

MARCIN KUCZOK

Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach  
Wydział Filologiczny

## AN INDIVIDUAL REALISATION OF THE LINGUISTIC GENRE OF SERMON IN JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S *PAROCHIAL AND PLAIN SERMONS*

INDYWIDUALNA REALIZACJA JĘZYKOWEGO GATUNKU KAZANIA  
W *PAROCHIAL AND PLAIN SERMONS* JOHNA HENRY'EGO NEWMANA

### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the structural, pragmatic, cognitive and stylistic aspects of the linguistic genre of sermon in Bl. John Henry Cardinal Newman C.O.'s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. When it comes to the structural aspects, Newman's sermons lack any compositional schema, described by rhetoric theories. In the Anglican Church of the Victorian era, sermons constituted a kind of "oral literature", read from the pulpit during the service. From the pragmatic perspective, Newman's example of life played a special role in his preaching as a means for communicating the Word of God. Newman's sermons were delivered in a kind of supernatural atmosphere and created a mutual magnetism between the preacher and the listeners. In the cognitive dimension, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* constitute almost a compendium of Christian dogma, with emphasis on the practical application of theological truths in the Christian life. There are also numerous references to Newman's personal life. From the stylistic perspective, Newman's sermons strike with simplicity, connected with the so-called "real style": Newman uses conventional language, avoids sophisticated rhetorical figures, and provides concrete examples from the Bible, everyday life, and the lives of saints and Church Fathers.

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza aspektów strukturalnych, pragmatycznych, poznawczych oraz stylistycznych gatunku językowego kazania w *Parochial and Plain Sermons* bł. Johna Henry'ego Kardynała Newmana. Pod względem strukturalnym, kazania Newmana cechuje brak jakiegokolwiek schematu kompozycyjnego, opisywanego przez teorie retoryczne. W Kościele anglikańskim epoki wiktoriańskiej kazania były rodzajem „literatury ustnej”, odczytywanej z ambony podczas nabożeństwa. Od strony pragmatyki językowej, szczególną rolę w praktyce kaznodziej-skiej Newmana odgrywał jego przykład życia jako narzędzie komunikacji Słowa Bożego. Kazaniom Newmana towarzyszył rodzaj nadprzyrodzonej atmosfery oraz magnetyzmu pomiędzy kaznodzieją, a słuchaczami. W warstwie poznawczej, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* stanowią niemalże kompendium dogmatyki chrześcijańskiej, z wyraźnym akcentem na praktyczne zastosowanie prawd teologicznych w życiu chrześcijańskim. Jest w nich także wiele odniesień do życia Błogosławionego. Pod względem stylistycznym, kazania Newmana uderzają prostotą, związaną z tak zwanym „stylem realnym” – Newman używa języka codziennego, unika wyszukanych figur retorycznych, sięgając za to po konkretne przykłady z życia, z Biblii oraz z życiorysów świętych i ojców Kościoła.

## Introduction

Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman C.O. (1801-1890) was an outstanding English philosopher, theologian and writer of the Victorian era. As an Anglican priest and an academic, he was one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement whose goal was to renew the Anglican Church. However, in 1845, after years of research into history and theology of the Church, Newman decided to convert to the Catholic faith. He became a Roman Catholic priest and joined the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. In 1879 Newman was given a cardinal's dignity and in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI beatified him. However, apart from being a great scholar, Newman was an exceptional preacher. Interestingly, his preaching has been assessed as a source of spiritual renewal in the Anglican Church, and later in the Catholic Church in England, after Newman's conversion and ordination as a Catholic priest in 1847<sup>1</sup>.

The present paper aims at analysing *Parochial and Plain Sermons* as examples of the linguistic genre of sermon. Commentators on Newman's preaching agree that his sermons were original and exceptional since they followed the homiletic conventions in a unique way, resulting in a new individual genre of sermon. After a short presentation of the backgrounds of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, the sermons will be presented as a genre of language, pointing to its specific characteristics. Then, following the criteria proposed by Maria Wojtak<sup>2</sup>, the paper will study the structural patterns, the pragmatic aspects, the cognitive aspects and the stylistic aspects of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.

### 1. *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (1834-1843)

The eight volumes of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* contain 191 sermons which were preached by Newman at St. Mary's church in Oxford, where Newman served as a vicar from 1828 to 1843. The sermons were delivered after evening services on Sundays and important holidays. The total number of his sermons was around six hundred<sup>3</sup>. Originally, the sermons were published between 1834 and 1843: the first six volumes as *Parochial Sermons*, and the last two volumes as *Plain Sermons*. The edition containing the eight volumes, published as *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, first appeared in 1868. The text analysed and quoted in the present article is a reprint of the edition published in 1907 and 1909 by Longmans, Green, and Co. in London, revised in 2001 and available online from the website of the Institute for Newman Studies in Pittsburgh, whose aim is to promote Newman's ideas in North America and worldwide<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> K. Panuś, *Historia kaznodziejstwa*, Kraków 2007, p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny w perspektywie genologicznej*, in: S. Mikołajczak, T. Węclawski (eds.), *Język religijny dawniej i dziś I*, Poznań 2004, p. 104-113.

<sup>3</sup> C.S. Dessain, *John Henry Newman*, Oxford 1980<sup>3rd ed.</sup>, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/index.html> (accessed 09.05.2013).

Most of Newman's listeners were not the faithful belonging to the parish, but university students, academics, and people from well-educated families. The sermons constituted the second greatest tool of expression for the Oxford Movement after treatises, and the greatest piece of writing in Newman's Anglican period of life<sup>5</sup>. As Charles S. Dessain has claimed, Newman's listeners became a channel for influencing the executive and ruling classes of England, who were highly impressed by his ideas<sup>6</sup>. In Paweł Kłoczowski's opinion, the role Newman's sermons played in influencing the world of Oxford University and the whole society of England is invaluable<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, the focus on the everyday Christian life exhibited in Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* proves that despite being a leader of a theological movement, Newman remained above all a devoted pastor of his flock<sup>8</sup>.

After the presentation of the backgrounds of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, the focus will now go to the sermon viewed as a genre of language.

## 2. The sermon as a linguistic genre

Sermons constitute a canonical genre of religious discourse: as they are connected to the prophetic activity of the Church, their primary function is to reveal God to people. This type of church teaching is theandric, which means it is both divine and human: God is the author of the act of communication and the preacher is only God's servant. In consequence, a sermon may be described as God's word transferred into man's word<sup>9</sup>.

In the classical definition, a genre of speech can be defined as a relatively permanent type of discourse, combining thematic, stylistic and compositional elements, and having special purposes. It is both a conventionally determined linguistic form and a linguistic activity<sup>10</sup>. In the view of Wojtak<sup>11</sup>, any linguistic genre is a conventional form of communication, which features four basic groups of characteristics:

- (1) structural patterns, which involve a determined frame of the text, special segments and the relationships between them, and the so-called dominant feature, that is a typical schema of the segments;

<sup>5</sup> I. Ker, *John Henry Newman. A Biography*, Oxford 2009, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> C.S. Dessain, *John Henry Newman...*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> P. Kłoczowski, *Wstęp*, in: J.H. Newman, *Kazania uniwersyteckie. Piętnaście kazań wygłoszonych przed Uniwersytetem Oksfordzkim między 1926 a 1843 rokiem*, trans. P. Kostyło, Kraków 2000, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> J. Klenowski (ed.), *Newman i jego dzieło*, Warszawa 1965, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> W. Przyczyna, *Słowo Boże i ludzkie w kazaniu. Charakterystyczne cechy kazania jako utworu mówionego*, in: Z. Kurzowa, W. Śliwiński (eds.), *Współczesna polszczyzna mówiona w odmianie opracowanej (oficjalnej)*, Kraków 1994, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup> M. Bachtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, trans. D. Ulicka, Warszawa 1986, p. 348.

<sup>11</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny w perspektywie genologicznej*, in: S. Mikołajczak, T. Węclawski (eds.), *Język religijny dawniej i dziś I*, Poznań 2004, p. 105.

- (2) pragmatic aspects, that is a determined sender and recipient of the act of communication, the relationships between them, the illocutionary roles of the participants in the act, their intentions, and the assumed perlocutionary aspect;
- (3) cognitive aspects, which involve the view of the world pictured by the genre together with the theme and the ways to convey it;
- (4) stylistic aspects, that is extralinguistic features connected with the structure, determined pragmatically and specified by the applied tropes.

The following parts of the article concentrate on the structural patterns, pragmatic aspects, cognitive aspects, and stylistic aspects of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* in the light of linguistic and homiletic theory.

### 3. The structural patterns of a sermon

When it comes to the structural patterns, sermons often follow a very schematic structure, which determines the standards of composition, the number of segments and their linguistic shape<sup>12</sup>.

#### 3.1 The structural patterns of a sermon in homiletic theory

In fact, sermons are said to be quite varied when it comes to their schemas of composition. The general schema based on traditional rhetoric involves three elements: the introduction, the main part, and the ending<sup>13</sup>. The introduction, apart from a motto, for instance, from the Bible or from another source, and welcoming the listeners, includes also a presentation of the topic and its main ideas, and finishes with a prayer for God's gifts to preach well for the priest and to understand the sermon well for the faithful. The main part is supposed to develop the topic of the sermon, usually in points. The ending of a sermon should recapitulate the topic of the sermon and arouse positive feelings in the listeners.

Otis C. Edwards has provided examples of eleven different models for the structure of a sermon, giving them special names:<sup>14</sup> (1) "the ladder sermon": the subsequent points of the discourse are presented one after another, like the rungs in a ladder, leading to the main idea; (2) "the jewel sermon": the main idea is presented to the listeners from different perspectives, which is similar to looking at a cut diamond from the perspective of its multiple facets; (3) "the classification sermon": the preacher classifies people's attitudes towards a certain problem or truth; (4) "the skyrocket sermon": the discourse of a sermon follows the trajectory of a skyrocket, flying high up and coming back down with enlightenment from God in heaven; (5) "the Roman candle sermon": the preacher presents separate

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>13</sup> G. Siwek, *Przepowiadać skuteczniej. Elementy retoryki kaznodziejskiej*, Kraków 1992, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> O.C. Edwards, *Elements of Homiletic. A Method for Preparing to Preach*, Collegeville 1990, pp. 75-85.

ideas referring to the same topic; (6) “the analogy sermon”: the preacher discusses one issue, using analogous descriptions or cases; (7) “the surprise package sermon”: the preacher leads the listeners to an unexpected, surprising conclusion; (9) “the twin sermon”: the preacher compares two similar ideas in order to achieve his goal; (10) the sermon employing “the chase technique”: the solution to the discussed problem is not presented directly, but is approached slowly but logically, as if it were chased; (11) “the rebuttal sermon”: the preacher debunks all the objections to the thesis put forward at the beginning of his sermon.

Apart from the schematic structure, sermons can be characterised by the presence of repeated formulas and elegiac vocabulary, such as special expressions used to initiate contact with listeners, to name the ceremony of the day, to refer to the Gospel, or to introduce exemplary stories. Additionally, at the end, a sermon may include an acclamation, a wish, or a call for prayer<sup>15</sup>.

The following section of the paper will examine the realisation of the structural aspects in Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.

### 3.2 The structural patterns of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*

When it comes to Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, the structure was unimportant to him as it was the general rule among Victorian preachers to ignore or even reject the traditional division into the structural elements<sup>16</sup>. Actually, the only component that was insisted upon by contemporary homileticians was the application of the proclaimed truths, because of its role in the persuasive goal of the sermon<sup>17</sup>. The lack of interest in the structure of church sermons of the era corresponds with the general tendency to shift away from the oral traditions<sup>18</sup>.

Another characteristic of the structure of Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons* is focusing on one thought through the whole composition rather than incorporate three heads as it used to be practised in traditional rhetoric. His sermons lacked clearly marked divisions or any kind of structural symmetry<sup>19</sup>.

From among the characteristic formulas, mentioned by Wojtak<sup>20</sup>, in Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons* special expressions are used to initiate contact with listeners [1], to name the ceremony of the day [2], to refer to the Gospel [3], and to introduce exemplary stories [4]. Newman included also acclamations [5], wishes [6], and calls for prayer [7] in his sermons.

[1] “*I wish to speak to you, my brethren (...)*”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory and the Victorian Sermon*, PhD Dissertation, Denton 1995, pp. 48-49.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 114-115.

<sup>20</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. 1, London 1907, p. 12, available at: <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/parochial/volume1/index.html> (accessed 09.05.2013).

[2] “There is much instruction conveyed *in the circumstance, that the Feast of the Holy Trinity immediately succeeds that of Whit Sunday.*”<sup>22</sup>

[3] “*To us then especially our Saviour says, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”*”<sup>23</sup>

[4] “*We will take the case of those who are in better circumstances than the mass of the community.*”<sup>24</sup>

[5] “*(...) much more have we the power to move Him (blessed be His name!)*”<sup>25</sup>

[6] “*For ourselves, let us but obey God’s voice in our hearts.*”<sup>26</sup>

[7] “*And let us pray God to enlighten us, and to guide us, and to give us the will to please Him, and the power.*”<sup>27</sup>

The next section of the article is devoted to the pragmatic aspects of a sermon, presenting them in the light of homiletic theory and then, in Newman’s sermons.

#### 4. The pragmatic aspects of a sermon

Analysing the pragmatic aspects of sermons requires highlighting two phenomena:<sup>28</sup>

- (1) the complicated nature of the act of communication due to the fact that it becomes a meeting between God and a human being; hence, the discourse constitutes a transcendental event;
- (2) the complex nature of the illocutionary force and of the set of intentions, which create a dynamic and complex systems within the genre.<sup>29</sup>

##### 4.1 A sermon as an act of communication

As an act of communication a sermon possesses all the elements typical of such an act: a specific sender, receiver, message, context, contact and code. Figure 1 below presents a sermon as an act of communication<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>28</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 108.

<sup>29</sup> John L. Austin distinguishes three kinds of speech acts: locutionary, perlocutionary, and illocutionary. A locutionary speech act is the performance of an utterance with its ostensible meaning. A perlocutionary speech act is the effect of an utterance, such as persuading, scaring, inspiring, etc. An illocutionary speech act has the so-called illocutionary force, that is the intended meaning of the speaker, for instance, a request, an order, etc. See: J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford 1965.

<sup>30</sup> Adapted from: Z. Adamek, *Homiletyka...*, p. 34. Adamek based his schema on Roman Jakobson’s theory of the communication functions: R. Jakobson, *Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics*, in: T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1960, pp. 350-377.

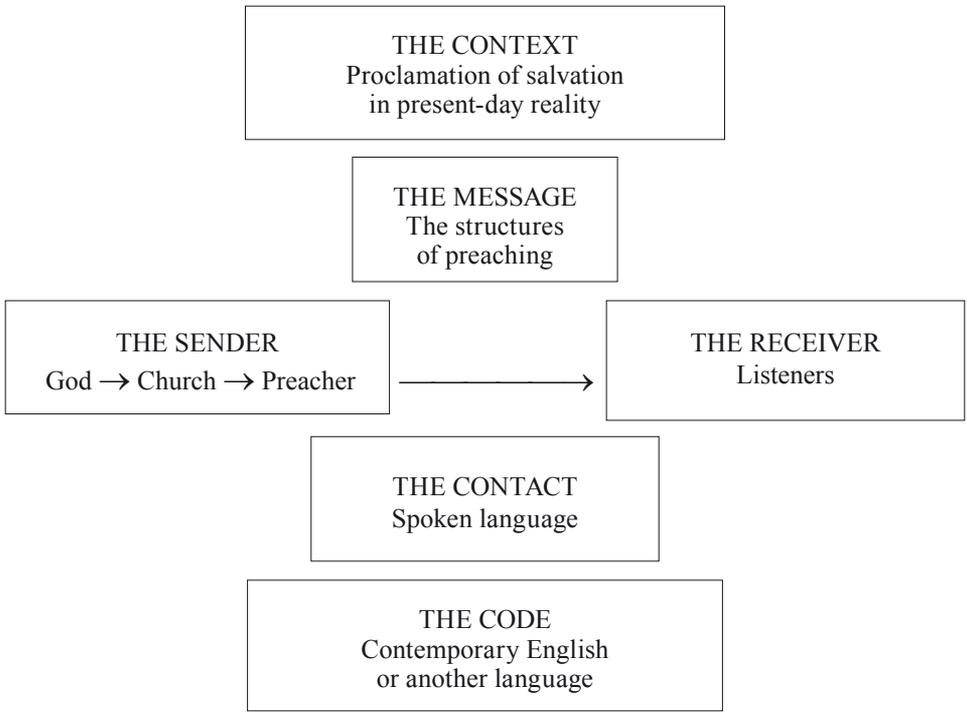


Figure 1. A sermon as an act of communication

The main sender of the act of communication in a sermon is God who provides people with the proclamation of salvation through the Church, and then, in the Church, through the actual preacher of the sermon. The form of contact is spoken language, and the code is the particular language of the given community, with the rules governing its grammar and vocabulary.

The problems connected with the interpretation of sermons as acts of communication arise from the various roles held by the participants of the act. From the social perspective, the sender is the church minister, and the listeners the laity. The illocutionary roles can be expressed by the relationships between the leader or the teacher and the followers or the students. These forms of religious discourse tend to be both expressive and persuasive: through sermons, the speaker, intends to influence the beliefs and attitudes of the listeners, seeking guidance and interpretation of their faith<sup>31</sup>.

#### 4.2 The pragmatic aspects of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*

Sermons in the nineteenth-century England were treated as a kind of “oral literature”, combining elements of both oratory and literary forms of discourse:

<sup>31</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 105.

the homileticians of the era claimed that while the purpose of preaching was similar to the orality-based public discourse, the sermons were supposed to follow the rules of the written word<sup>32</sup>.

In fact, the common Anglican practice at the time was to read church sermons, and so did Newman. He believed that a written sermon surpassed a spontaneous, extemporaneous one because reading allowed better “accuracy of wording, completeness of statement, or succession of ideas.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, as Richard B.G. Johnson has observed, from the Elizabethan era till the Victorian times in England, sermon writing and reading served as a means for spiritual profit<sup>34</sup>. It is also worth mentioning that after his conversion to Catholicism, Newman started to advocate delivering sermons extempore in order to conform to the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church<sup>35</sup>. However, although as a Catholic he officially supported the tradition of the oral approach to preaching, privately he still preferred the literal approach<sup>36</sup>.

Suffice it to say that in the case of Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, the written and the spoken word were “complementary rather than antithetical,” providing a perfect example of the Victorian genre of sermon: they showed “the literary sophistication of the accomplished stylist and the ethical force and the practical concern of the classical public speaker.”<sup>37</sup>

What really counted for the nineteenth-century homileticians from the pragmatic point of view was the personal ethos of the preacher<sup>38</sup>. The speaker was expected to possess a trustworthy personality and earnestness if his call to action was to be effective. Newman was more than a popular preacher in fact: he was revered by numerous people and his disciples even followed his manners of his behaviour and various habits<sup>39</sup>. According to Robert H. Ellison, testimonies prove that Newman’s delivery of his sermons was an example of the mutual magnetism between the speaker and the hearer, a feature of preaching set forth as one of the goals for the Victorian sermon<sup>40</sup>. The most important element of Newman’s ethos was his “aural image,” that is an impression of supernatural character of his preaching<sup>41</sup>.

Furthermore, as Ellison observes, even for Newman himself the ethos of the preacher was a significant component of delivering a sermon: the earnestness of the preacher was a natural fruit of the Christian life<sup>42</sup>. In *The Idea*

<sup>32</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, London 1907, p. 423, available at: <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/index.html> (accessed 09.05.2013).

<sup>34</sup> R.B.G. Johnson, *The Catholic Preaching of John Henry Newman and its Relation to Evangelization in the Vatican II Era*, PhD Dissertation, Pittsburgh 2001, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University...*, p. 420.

<sup>36</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, p. 111.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 118-125.

<sup>39</sup> O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church. Part I*. London 1966, p. 169.

<sup>40</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>42</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, pp. 119-120.

of a University he states that the preacher “persuades by what he is, as well as by what he delivers.”<sup>43</sup>

What is more, it is the persuasive character of Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons* that differentiates them from other literary works, as literature never aims at stimulating readers to act according to the presented standards<sup>44</sup>.

The next section will focus on the cognitive aspects of sermons, examining the homiletic tradition in this respect and the cognitive aspects of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.

## 5. The cognitive aspects of a sermon

The cognitive aspects of a sermon are the result of its theological sense and functions. Gerard Siwek points to four thematic aspects of a sermon, giving them Greek names<sup>45</sup>. Thus, the topic of the sermon is expected to be kerygmatic (in Greek, κήρυγμα means “proclamation” or “announcement”), which means a solemn announcement of God’s answer to the question posed by people. It involves didascalía (in Greek, διδασκαλία means “explanations” or “interpretations”), that is the interpretation of God’s words, and paraklesis (in Greek, παράκλησις means “admonition,” “exhortation” or “encouragement”), which means showing how to realise the salvific truth in everyday life. Finally, the aim of a sermon is mystagogy (in Greek, μυσταγογία means “leading to a mystery”), which means introducing a communion between people and God.

### 5.1 The cognitive aspects of a sermon in homiletic theory

Having the status of God’s word put into man’s word a sermon becomes a paradoxical genre<sup>46</sup>. According to Mieczysław Brzozowski, a homily is supposed to render the theological truths stemming from the reflection on God’s Word and church teaching in a language that is adapted to and well understood by the listeners<sup>47</sup>. Expressing the transcendental contents of religious reality in the language of contemporary world causes a serious problem and challenge for sermons. This is often done by means of analogy between biblical situations discussed in sermons and the listeners’ experiences<sup>48</sup>.

The problem is that a preacher cannot employ theological jargon which is incomprehensible for his listeners. On the other hand, using pompous vocabulary or old clichés can lead to a phenomenon described as “semantic saturation,” which means using words or sentences so well known to the listeners that they become

<sup>43</sup> J.H. Newman, *The Idea of a University...*, p. 426.

<sup>44</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, p. 117.

<sup>45</sup> G. Siwek, *Przepowiadać skuteczniej...*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>46</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 110.

<sup>47</sup> M. Brzozowski, *Homilia*, in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, Vol. 6, Lublin 1993, p. 1178.

<sup>48</sup> B. Matuszczyk, *O zniewoleniu normą – na przykładzie języka i stylu współczesnych kazań*, in: D. Kowalska (ed.), *Autorytety i normy*, Łódź 1993, pp. 296-298.

empty and meaningless. The only way to overcome this difficulty is creativity of religious language, which is supposed to be based on personal experiences of faith that, in turn, spontaneously provide the appropriate language<sup>49</sup>.

Adamek has provided four conditions that the language of sermons needs to fulfil in order to express the supernatural reality and transgress its own limitations<sup>50</sup>. Hence, the language of sermons and homilies must be: (1) symbolic: symbols expressed in language mediate between natural reality and the supernatural one; (2) axiological: not only do sermons provide the listeners with information but they are also supposed to express values, and moral aspects of the Christian life; (3) biblical: the Bible as the Word of God constitutes the basis for the Church teaching: sermons and homilies aim at proclaiming the Word of God and bring it to people; (4) existential: the language of sermons on the one hand needs to refer to experiences of contemporary people but on the other hand, it must correspond with their everyday language.

## 5.2 The cognitive aspects of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*

The subjects undertaken by Newman in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* varied, encompassing a wide scope of issues connected to practical implications of theological truths in the lives of Christians. The power of his preaching resulted from his quest for reality in religion, a reality of the Christian life<sup>51</sup>. Interestingly, Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* have been described as "almost a compendium of Christian dogma."<sup>52</sup> However, providing a systematic view on theology by means of abstract speculation was not the intention of Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons*: what he aimed at was making the Word of God understood in a practical way<sup>53</sup>.

It is worth noticing that some of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* constitute a cycle, namely sermons thirteen through seventeen of Volume 5, where Newman used the method of one paragraph summaries of the previously preached sermons. In the views of W.D. White, cycles of sermons can be also found outside *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, including Newman's unpublished manuscripts; the use of cyclic sermons may prove Newman's contention that religious reality forms a system<sup>54</sup>. Interestingly, Johnson has observed that the early sermons of Newman's preaching seem far more rigoristic than the latter ones, perhaps because of the influence of Evangelicalism which made a strong impression on young Newman<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> W. Przychyna, *Słowo Boże i ludzkie w kazaniu...*, p. 169.

<sup>50</sup> Z. Adamek, *Homiletyka...*, pp. 181-190.

<sup>51</sup> O. Chadwick, *Newman*, Oxford 1983, p. 19.

<sup>52</sup> R.B.G. Johnson, *The Catholic Preaching of John Henry Newman...*, p. 66.

<sup>53</sup> R.B.G. Johnson, *The Catholic Preaching of John Henry Newman...*, p. 66; see also: L. Bouyer, *Newman's Vision of Faith. A Theology for Times of General Apostasy*, San Francisco 1986, p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> W.D. White, *John Henry Newman, Anglican Preacher: A Study in Theory and Style*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton 1969, pp. 262-263.

<sup>55</sup> R.B.G. Johnson, *The Catholic Preaching of John Henry Newman...*, p. 65.

As Jan Kłos has claimed, for Newman the form of sermon was an ideal means of rendering the need for personal fight against evil in the world and in the human soul, providing guidelines for this battle, warning against potential dangers, and advising how to rectify life after committing mistakes<sup>56</sup>. In the same vein, Ellison writes that “the necessity of Christian action is a central concern of Newman’s Anglican sermons,”<sup>57</sup> which was especially visible in such topics of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* as the importance of self-denial, the role of both public and private prayer in the Christian life, or the necessity to persevere despite adversity. Furthermore, Newman himself has stated clearly that “it is nothing to know what is right unless we do it.”<sup>58</sup> As Owen Chadwick has observed, in the Victorian times there existed a lot of religious language, which, unfortunately, was far from the practice of everyday life<sup>59</sup>. What Newman did was in fact appealing to people’s discontent with this situation and he managed to alter the feeling towards religion among the English people.

Additionally, what might have contributed to Newman’s success, was, according to White, the fact that his sermons included unconscious projections of his own personality: although the personal pronoun “I” is almost absent from Newman’s sermons, he frequently reveals himself and his own story of life through his preaching<sup>60</sup>. As White has observed, for this reason another commentator expressed his opinion of Newman as “the most autobiographical of men.”<sup>61</sup> Keith A. Waddle has named this quality of sermons as “earnestness of preaching”, which the author has defined as “a combination of sincerity and integrity of the speaker”: humility attained by being focused on the hearers rather than on himself<sup>62</sup>.

Additionally, the witnesses and listeners reported that Newman’s words gave the impression as if they came from above, and not from the preacher, addressing people’s most secret thoughts and consciousness<sup>63</sup>; his sermons are assessed as “psychologically penetrating applications of Christian teaching which could appeal to Christians of every tradition.”<sup>64</sup>

The last group of features, analysed in genres of speech, involve the stylistic aspects, which will be presented in the following part.

<sup>56</sup> J. Kłos, *John Henry Newman i filozofia: rozum – przyświadczenie – wiara*, Lublin 1999, pp. 52-53.

<sup>57</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>58</sup> J.H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, Vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>59</sup> O. Chadwick, *Newman...*, p. 19.

<sup>60</sup> W.D. White, *John Henry Newman, Anglican Preacher...*, pp. 190-192.

<sup>61</sup> H. Bremond, *The Mystery of Newman*, trans. H.C. Corrance, London 1907, p. 6, quoted in: W.D. White, *John Henry Newman, Anglican Preacher...*, pp. 190-192.

<sup>62</sup> K.A. Waddle, *Unspoken Persuasion: Language Theory of Victorian Homilists*, PhD Dissertation, Pennsylvania State University 1999, pp. 72-73.

<sup>63</sup> T. Wall, *The Writer and Preacher*, in: M. Tierney (ed.), *A Tribute to Newman. Essays on Aspects of His Life and Thought*, Dublin 1945, pp. 341-342.

<sup>64</sup> M. Trevor, *Newman’s Journey*, Huntington 1985, p. 60.

## 6. The stylistic aspects of a sermon

As far as the stylistic aspects are concerned, Wiesław Przyczyna points to the fact that since God revealed Himself to people as Goodness, Truth and Beauty, the linguistic level of sermons is supposed to reflect this Beauty in its aesthetic merits<sup>65</sup>. These include harmony of all the elements of a sermon, that is its ideas, thoughts and composition, its correctness, freshness, and an appropriate use of rhetorical figures, such as rhetorical questions, apostrophes, similes, or metaphors. On the other hand, however, religious language should remain simple and neutral: preachers are advised to avoid overly ornamental language, an excessive number of tropes, as well as pathos, paternalism, or reprimanding.

### 6.1 The stylistic aspects of a sermon in homiletic theory

Sermons employ a variety of stylistic registers, resulting in numerous forms<sup>66</sup>. It is acceptable to use both formal language as well as colloquial forms, provided that they serve to adapt the message of the Gospel to the contemporary recipients, making the discourse more vivid or moving the listeners<sup>67</sup>.

Siwek elaborates on six stylistic aspects of the language of sermons and homilies:<sup>68</sup>

- (1) the dialogical character: the style of a sermon should take into account the fact that a sermon is an act of communication, in which not only does the speaker inform the hearer about something, but also the hearer gives feedback by means of verbal or non-verbal actions;
- (2) the communicative character: a sermon is supposed to be an effective tool for convincing the listeners about the proclaimed truth; this can be achieved by choosing the right vocabulary to render the assumed ideas clearly and precisely;
- (3) the concise character: the general rule is that a preacher should not say more than necessary, as too much information hampers the reception of what is really important; a good sermon rather uses synonymy and repetitions of the most important facts;
- (4) the imaginary character: vivid images can easily appeal to the listeners, thus, a sermon should be rich in concrete vocabulary, providing examples, and employing rhetorical figures, such as metaphors, personifications, synecdoche, or hyperbole;
- (5) the emotional character: the listeners are expected to experience the revealed truths proclaimed in a sermon: for that reason a sermon should affect

<sup>65</sup> W. Przyczyna, *Słowo Boże i ludzkie w kazaniu...*, pp. 168-169.

<sup>66</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 110.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111; see also: M. Wojtak, *Indywidualna realizacja wzorca gatunkowego kazania*, *Stylistyka* 11 (2002), p. 427.

<sup>68</sup> G. Siwek, *Przepowiadać skuteczniej...*, pp. 120-166.

both the reason and the feelings; the preacher is supposed to choose the right vocabulary, marked either positively or negatively, according the expected effects;

- (6) the persuasive character: sermons aim at convincing people that the teaching of God and of the Church is really true and as such it needs to be accepted and practised by people; preachers can employ a wide range of linguistic means for fulfilling this goal: lexical, morphological, or syntactic.

It is worth remembering that sermons can be classified as instances of the rhetoric style of religious language, and thus, they exhibit numerous features typical of the this style of language.<sup>69</sup> The author classifies the stylistic means of expression into the following four groups:<sup>70</sup> (1) verbal means, such as synonymy, hyperonymy, hyponymy, periphrasis, loanwords, colloquialisms, regionalisms, scientific expressions, biblisms, poetisms, archaisms, neologisms, as well as tropes, such as metaphor, metonymy, animization, anthropomorphisms, personification, hyperbole, litotes or oxymorons; (2) syntactic means, which may include such figures as epithet, ellipsis, gradation, anaphora, epiphora, inversion, parenthesis, polysyndeton, or asyndeton; (3) figures of thought, for instance, apostrophes, rhetorical questions, similes, or irony; (4) phonetic means, which include rhymes, alliteration, onomatopoeia, as well as rhythm.

Interestingly, one of the important characteristics of preaching is its symbolic and metaphorical nature<sup>71</sup>. However, it is worth noticing that metaphor in rhetoric not only is a stylistic ornament, but it holds cognitive functions: by stimulating the listeners' imagination, a trope facilitates understanding of abstract concepts. Sermons include a new area of meaning, which is sacred and transcendental, and which escapes everyday, profane meanings and expressions<sup>72</sup>.

## 6.2 The stylistic aspects of *Parochial and Plain Sermons*

The sermons delivered by Newman were said to strike with their simplicity: they did not possess any features of artificial rhetoric, elaborated poetry, or exaggerated tone, aiming at exciting emotions in the audience, but were rather unpretending and sincere, proclaimed or even read in a low voice<sup>73</sup>. The style of Newman's sermons is referred to by Ellison as "real style": characterized by unpretentious, but attractive language in the aesthetic sense; assessed as ordinary, conversational rather than a stylized "pulpitspeak", pure and transparent, accessible and unaffected<sup>74</sup>. Moreover, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* reached the hearers' imagination by virtue of the concreteness of style: making references to specific

<sup>69</sup> D. Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak, *Wykłady ze stylistyki...*, p. 109.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-57.

<sup>71</sup> M. Wojtak, *Styl religijny...*, p. 112.

<sup>72</sup> D. Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak, *Wykłady ze stylistyki...*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>73</sup> J.L. May, *Cardinal Newman. A Study*, London 1945, p. 28.

<sup>74</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, pp. 114-116.

examples of characters or incidents, especially from the Bible, or from historical men of faith, such as saints or church fathers<sup>75</sup>.

All the above characteristics of Newman's language stand in line with the homiletic theory of the Victorian era: sermons were expected to find a middle way between a classical oratory and a literary work. The style of a sermon could be neither mean nor vulgar, nor ornate and affected<sup>76</sup>. In fact, the only rhetorical device used by Newman in his sermons was pausing, but employed rather for the result of intensity of thought than for ornamental effects<sup>77</sup>. He distrusted the so-called trope-based rhetoric, and thus, avoided the common rhetorical figures, such as recapitulations, startling illustrations, over-worked phrases, or elaborate metaphors<sup>78</sup>.

On the other hand, White points at Newman's imaginative or figurative language as one of the features of his style of preaching: imagery, metaphor, symbol or analogy, employed, however, for apprehending certain realities rather than for rhetorical colouring, which he deliberately condemned as opposing the truth<sup>79</sup>. Additionally, these figures of speech were used by Newman rather naturally and effortlessly, in a moderate and disciplined way, which can be said to reflect the principle of reserve, that is the unwillingness to speak much about religious experiences, the fear of enthusiasm, a "spirit of quiet adoration", which constitutes the "natural stance before mysteries."<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, as Meriol Trevor has commented, Newman was a poor public speaker, and his voice, although clear, was not resonant<sup>81</sup>. One of the most characteristic features of his preaching was the monotonous style of delivering his speech<sup>82</sup>. Sometimes, however, Newman's preaching gave the impression of "being the involuntary outbursts of a preacher unable to contain himself any longer", aiming at conveying the proclaimed truth in possibly the simplest and plainest language<sup>83</sup>.

## Conclusions

The analysis of the four aspects of the linguistic genre of sermon in John Henry Newman's *Parochial and Plain Sermons* has revealed different kinds of features: those typical of all sermons, those characteristic of the Victorian sermon, and those that are unique to Newman's preaching.

<sup>75</sup> W.D. White, *John Henry Newman, Anglican Preacher...*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>76</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>77</sup> M. Trevor, *Newman's Journey...*, p. 60; see also: I. Ker, *John Henry Newman...*, p. 91.

<sup>78</sup> K.A. Waddle, *Unspoken Persuasion...*, p. 82; see also: R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, pp. 116-117.

<sup>79</sup> W.D. White, *John Henry Newman, Anglican Preacher...*, pp. 258; 267; 274-276.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 194-196.

<sup>81</sup> M. Trevor, *Newman's Journey...*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>82</sup> O. Chadwick, *Newman...*, p. 18.

<sup>83</sup> I. Ker, *John Henry Newman...*, p. 91.

First, the focus on the practical aspects of the Christian life and the use of certain typical formulas seem to be the only traits typical of the genre of sermon as such. Then, the characteristics common for all Victorian sermons include treating preaching as “oral literature” and reading the sermons instead of delivering them extempore, neglecting any structural patterns, with the focus on just one thought throughout the whole sermon, applying the so-called “real style”, based on conventional language with concrete examples, and emphasising the ethos of the preacher rather than the text of the sermon as the means for influencing listeners.

The individual characteristics, making *Parochial and Plain Sermons* a unique and exceptional collection of sermons, encompass the fact that the sermons constituted almost a compendium of Christian dogma, and at the same time, they included the preacher’s biographical content. Although they were delivered in a monotonous voice, Newman created a kind of supernatural “aural image” and a mutual magnetism between him and his listeners. Commentators emphasise the fact that although Newman’s preaching lacked rhetorical merits, which were deliberately distrusted by the preacher, listening to his sermons was an exceptional experience: the words struck the listeners with their psychological penetration, truthfulness and perspicacity as if coming straight from God. Additionally, it is worth noting that George Dennis perceives the sermons as enduring masterpieces of literature thanks to their psychological penetration, scriptural wisdom, and the beauty of language<sup>84</sup>.

The outstanding character of Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons* can be confirmed by the fact that, as Ellison has noticed, the republication of *Parochial and Plain Sermons* in 1868 due to the continued popular demand, only thirty years after their original printing, was unprecedented<sup>85</sup>. Suffice it to say that “Newman’s preaching at St. Mary’s became legendary.”<sup>86</sup>

Słowa kluczowe: Newman J.H., *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, gatunek języka religijnego, kazanie

Keywords: Newman J.H., *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, genre of religious language, sermon

<sup>84</sup> G.T. Dennis, *Oxford Movement*, in: *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 10, New York 2002<sup>2nd ed.</sup>, p. 733.

<sup>85</sup> R.H. Ellison, *Orality-Literacy Theory...*, p. 15.

<sup>86</sup> I. Ker, *John Henry Newman...*, p. 90.