120-127; other terminological options came from Lidiei Sfîrlea – „biblical style" – *Delimitarea stilurilor literare românești*, in „Studii de limbă literară și filologie", II, București, 1972, p. 145-206 (analisys of the characteristics of biblical text compared to the belletristic and scientific ones), Marcu Mihail Deleanu's („religious-ecclesiastical style") in the study *Stilul religios al limbii române literare*„Limbă și literatură", anul XLII (1997), vol. II, p. 29-39, George's Chivu ("the church language"), *Civilizație și cultură. Considerații asupra limbajului bisericesc actual*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 1997 and Dumitru Irimia's – „religious style" - *Introducere în stilistică*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 1999. Professor Chivu's conference was intended to complete the Romanian stylistic spectrum of the last decades with the required attention paid to the ecclesiastical language. Through the examples provided, abundant and judicious, the text maintains the status of remarkable reference to this topic.

[14] Gheorghe Chivu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[15]Sorin Stati, Gheorghe Bulgăr, *Analize sintactice și stilistice*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1970, p. 227; in the monography dedicated to the linguistic universe of Eminescu's poetry, Dumitru Irimia acknowledged the „the particular and more appropriate character of the joining of the background with the expression" of the popular and archaic lexicon, D. Irimia, *Limbajul poetic eminescian*, Editura Junimea, Iași, 1979, p. 236.

[16] As we hear, for instance, in the current expression „to count him among the righteous".

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

emphasizing constructions (*Our Lord our God let us*...), redundant or even pleonastic (,,with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm", "mercy of mercifulness", "he healed *him*", "to have mercy on *us*", "for Thine is the kingdom *and* the power *and* the glory..." (a polisindeton specific to final liturgical formulas), *and together with* Your Father who is without beginning", "gladness and joy", "for proper wealth", "greatness of glory", "to the ages of ages", and so on), slavic terms the lexical survival of which is due mainly to the church language. The pleonastic coupling of certain synonymous terms - "gladness and joy", "trespasses and sins", "our Lord and God", "the Most Pure and Innocent", "good and merciful" etc. – is a redundancy incompletely resolved by translation, but can be ascribed to the desire for emphasizing the concerned doctrinal notions. The peculiarities of word order and these apparent syntactic anomalies are therefore based on theological reasons, not emotional, revealing the concern to give priority to dogmatic element, which is permanently found in the didactic and updating intention of the preacher. Here we could illustrate, of course not singularly, the resounding biblical noun "bosom", κόλπος, or the plural archaic form "bosoms". It comes from the words of John the Evangelist on the divine status of the Second Person of the Trinity. Eternal, the Son "is in *the bosom* of the Father" (John 1, 18) and from this position he bears witness to the people about His Father who no one has ever seen. "In *the bosom* of the Father" suggests, therefore, an intimacy and an ontological equivalence of the two Trinitarian hypostases. The atemporal birth of the being of the Father gives the Son the natural prerogative of full knowledge, but also accessibility to the One who gave birth to Him "before all ages" and beyond any possible thought. An approximate meaning, though without the special sense of the divine consubstantiality from the first expression, is also found in the liturgical use of "Abraham's bosom", which expresses, as the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus implies, the communion of those who passed to eternity with the paradigmatic father of the biblical faith. Frequent syntactic inversions, such as direct object before its verb (,,In Lord I trusted" and so on) or the adverbial of time ("Eternal be his memory") with elliptical structure in this latter case, deliberately emphasize certain central themes within the Christian thought: God and the unfathomable depths of the eternity, specific only to Him.

Although, as Valeria Gutu Romalo noticed, in the church speech these archaic words and phrases "retain their active character, being currently used, without ostentation"[17], they often create, unaware from the preacher, an effect of artificiality, which we could call *ecclesiastical discursive mannerism*, especially in cases in which the subject matter (and the audience!) belongs to modernity. With few exceptions, the homiletic style refuses innovation or at least the phrasal

[17] Valeria Guțu-Romalo, *Corectitudine şi greşeală. Limba română de azi*, ediția a III-a, revăzută şi adăugită, Humanitas, București, 2008, p. 159. Likewise, in the article mentioned, Professor Gh. Chivu rejects any conclusion regarding a stylistic intention of the archaic particularities of the religious language, showing their structural character in the respective linguistic field.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

pattern, which keeps it under the condition of a tedious syntagmatic predictability, which ultimately turns out to be fruitless for the reception of the sermon. The exemples of stylistic boldness (Nicolae Steinhardt, Bartolomeu Anania, Antonie Plămădeală, Constantin Necula etc.) generally remain in minority in front of the inertia of the "language of the past", being considered an abandonment of church speech tradition. One can notice, however, especially among young preachers, the tendency to appreciate such examples of verbal renewal. As a main factor for the conservation of the moral principles, implicitly linguistic, of the Christian Tradition, we believe the ecclesiastical environment must pursue its mission, without mistaking it for the autistic conservatism and the inexplicable appetence for cliché. As an antipodic alternative to the old homiletic language, one often resorts to the excessive colloquial style and the massive insertion of neologisms, the former verging on prosaic, the latter being made responsible for the bombastic and pedantic style. The excess of metaphors, on the other hand, can obnubilate, especially for the less educated and sensitive receiver to the nuances of language, the doctrinal concepts that serve as didactic grounds of the sermon, leaving him "outside the discursive influence"[18]. At the same time, regarding the same coordinates of reciprocity, we must say that the linguistic peculiarities, selectively exemplified by us, of the preaching style cannot be assimilated by an auditor who is completely uninitiated in the church ethos, namely in the absence of an epistemic compatibilization of the protagonists of this type of communication.

Analyzing Gala Galaction's prose, whose admiration was considered by one of the classics of Romanian literature, Tudor Vianu, this "stylistic clockmaker" of our literary culture, as one of his contemporaries[19] called him, discovers a double propensity in the cleric's writing, for *allegory* - figure of speech that makes an idea sensitive by means of an image - marked by the generous use of epithets to their paroxysmal degree, and for *lyricism*, which he ascribes it to the theological formation of the author's vibrant *Christian pages* (*Day of the Lord*). For the great Romanian stylistician, the artistic features mentioned above represent an emphasis specific to the edifying rhetoric of the church[20]. The assertion is entirely credible, the more so the Orthodox sermon cultivated, in large proportions, the allegorized biblical hermeneutics having its ancient origin in Alexandria, and faithfully took over the sacral aesthetics of biblical themes. Out of this predilection of Christian speech for imagistics and suggestibility, to which the encomniastic element is added (equally defining), comes the homiletical lyricism, that emotional display of the preacher's text; all this joining the other "flaps of the instrument of the ecclesiastic oratory" which Nicolae Manolescu identified, customized and perfectly generalisable, in the pulpit technique of

[18] Constantin Sălăvăstru, *Mic tratat de oratorie*, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iași, 2006, p. 63.

[19] E. Papu, *Din luminile veacului*, Editura Pentru Literatură, București, 1967, p. 59.

[20] Tudor Vianu, *Arta prozatorilor români*, Editura Orizonturi, București, 2010, p. 275.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

metropolitan Antim Ivireanul: solemnity, familiarity, example, exaltation, admonishment, psalmody, poetic, trivial, methodic and messianic[21].

The intelligibility and, equally, the stimulating attractiveness of the Christian idea are born from the creative labor of the communicating language, which is far from generating a conflict between the rigor of theological dogma and the aesthetic principle. On the contrary. The communicative - didactic function of the sermon does not exclude the aesthetic normalization of the text that underlies it, but undoubtedly implies it. Otherwise, neglecting its form or tyrannically limiting its virtualities, the substance of the religious message comes close, in the public communication field (is this not enough?), to an useless prosaism. Abandoning not the primary didascalic function, the pulpit oratory makes, thus, a happy pact with the artistic spirit. The beautiful is, no matter what, the leading factor for the ennoblement of the contents of an experienced fact. Although substantially under disjunction, as Tudor Vianu[22] conceived them, the aesthetic contemplation and the religious act do not reject a generally axiologic meeting point. According to the popular thought and beyond its proverbial subjectivity (namely residing only in "the eye of the beholder"), the beauty of things enjoys success even before God, for, is it not true?, if something is beautiful, even God likes it, too. In this sense, "Dostoyevsky's prophecy according to which «the beautiful will save the world» may mean that, by its power to restore cosmos to its original purity, art plays a similar restorative role, keeping the proportions, with the redemptive effect of Christ's sacrifice"[23]. The solemn archaic feature of the sermon, practiced in the name of that paradigmatic κάλλος, does not have, therefore, up to a point, anything that needs amendment, presenting itself as aesthetic factor without which this type of discourse would no longer be what it is. However, often, the language acquires a ceremonial artificiality, obsolete, willing, based on a motivation that ignores the principles of communication (e.g. the semantic congruence, the corollary of that *intersubjectivity* defined by E. Benveniste, is achievable primarily through linguistical adaptation) to completely differentiate from the regular expression of the general public. Under these circumstances, cripticity grows considerably, given the occurence, almost inevitable, of the wooden language, and the redemptive meanings of the Gospel's message face the danger of remaining only in the mind of the preacher. Here we are, in other words, in front of the *cognitive dissonance*, known as pathology of reception thanks to Leon Festinger' research in the 50s of the last century and, ultimately, in front of a semantic undesirable obscurity.

It can be noticed that the conative function of the pulpit language takes, almost every time, the form of hortative conjunctive (,,let us cast off the the

[21] Nicolae Manolescu, *Istoria critică a literaturii române*, Editura Minerva, București, 1990, p.43.

[22] Tudor Vianu, *Estetică*, vol.1, Editura Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă Regele Carol I, București, 1934, p. 73.

[23] M. Dinu, *Un alt Bolintineanu – gînduri despre natura poeziei*, ed. a 2-a, Editura Spandugino, București, 2011, p. 36.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

passions!", “Let us know the true teachings”, “Let us love the saints!" etc.). The prevalence of verbs in the construction of the sentence testifies the praxeological aspect of the homily. As the precepts dealt with in the sermon are intended to determine a virtuous moral behavior of the receivers, the dynamism of semantic reverberations grows through the increased use of verb forms, that "angel of motion that gives the first impulse to the sentence", according to the expressive definition of Baudelaire[24]. The action function of the Christian sermon was prototypically illustrated by Jesus countless times, but the most eloquent example is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 10, in the formulation of the reply given to the lawyer’s question “What shall I *do* to inherit eternal life?”. After a heuristic dialogue on the precepts of the Law, in order to (re)define the fundamental biblical concept of neighbor ("μου πλησίον"), Jesus molds the resounding parable of the Good Samaritan, in the light of which the Christian life has a a fundamental active dimension, efficient through gestures of genuine charity, beyond any ethnic frontier or social preconception. Let us note that, both at the end of the introductory dialogue (which Jesus moves towards the identification of the premises of immediately following argumentation), and as an epilogue, lapidary and yet captivating by its imperative concentration, of the parable’s message, the divine Teacher with human nature offers the unequivocal practical urge: “*Do* this and you shall live!” and “*Go*, and *do* thou likewise”!. In the spirit of this model of Christ’s doctrine, homiletics kept the discursive function focused on action, thereby cultivating the belief that a faith deprived of deep introspection and, therefore, factual materiality is downright barren.

Organically refusing neologisms (or, in any case, not taking them suddenly, but moderately, for fear of not making complicated and secularize the expression), the religious language limits the synonymous exercise of the preacher priest. Which is not necessarily a glitch. Although it offers a certain freedom in the enunciative organization, the didactic-ethic function of the sermon requires a stylistic conduct of the orator, carefully guided by the principle of accessibility[25], but also by the lexical stability, which, especially in the latter case, requires, under certain discursive contexts, a terminological register, customized, resulting from the theological filtration and preserved in the linguistic use of the Church. Through this semantic specialization, the terms in question become non-substitutable, being linguistic testimonies of a spiritual identity. This does not exclude the use of explanatory appositions, where the speaker deems necessary, out of the data he owns on the apperceptive quality of the public (collected from the extra-homiletic communication plan – pastoral casuistry, confessions, dialogues, etc.), but also as a result of decoding the nonverbal reactions generated by the sermon. The fear of dogmatic transgression

[24] Apud G. Genette, *Figuri*, traducere de A. Ion şi A. Mavrodin, Editura Univers, Bucureşti, 1978, p. 300.

[25] Apostle Paul assumes this kerygmatic demand when he confesses: “ I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise” (Rom 1, 14).

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

must not diminish up to extinction that triple freedom - phonematic, paradigmatic and syntagmatic (pronunciation, selection and composition) – decisive for the linguistic act, by which the orator can manifest his presence in the language. In addition, through adjoining kinesic aspects (hand gesture, mimic language[26]) and the suprasegmental side of the speech (the expressive dynamics of breaks, variation of emotional tones, intensity and rhythm of pronunciation, prosody), he can build a metadiscoursive level extremely influential on the stylistic level[27].

Bibliography

Belu, Dumitru, *Curs de omiletică. Momente din istoria predicii. Teoria predicii*, Editura InfoArt Media & Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2012

Cătănescu, Maria, *Elemente de retorică românească: poezie, proză, text dramatic*, Editura ALL Universitar, București, 2001

Chivu, Gheorghe, *Civilizație și cultură. Considerații asupra limbajului bisericesc actual*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1997

Creția, Petru, *Luminile și umbrele sufletului*, Humanitas, București, 2011

†Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *Comori ale Ortodoxiei. Explorări teologice în spiritualitatea liturgică și filocalică*, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2007

Deleanu, M. M., *Stilul religios al limbii române literare*, în „Limbă şi literatură", anul XLII (1997), vol. II

Dinu, M., *Un alt Bolintineanu – gînduri despre natura poeziei*, ed. a 2-a, Editura Spandugino, București, 2011

Genette, G., *Figuri*, traducere de A. Ion şi A. Mavrodin, Editura Univers, București, 1978

Irimia, Dumitru, *Introducere în stilistică*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1999

Manolescu, Nicolae, *Istoria critică a literaturii române*, Editura Minerva, București, 1990

Neț, Mariana, *O poetică a atmosferei. Rochia de moar*, Editura Univers, București, 1989

Pop, Ion, *Spre un alt tip de istorie a literaturii*, în „Viața românească", nr.5-6/2013

Sălăvăstru, Constantin, *Mic tratat de oratorie*, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iași, 2006

Schmemann, Al., *Liturghie și viață. Desăvîrșire creștină prin intermediul experienței liturgice*, traducere de Pr. Viorel Sava, Editura Basilica, București, 2014

Secrieru, Mihaela, *Stilul religios – un arhetip al stilurilor funcționale ale limbii române. Prolegomene*, în „Philologos", I(1), nr. 1-2, iunie 2005

Stati, Sorin, Bulgăr, Gheorghe, *Analize sintactice și stilistice*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1970

[26] For instance, no one forbids the preacher to accompany his sentences with sincerity and the warmth of *smile* (of course, in agreement with the respective semantic context). It is a human cohesive factor the effectiveness of which anyone can test, in any discursive genre. In the process of primary individuation of the child, for example, this mimic language element is "the prototype and the basis of subsequent social relations" (R.A. SPITZ), thus, the undeniable communicative archetype. And who can question the authenticity of a child's smile?

[27] Autorul mulțumește dlui prof. Cristian Ioniță pentru traducerea textului în limba engleză.

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)

Țâra, Vasile D., *Discursul religios, model și normă de exprimare îngrijită în epoca veche*, în „Text și discurs religios”, nr.1/2009
Vianu, Tudor, *Arta prozatorilor români*, Editura Orizonturi, Bucureşti, 2010
Vianu, Tudor, *Estetică*, vol.1, Editura Fundaţia pentru literatură şi artă Regele Carol I, București, 1934
Zafiu, Rodica, *Diversitate stilistică în româna actuală*, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, București, 2001
Zamfir, Mihai, *Scurtă istorie. Panorama alternativă a literaturii române*, Editura Polirom-Cartea Românească, Iași, 2011
*** *Probleme de stilistică. Culegere de articole*, Editura Ştiințifică, București, 1964

BDD-A19540 © 2015 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.75 (2026-10-30 17:03:33 UTC)