



Errors in Preaching the Word of God in the Perspective of the Catholic Church and Evangelical Communities

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Abstract: The article presents and analyzes the errors in preaching God's word, focusing on two homiletic traditions: Catholic and Evangelical. The purpose of the paper is to organize knowledge about these errors and conduct a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in approaches to preaching God's word. The author employs literary analysis and comparative methods to answer the question of what errors are made most commonly in both traditions and whether they have common sources. The first part of the article will present errors in homily preaching, attempting to view these errors within the context of Catholic homiletics. The second part will discuss errors in expository preaching, which is primarily the domain of Evangelical communities. The third part of the article will attempt to analyze and compare the differences and similarities in the presented preaching errors. The work shows that Catholic homilies are strongly tied to Tradition and liturgy, while Evangelical sermons focus on the direct application of Scripture and personal experience of faith. A better understanding of these differences and a more intentional approach to preaching can help minimize errors and improve the quality of preaching in both traditions.

Keywords: errors in homily preaching, errors in expository preaching, homily, expository sermon, Catholic Church, Evangelical communities

God wants to reach others through the preacher, and it is He who extends His power through the human word (EG 136). Stanisław Dyk, referring to *Evangelii Gaudium*, emphasizes that one of the greatest dangers a preacher faces is losing faith in the power of God's word, and thus in the meaning of his preaching ministry (Dyk 2016, 9). In addition to the loss of faith, there are many other dangers associated with preaching the word of God, which contemporary literature refers to as errors.

It is worth noting that there is no stand-alone publication in homiletics devoted to errors in the preaching of the word of God, especially one that takes into account both homiletic traditions: the Catholic and the Evangelical.

The purpose of this article is to systematize knowledge of the mistakes made in the preaching of the word of God from both Catholic and Evangelical perspectives, as well as to analyze the similarities and differences in the understanding of these homiletic traditions. This will allow us to find out what mistakes are made in the preaching of the word of God, and whether we can identify a common source of these preaching mistakes? To address these questions, the methods of literary

analysis and comparative analysis will be applied. The terms applied to individual errors in homily preaching, which will be discussed below, do not appear to have exact equivalents in English. Therefore, a secondary purpose of this article is to suggest neologisms that best convey their meaning with the closest possible lexical and epistemological accuracy.

The article will be structured as follows. The first section will present errors in homily preaching, focusing on preaching errors within the context of Catholic homiletics. The second section will address errors in expository preaching, which is primarily associated with Evangelical communities. Finally, the third section will analyze and compare the differences and similarities in the presented preaching errors.

1. Errors in Homily Preaching—a Catholic Perspective

1.1. Errors in Preaching Kerygmatic Content¹

Errors in the proclamation of kerygmatic content are a significant problem in homiletics. A homily, as a form of transmission of the word of God, requires not only fidelity to the Scripture but also skillful transmission of its salvific message in a way that is understandable and that reaches the listeners. In practice, however, various errors often undermine the effectiveness of preaching. Each of these errors affects the way the word of God is interpreted and transmitted, often distorting its meaning and weakening its power to influence the faithful. The most common errors include:

1) Apocryphalism

The error of apocryphalism is related to the error of historicism. This distortion in the preaching of the word of God consists in supplementing biblical texts, which are limited in information, with details from the apocrypha (cf. Twardy 2003, 161–62; 2009, 316; Zadrożny 2020, 22).

2) Biblicism

The homily should faithfully convey the spirit and salvific message of the biblical texts. A misconception of this fidelity is a biblical approach that focuses solely on the literal wording of Scripture, instead of bringing out the kerygma hidden within it. This is manifested in homilies that abound in biblical quotations, in the assumption that the more references to Scripture there are, the better the preaching of the word of God. Another form of the error of biblicism is the repetition or paraphrasing of passages from the lectionary without revealing their salvific meaning (cf. Dyk 2008b, 294; Malewicz 2017, 45).

¹ For more on preaching kerygmatic content, see Siemienieć 2017, 23–34; Malewicz 2017, 35–47.

3) Culturalism

The error of culturalism is one of the forms of instrumentalization of the kerygma. It consists in subordinating the kerygma to dominant cultural trends. Thus, when enslaved in the homily, the word of God loses its distinctiveness, its evangelical nonconformism, and, above all, its ability to explain and evaluate cultural phenomena. Instead of opposing non-evangelical phenomena, it perpetuates them (cf. Siwek 2007, 22–23).

4) Exegesis²

Exegesis is an extremely important tool for the homilist, but it should be used at the preparation stage, not during the delivery of the homily. The *Homiletic Directory* emphasizes that the homily “is not an occasion for in-depth biblical exegesis: this is not the time to conduct it properly.” (HD 6) Treating the homily as a scholarly lecture on the biblical texts read during the liturgy of the word is a mistake. In such cases, exegesis fails to fulfill its purpose, which is to lead to an encounter with Christ present in the text, and instead focuses solely on the analysis of the text itself. The main purpose of the homily is not to explain each passage in detail, but to reveal the salvific mystery of Christ contained in the text (cf. EG 147; HD 6:30) (Twardy 2015, 53; Malewicz 2017, 45).

5) Historicism

The error of historicism in homily preaching lies in presenting events related to the history of salvation solely as past, one-time facts. Such an approach focuses on the historical details of Jesus Christ’s life, ignoring their contemporary relevance. As a result, the salvific mysteries become mere memories, and Jesus is presented primarily as a moral example, without acknowledging his salvific role in the present (cf. Twardy 2009, 315–17; Dyk 2014, 147–60; Malewicz 2017, 44).

6) Instrumentalization of the Kerygma

Instrumentalization of the kerygma involves adapting the message of the sacred text to a predetermined content of the preaching, thus bending it to a “preconceived idea” (HD 6). This kind of improper actualization starts from the preacher’s own intentions, instead of being based on the sacred text (cf. Dyk 2008b, 296). Meanwhile, it is the sacred text that should guide the homilist, not the other way around. Such manipulation of the kerygma is akin to selective reading of the Bible, a practice common in some sects, where Scripture is used for narrow, predetermined purposes (cf. Malewicz 2017, 46).

² Gerard Siwek refers to this error as scholasticism, see Siwek 2007, 21.

7) Lack of Kerygmatic Content

The absence of kerygmatic content in the homily, meaning the omission of references to the proclaimed word of God, turns the homily into a mere lecture on a specific topic, which contradicts the essence of the liturgical celebration (cf. *EG* 138). The *Homiletic Directory* (cf. *HD* 6) clearly states that the Mass should not be the place to address issues unrelated to the liturgy and its readings (cf. Twardy 2015, 49; Malewicz 2017, 44).

8) Modernizing

This approach involves the homilist often attempting, at all costs, to portray biblical events and characters in a modern context. As a result, modern thinking is imposed on the biblical texts, and they are interpreted through the lens of contemporary realities, which negatively impacts the faithful communication of the word of God (cf. Twardy 2009, 320).

9) Peripherism

Peripherism is the opposite of synthesizing the salvific message in a homily and involves focusing on marginal or secondary themes contained in the sacred texts. It is characterized by a selective and fragmentary interpretation of the lectionary, in which the homilist relies on individual readings, sentences, or words taken out of context, rather than considering the overall meaning of the liturgy of the word. Such an approach exposes the homilist to missing the main message intended by Christ and the Church (cf. *EG* 148; *HD* 32). Peripherism often results from the homilist's tendency to focus on favorite topics or to share only what has personally moved him. Its main cause is a routine approach to Scripture and a lack of diligence in the homiletic interpretation and synthesis of the readings (cf. Twardy 2009, 324–34; 2015, 51–52; Malewicz 2017, 46).

10) Psychologizing

Psychological recreations of the emotions and feelings of biblical characters, especially Jesus and Mary, are justified to a certain extent, as it is possible to speak of their joy, suffering, or sadness. However, this should be done with great care, since biblical texts do not focus solely on emotions but rather on the message of the kerygma (cf. Twardy 2009, 318).

1.2. Errors in Preaching Didaskalia Content³

Errors in the proclamation of didaskalia content can significantly affect the effectiveness and understanding of the message of the homily, especially when theological depth and proper focus of the teaching are neglected. In the context of Catholic homiletics, there are many potential pitfalls that can distort the message of the kerygma and weaken its impact on the faithful. Each of these errors affects the way the content is interpreted and communicated, leading to an impoverishment of the spiritual experience of the faithful and a loss of deeper understanding of God's saving work in their lives. According to Henryk Ślawiński, this reflects a doctrinal poverty and, consequently, a less than modest catechetical element in the homily (cf. Ślawiński 2023, 96). Among the most common errors are:

1) Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism, on the other hand, is an inappropriate focus on humans as the starting point for accepting and understanding the truths of faith, while ignoring the dynamic dimension of the liturgical celebration, where God's work of salvation is currently taking place (cf. Łysy 1993, 77; Chrzanowski 2017, 103–4).

2) Biblical Divisivism

The next error in preaching the word of God is biblical divisivism. In this case, the homilist treats Scripture mainly as a collection of texts that confirm or illustrate theological theses and catechism, or provide edifying examples of Christian living. From this, it follows that Scripture plays a supporting role, providing texts to support and justify previously assumed dogmatic theses (cf. Twardy 2009, 314).

3) Didacticism

Another danger in preaching didaskalia content is didacticism. It consists in an excessive focus on teaching in the homily. In this case, the homilist's main goal becomes the transmission of knowledge about the truths of faith and the principles of Christian life, rather than the proclamation of God's saving actions that take place in the lives of every person (cf. Twardy 2009, 312–14; Chrzanowski 2017, 103).

4) Doctrinaireism

Doctrinaireism is yet another of the errors to be avoided in preaching the truths of the faith. It consists in an excessive focus on the instructive function of the homily. This error stems from the belief that the more religious knowledge

³ For a more detailed discussion of the proclamation of didaskalia content, see Guzowski 2017, 77–87; Chrzanowski 2017, 89–104.

the listeners have, the deeper their faith will be. As a result, many homilists use theology to convey information about the truths of faith, moral principles, and religious practices in a systematic and comprehensive manner, often taking the form of so-called “catechism sermons.” However, such an approach overlooks the fact that a homily should also affect the will and emotions of the listeners, stimulating their imagination. Moreover, it is a significant mistake to reduce faith to a set of doctrines and rules, instead of showing it as a living relationship with the Person who saves (cf. Twardy 2009, 310–312; Chrzanowski 2017, 103).

5) Individualism

The error of individualism consists in neglecting the ecclesial and social aspects, which play a secondary role in the preaching of the word of God or never appear in the content of the homily. From this, it follows that the preacher neglects the role of the Church as the place where and through which Christ saves humanity (cf. Twardy 2009, 321).

6) Lack of Theological Depth

Fidelity to the word of God in the proclamation of the kerygma requires the homilist to deepen the theological content of the homily. Neglecting this aspect leads to a superficial and general presentation of the salvific message contained in the proclaimed word, which is a serious shortcoming (cf. Dyk 2008a, 79–80; Twardy 2015, 54–56; Chrzanowski 2017, 102) that leads to doctrinal poverty (cf. Dyk, Sławiński, and Szewczyk 2023, 197).

7) Mariocentrism⁴/Hagiocentrism

The above distortions in the proclamation of the didaskalia content indicate a separation of Mary and/or the saints from Christ and the Church. They overemphasize the dignity, privileges, or excessive importance of the mediation of Mary and/or the saints. The homilist fails to see the connection between Mary and/or the saints and the Eucharistic liturgy. In such a situation, while theologically deepening the texts referring to Mary or the saints, the preacher fails to indicate their unity with the celebration of the mystery of Christ (cf. Twardy 2003, 162; Chrzanowski 2017, 104).

8) Multifaceted and Superficial Content

The homily should focus on one aspect of the readings from the lectionary, which reveals what God has done for us in Jesus Christ (cf. *GIRM* 65). Departing from

⁴ Jan Twardy reminds us that the instrumental treatment of Mary and sentimentalism are often associated with Mariocentrism. The aim of the former is to seek Our Lady's help for various needs in isolation from God, while the aim of the latter is to evoke excessive sentimentality in the homily. See Twardy 2003, 163.

this approach leads to discussions of many topics contained in the Sunday readings, and an overly broad focus on the kerygma results in a superficial presentation of the mystery in question (cf. Wallace 2004, 61; Chrzanowski 2017, 102). From the above, we see that it is crucial to concentrate on a single theme that condenses the content and emphasizes the main idea. This approach has two positive effects: first, it allows the theological depth of the kerygma to be proclaimed, avoiding generality; second, the correct updating of the kerygma prevents the message from becoming too abstract (cf. SC 46) (cf. Dyk 2008b, 304; Connors and Garrido 2016, 131). The kerygma is theologically very rich, and it is impossible to convey all of its content in a single homily, so a homily based on the readings from the lectionary should not attempt to cover everything, because then it becomes meaningless (cf. Dyk 2008b, 304–5; Chrzanowski 2017, 103).

1.3. Errors in Preaching Mystagogical Content⁵

Errors in the proclamation of mystagogical content can lead to a distortion of the essence of the liturgical experience and undermine the ability of the faithful to participate fully in the mysteries of faith. Mystagogy, which aims to introduce the faithful to a deeper understanding of the sacramental encounter with Christ, is often overlooked or treated superficially. These errors can make the homily a mere form of doctrinal teaching, instead of leading to an authentic encounter with Christ present in the liturgy. The key errors in this category are:

1) Lack of Mystagogy

Chino Biscontin notes that

In the same way, we are not talking about someone present and someone absent. The homily preacher cannot limit himself to mediating the understanding of doctrinal biblical passages. He should also mediate the presence of the Speaker [...]. To be ministers of the word of God also and essentially means to be mediators of presence and encounter. (Biscontin 2011, 46)

From the above, we see that the homily's failure to explicitly point out Christ's presence in the liturgical celebration is a serious mistake. Therefore, the homily must not turn into a catechesis, which often ignores both the sacred texts proclaimed and the saving presence of Christ in the liturgy (cf. Dąbrówka 2017, 168), because its task is to show the liturgical participants the present significance of the salvific events that culminated in the paschal mystery of Christ (cf. Sławiński 2017, 77).

⁵ The preaching of mystagogical content was addressed in the following articles: Migut 2017, 133–48; Dąbrówka 2017, 149–70.

2) Rubricism

The error of rubricism consists in focusing homily preaching exclusively on explaining the various elements of the liturgy and the rules governing them, without relating them to the proclaimed word of God and the life of the faithful. The homily is not intended merely to inform about ceremonies and rites, but to lead to an encounter with Christ, who, through signs and symbols, comes to the community to accomplish the work of salvation (cf. Głowa 2012, 236; Dąbrówka 2017, 169).

3) Superficial Mistagogia

It is also a mistake to treat this stage of the homily in a cursory and merely suggestive manner. The homilist should arouse faith in the presence of Christ in the liturgy, accurately introduce the content of the mystery made present, and lead the faithful to respond to this saving presence. Only an in-depth mystagogy offers a chance to grasp the deepest meaning of the sacramental encounter with Christ, which allows the faithful to participate in it with greater commitment (cf. Dąbrówka 2017, 168–69).

1.4. Errors in Preaching Existential Content⁶

Errors in the preaching of existential content can lead to the detachment of the homily from the daily lives of the faithful and weaken its impact on their spiritual experience. Each of the errors stems from the homilist's inadequate approach to understanding the existential needs of listeners, as well as the failure to include their perspective in the process of interpreting and proclaiming God's word. Rather than leading to a deeper understanding of God's message in the context of daily life, the homily often becomes a one-sided presentation that fails to relate to the real problems and challenges faced by the faithful. Among the most common mistakes in this area are:

1) Compartmentalization

Enslaving the word of God in homilies, known as shuffling, involves limiting its interpretation to only one aspect of human life while ignoring its meaning in other contexts. An example of this is relating the content of Scripture only to the spiritual realm, while neglecting its significance in the temporal dimension (cf. Siwek 2007, 24).

⁶ There are a number of studies addressing the issue of preaching existential content; see Hajduk 2017, 51–61; Krauze 2017, 63–73.

2) Double-Sided Biblicism

Adam Szumorek, referring to the views of, among others, John Stott, states that “sermons resemble a fragment of a bridge which, firmly planted on one side of a precipice, rises high into the sky but does not reach those on the other side.” (Szumorek 2005, 125) In such a situation, it is difficult to speak of effective communication between the world of the Bible and the modern world (cf. Szumorek 2005, 125).

3) Individualism

A basic and common mistake in preaching existential content is individualism. It stems from the homilist's inadequate approach to this content: the preacher does not invite the audience to cooperate or actively co-create the homily, often preparing it in complete isolation, such as in a chapel or room, away from contact with the faithful. Not only are the laity not partners for the homilist in working on the homily, but they are also not partners in reading the biblical text through the lens of their daily lives. The homilist, forgetting that the homily is not his private affair but concerns the whole community, will preach the word of God over the heads of his faithful (cf. Twardy 1998, 128; 2009, 321–23; Krauze 2017, 71).

4) Subjectivism

Another mistake in preaching existential content is subjectivism. It consists not only in interpreting the biblical text according to one's own tastes and moods (cf. Twardy 2009, 319) but also in failing to correctly diagnose the existential situation of the listeners. The cause of the above error is the homilist's embeddedness in a particular way of thinking and his failure to confront his experience with the reality of the world around him (cf. Przyczyna 2013, 127; Krauze 2017, 71).

1.5. Errors in Preaching Moral Content⁷

The proclamation of moral content in homilies often faces a variety of difficulties that can weaken their impact on the faithful. A proper approach to the preaching of moral content requires not only an understanding of the spiritual needs of the faithful but also avoiding an excessive emphasis on a moralistic tone and focusing on conveying the authentic message of the Gospel. Among the most common errors in this area are:

1) Moralizing

Moralism is a serious problem in homily preaching. The term “moralism” itself refers to an extreme and often oppressive form of moralism, involving intrusive

⁷ The preaching of moral content was addressed in the following articles: Derdziuk 2017, 107–16; Orzoł 2017, 117–30.

instruction that is often counterproductive (cf. Zgółkowska 1999, 13). Such an error in homilies is associated with “weak” parenesis and has many causes that include: misunderstanding the liturgical dimension of the homily, lack of reference to the life of the community, parenesis with no connection to the evangelical order, drawing conclusions from all the components of the text, misinterpreting the changes taking place in the world, and confusing the morality of the act of preaching (cf. Dyk 2007, 77–81; Orzoł 2017, 126–29).

2) **Negativism**

Another mistake in preaching moral content is negativism. It refers to an attitude or style of homily preaching that is dominated by negative content, criticism, or condemnation, rather than a positive message that fosters the faith and spiritual development of listeners. This way of preaching can manifest itself in several ways, including a focus on criticism; a lack of hope and prospects for change; a resistance to change; and a lack of inspiration and encouragement (cf. Dyk, Sławiński, and Szewczyk 2023, 209).

3) **Weak Parenesis**

In homily preaching, there is the concept of “weak parenesis,” which defines preaching that fails to motivate listeners to make moral commitments (cf. Dyk 2007, 75–76). What causes “weak” parenesis? First, the danger arises when the homily is not grounded in a salvific foundation, placing the entire responsibility for moral life on the listener, who must fulfill commitments on his/her own. The lack of recognition of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit softens the message of the homily, making it more accessible, treating Jesus only as an example of moral living and overlooking the role of the Holy Spirit (cf. Dyk 2007, 76). In this case, we can speak of a-pneumatological parenesis (cf. Orzoł 2017, 125). Secondly, weak parenesis occurs when the homilist does not know the real problems and doubts of the listeners. As a result, he addresses problems that do not exist or uses outdated examples and stories, making his preaching irrelevant to the audience and failing to encourage them to change (cf. Dyk 2007, 76). In this case, we are dealing with a-existential parenesis (cf. Orzoł 2017, 125). Thirdly, parenesis takes place when substantive arguments are lacking; the homilist reaches for emotional means of communication, especially fear, which contradicts the teaching of the Gospel. While emotions can be used in preaching, they should support reason and follow the logical structure of the Gospel (cf. Dyk 2007, 76). In this case, we have an example of a-logical parenesis (cf. Orzoł 2017, 125).

2. Errors in Expository Preaching—an Evangelical Perspective⁸

2.1. Preaching That Disregards the TEXT

Preaching that disregards the biblical text is a serious problem in Evangelical homiletics, as it can distort the original message of Scripture and mislead listeners. Each error stems from a lack of respect for the biblical context and a tendency to either over-interpret or omit key elements of the message. An improper approach to the text can lead to various errors, such as:

1) A-Illustration Sermon

The purpose of using examples and illustrations is to make biblical truth more understandable to listeners and to apply it in a way that will realistically affect their hearts and minds. Using examples merely for effect or to make the audience laugh is not acceptable. Each illustration should be appropriate and well thought out, not added just to fill in the gaps in the sermon outline. It is important that all examples are reliable and that their facts are thoroughly verified. Avoid basing a sermon solely on illustrations, no matter how good they may be. The sermon should be based on the word of God, not on personal stories.⁹ A preacher should not use stories from other people's lives as his own illustrations, as this would be dishonest. Next, it is advisable to avoid using books with ready-made examples, as they are often outdated, inaccurate, and used by other preachers (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 86–87). The illustrations must not distract the audience from the essence of the sermon, and they certainly must not discredit the truth contained in it (cf. Buice 2018).

2) A Multi-Faceted Sermon

A preacher makes the mistake of introducing too many personal problems into a sermon. Seminary notes should be treated like a list of components; they provide information but are not relevant to the listeners. People need spiritual nourishment, not component analysis. This principle applies to the preaching of any Bible passage. To effectively discuss a particular book and avoid getting lost in the details, it is necessary to gain preaching experience. First, the preacher should thoroughly familiarize himself with the material and then prepare a sermon that will satisfy the needs of the listeners and, above all, bring glory to Jesus Christ (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 84–85).

⁸ For a list of denominations and evangelical circles operating in the Republic of Poland, see Pasek 2004, 42–44; 2014, 146–51.

⁹ Warren Wiersbe and David Wiersbe explain that information and experience gained outside the community can be useful in a sermon, however, it should be presented carefully, see 1986, 98–99.

3) Atomistic Sermon

A preacher who succumbs to atomistic tendencies extracts detailed implications, subtexts, or various aspects of the biblical author's thoughts, which then begin to dominate the original meaning of his words. The effect of this is to change the original message of the biblical author. An atomistic sermon takes the form of a character trait, experience, or behavior of a biblical character, which the preacher highlights and treats as the main point of reference. The problem with this method is that the idea of a particular passage of Scripture is either ignored or reduced to a secondary role. In either case, whether ignored or reduced to a secondary role, the original meaning of the text is altered and deviates from the author's proper biblical intent (cf. Thornton 2021a).

4) Christ-Less Sermon

A preacher, using Old Testament passages to deliver moralizing sermons, leaves out Christ and the Gospel. This can be illustrated by imagining God's word as a great wheel with Christ as its center and the Gospel as its axis. No passage of Scripture is faithfully preached unless we follow its spokes to the center, clearly explaining what the passage says about Christ and how it relates to the Gospel (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 9).

5) Doctrinal Sermon

A sermon often ignores the individual characteristics of the literary genres found in the Bible, treating narratives, poetry, epistles, and apocalyptic texts in the same way, often as if all passages were merely logically ordered statements. A sermon should contain statements of truth; however, it should not be limited to just this style of speaking. Individual passages can convey the same main message but through different forms of expression. The literary diversity of Scripture should not be ignored when preaching; it should be appreciated and taken into account (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 9).

6) Impressionist Sermon

The impressionist preacher perceives reality in a subjective way, modifies it, deliberately exaggerates certain aspects of it, omits others, and distorts it as a result (cf. Helm 2014, 19). Impressionistic preaching loses its connection to the authentic transmission of the text, ignoring its historical, literary, and theological conditions. While this method of expository preaching is certainly easier, we must keep in mind that it implies a liberal interpretation of the biblical text by the preacher according to his own preferences (cf. Helm 2014, 21).

7) Misty Sermon

The ending of the sermon should be planned from the very beginning. When the preacher analyzes the biblical text and prepares the sermon, he should keep in mind the purpose of the sermon. The sermon is not just about explaining the topic but aims to achieve a specific result. If the sermon has touched the preacher's heart, he will be able to apply it effectively to the lives and hearts of his listeners. The preacher should be precise in his message. If he formulates the topic of the sermon well, he will make clear what changes he would like God to make in the lives of the community members. A vague theme leads to a vague conclusion (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 92–94).

8) Shortcut Sermon

This is a sermon that completely lacks an analysis of the biblical text on which it is based. Although the direction of the sermon is set by the word of God, it seems that only the preacher realizes this (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 9).

9) Speculative Sermon

There are plenty of certain and wonderful truths in Scripture, so a preacher who bases his sermon on conjecture or assumption risks committing a serious offense (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 79).

10) Springboard Sermon

A preacher focuses on secondary aspects of the passage without paying attention to its main message. One of the key advantages of sequential expository preaching, which consists in discussing passage after passage, is that it forces the preacher to address topics he would prefer to leave out, or to appropriately balance topics he might otherwise overemphasize (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 8–9).

11) Technocentric Sermon

The use of technology in a sermon should not distract from the preaching. It should be emphasized that inserting any video excerpts into a sermon can be a huge distraction that takes the audience's attention away from the sermon itself. In fact, when videos are played, the sermon may lose its immediacy. Modern technology is not necessarily part of the sermon being preached (cf. Buice 2018).

12) Thematic Sermon

An expository sermon begins with the text and sticks to it throughout the sermon. The points of an expository sermon emerge from the text of Scripture and act as indicators of clarity and direction within the text, rather than acting as distractors. As the explanation is unfolded in front of the congregation, one main meaning, the central idea of the text, is shown to all (cf. Buice 2018).

13) Unfounded Sermon

A preacher shares thoughts that do not come from a proper understanding of the Bible passage under discussion. He does not pay attention to the actual content of the text or its context. If he does not set himself the goal of thoroughly exploring the truth contained in God's word, his sermon is based more on his own interpretations than on God's intended meaning (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 8).

2.2. Preaching That Disregards the AUDITORIUM

In expository preaching, as in any other art form, it is not only what is said that is important, but also how it is conveyed. Although the main goal of expository preaching is to reach the listeners' hearts with God's message, there are many mistakes that can make it impossible for the message to reach the audience effectively. Among such errors, we can certainly include the following:

1) Biographical Sermon

The danger of a biographical sermon is to misunderstand the historical text by detaching the biblical figure from its place in salvation history as presented in Scripture. As a result, such a sermon fails to convey a single, consistent intention of the biblical author. It is worth noting that the biographical character is taken out of the context of salvation history by selective interpretation (i.e., by dividing salvation history into smaller, separate pericopes), leaving only the character and the text devoid of historical context. When a biblical figure is presented in this way, without reference to the historical genre, the authority of Scripture is weakened (cf. Thornton 2021b).

2) Egocentric/Anthropocentric Sermon

The preacher should not be the central theme of the sermon. When a preacher shares his experiences or personal experiences, he should do so in a way that serves the people. Some preachers focus on themselves to the point that their lives can be reconstructed from their sermons, while others hide so much that their personal stories remain anonymous. Both extremes should be avoided. The congregation wants to see Christ, but it wants to see Him through the lens of an authentic person who may sometimes make mistakes but who remains faithful to his calling (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 103–4). God should be the only protagonist and the main focus of the sermon (cf. Buice 2018).

3) Exegetical Sermon

An exegetical sermon may completely ignore the needs of the audience. In such a case, a person might as well read the exegetical commentary itself. All that is conveyed in such a sermon is truth derived from the text; it is not actual

preaching, but rather a lecture. Such a sermon appeals only to the listeners' intellect. Meanwhile, true expository preaching should impart knowledge, but also move the heart and influence the will (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 9).

4) **Hopping Sermon**

There's nothing wrong with using a few verses to support a particular idea, but it's a good idea to give people time to familiarize themselves with them. The purpose of using quotes in an expository sermon is to support, not hurt, its content. Using too many quotes, even if they are valuable, can overwhelm the message. Not every listener will open his or her Bible at every verse, but all should have the opportunity to hear each verse, familiarize themselves with its content and the parallel texts before moving on to the next. Some preachers use an excessive number of verses in rapid succession, which can make it difficult for listeners to take them in (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 95; Buice 2018).

5) **Hypocritical Sermon**

Another extreme is when the preacher is seen as a teacher of the Word, but not as someone who lives according to the Word. Although there are times when the preacher should use "you" instead of "we," the one who always says "you" and never "we" is not setting an example of someone who is subject to God's will and who listens and then submits to God's voice himself. Such a way of preaching leads to a situation which is opposite to that in which the church lives through the mediation of its pastor: here it is the pastor who lives through the mediation of the church. Such a preacher may assume that his piety and discipleship are limited solely to his ministry. As a result, he does not live as a disciple of the Word, but rather as someone who merely subordinates others to the Word, remaining on the sidelines himself (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 10).

6) **Inebriated Sermon**

A preacher standing behind a pulpit and using the Bible to justify his own thoughts, instead of conveying what God intended in His Word, is akin to an intoxicated person who merely leans against a lamppost instead of using it. The true attitude of a preacher is to fully submit to the content of Scripture because it is the Bible, not the preacher, that is the Word of the Spirit (cf. John 6:63). This may manifest in sermons that are always based on the same doctrines, regardless of the actual message of the biblical passage. It is also possible for preachers to make political, social or therapeutic conclusions not based on the intent of the Holy Spirit hidden in the text. In essence, the preacher's tendency to preach inebriatedly instead of practicing expository preaching stems from the fact that the preacher imposes his own passions, goals and perspectives on the biblical

text. When he does so, the Bible becomes merely a means of validating his own opinions (cf. Helm 2014, 26–27).

7) Instrumentalization of the Sermon

It involves the preacher transferring his personal problems to the pulpit, incorporating them into the content of the sermon (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 83).

8) Irrelevant Sermon

This is a sermon that focuses primarily on pointing out the mistakes made by people outside the community. Sometimes, the message of the sermon is directed exclusively at non-believers, suggesting that the word of God has nothing to offer to members of the community. At other times, the sermon's application addresses problems that do not concern the community to which it is preached at all (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 9–10).

9) Misfit Sermon

The mistake lies in the hermeneutical difference between the passages of Scripture and the life of the church, which leads to an inappropriate application of the meaning of the original context directly to modern realities (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 10).

10) Multi-Source Sermon

Each new translation of Scripture often requires a separate “study edition.” As a result, local ecclesial communities may be the only group that functions without a unified manual. Reading a new translation does not guarantee spiritual growth. Therefore, each community should choose one Bible translation and stick to it, regardless of the individual preferences of its church members. A preacher who uses a different translation every week misses an opportunity for stability in preaching (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 96–97).

11) Over-Intellectualized Sermon

The preacher must be understood by the audience. If the sermon requires the use of theological terms, the preacher should take the time to explain them and illustrate them with examples. He should avoid using words and phrases that are unfamiliar to the audience, as this may discourage them from listening. The preacher should try to avoid the temptation to demonstrate his knowledge with difficult terms. The greatest preachers speak in a way that is clear and accessible. An expository sermon cannot be a grammatical lecture involving listeners in complex analyses of words and their etymologies (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 88–89).

12) Private Sermon

It is easy for a preacher to focus mainly on how a particular text of Scripture relates to his or her own life, which can lead to preaching as if the entire community is in a similar situation. In this way, the community is deprived of the understandings that God's word applies to every aspect of believers' lives and loses the ability to communicate this to people with life circumstances quite different from our own (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 10).

13) Sermon with Extended Introduction

The main purpose of introducing an expository sermon is to arouse interest and convince the audience that listening to the sermon will benefit them. The longer the introduction, the greater the risk that listeners will lose interest in the sermon. Introductions often waste time with general remarks about the church, music, special guests, or announcements. Preachers should understand that instead of talking about the sermon, they should preach it. In the case of a sermon series, each expository sermon should be a separate unit, but at the same time it should be related to the previous ones (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 75–78). A sermon does not become better just because it is longer. If the sermon is too long, people will not be able to concentrate on it until the end (cf. Buice 2018).

14) Stylistically Incorrect Sermon

Speech is the preacher's primary tool, so he must learn to use it effectively. We often hear even well-known preachers who make linguistic errors. This is not acceptable in a sermon. Slang and various types of jargon have no place in the pulpit, unless they are used in quotations or as illustrations of thoughts that cannot be expressed in any other way. Effective expository preaching, like good writing, should be clear, vivid, articulate and understandable (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 81–82).

15) Unnatural Sermon

The way an expository sermon is preached is of great importance. The content of a sermon is "like an arrow that hits the heart, but the way it is delivered, symbolized by the feathers of the arrow, is crucial for it to reach its target." (W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 90) Preachers can learn a lot from experienced public speakers who know how to present their message effectively. One should avoid the "preacher" style, which is different from the natural style of communication. Other preachers should not be imitated. The sermon should not be a performance, the pulpit is not a stage, and the congregation is not an audience. The preacher, being part of the sermon, should be authentic both on and off the pulpit. A good expository sermon does not focus on form but is an effective

tool for communicating the truth of God's word (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 90–91).

16) Witty Sermon

Preaching the word of God is a serious task, and a preacher should not take on the role of a comedian and should never make fun of eternal issues. While subtle humor may have its place behind the pulpit, comedy or so-called “clerical ramblings” are absolutely unacceptable. Humor should serve a specific purpose: it can be used as a spice to enrich the message, or sugar to make difficult truths easier to accept. It can help relieve tension, attract the attention of a sleepy congregation or prepare the way for deeper truths. Humor is not a key element of a sermon, but rather a supporting element that helps the preacher reach the hearts of the listeners. If humor is not natural to the preacher, it is better to avoid it. Behind the pulpit, humor should be used as a tool for edification or as a strategy in battle, never as entertainment (cf. W. Wiersbe and D. Wiersbe 1986, 100–102).

2.3. Preaching That Disregards GOD

In preaching the word of God, it is extremely important not only to understand the content of the message but also how it is delivered to the congregation. An expository sermon should not only express deep consideration of the Scriptures but also be a passionate, fervent, and prayerful action that becomes an instrument in the hands of God to reach the hearts of the listeners. Below are the various types of errors that can result from disregarding the God in expository preaching.

1) Anthropophobic Sermon

Fear of people is one of the unpleasant mistakes the devil uses to silence good preachers and obscure the truth about God. Many good preachers succumb to the pressure. The same God who rules the entire universe has the power to free the preacher from the fear of people (cf. Buice 2018).

2) Passionless Sermon/the Frankenstein Sermon¹⁰

However, a preacher who understands the passage well and aptly relates it to the life of the community may preach as if he were reading a phone book. In such a case, there is a lack of a sense that when the preacher shares the word of God,

¹⁰ Sean DeMars explains that all the homiletical components of an expository sermon may be present in a “The Frankenstein Sermon,” including a thoughtful introduction and conclusion, helpful illustrations, a well-organized sermon outline, thorough exegesis, and a presentation of the Gospel that flows from the meaning of the text. However, what is missing is the most important element—the invigorating force that should bring the sermon to life, see DeMars 2024.

it is God Himself communicating with His people. If the preacher does not realize that it is God, through the Holy Spirit in the Word, who works intercession, encouragement, exhortation, formation, and purification in the lives of believers, his sermons may lack passion, fervor, reverence, seriousness, visible joy, or tears of sorrow—they will remain mere words (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 11). A sermon devoid of passion is not a true sermon (cf. Buice 2018); it will fail to communicate God's message (cf. Robinson 2000, 17).

3) **Powerless Sermon**

Too much attention is paid to exegesis of the Scriptures and perfecting the sermon, while little time is spent praying for proper understanding and appropriate application. A preacher who works hard on the sermon but prays little relies mainly on his own strength and not enough on the Lord. This is one of the greatest temptations to which the preacher is exposed; although more observant members of the church may see errors in exegesis or misapplication, the role of prayer in the preacher's work will only be seen by God (cf. Gilbert-Smith 2015, 11).

3. **Comparative Homiletics—an Attempt at Analysis**

A comparative analysis of the Catholic and Evangelical homiletical perspectives in the context of errors in homily preaching and expository preaching can help us understand how different Christian traditions approach the same topic. Here are the main differences and similarities between the two perspectives, which we can focus on in the following categories: approach to the Scripture, style and form of preaching, teaching and interpretation, liturgical context, and spiritual and moral challenges.

1) **Approach to the Scripture**

The Catholic tradition places great emphasis on Tradition and the Church's Magisterium alongside Scripture. Homilies are often set in the context of Catholic teaching and traditional interpretation. References to Church rites, doctrine, as well as references to saints may be present in homilies. Evangelical preachers usually focus on *sola scriptura*, meaning that Scripture is the sole authority on matters of faith. Expository sermons focus on direct teaching from the Bible but may contain errors if the interpretation of Scripture is one-sided or selective. In both traditions, errors can arise from the misapplication of Scripture, whether through an over-reliance on Tradition or a selective interpretation of texts.

2) Style and Form of Preaching

Homilies in the Catholic tradition often take the form of reflections on the biblical text, as well as references to the Church's liturgy and tradition. Homilies can be more formal and aim to deepen spirituality and religious practices, including an understanding of and engagement with the sacraments. Formalism or an absence of references to the needs of contemporary communities can make homilies less engaging and less timely. Expository sermons tend to be more dynamic and practical, with an emphasis on the direct application of the biblical text to daily life. They can be more personal and emotional, with the goal of inspiring and encouraging conversion and a personal life of faith. On the other hand, excessive emotionalism and a lack of deeper theological context can lead to unnecessary simplifications and superficial teaching. Errors in the preaching of the word of God can result from a mismatch between the preaching style and the needs and expectations of the audience, regardless of tradition, which can affect the effectiveness and accuracy of the teaching.

3) Teaching and Interpretation

Catholic teaching often integrates the interpretation of Scripture with the Church's teaching. Homilies may refer to official documents as well as other teaching sources. Errors in homilies can include inadequate consideration of Church authority or misinterpretation of Tradition. Evangelical preachers place great emphasis on individual interpretation of Scripture and may also affiliate with certain theological schools of thought. Errors in expository preaching can include misapplication of the biblical text, such as selecting verses out of context or promoting views that are inconsistent with widely accepted tenets of the faith. Errors can result from an imbalance between personal understanding of Scripture and the authority of the Church/communities or traditional teaching.

4) Liturgical Context

A homily is closely linked to the liturgical celebration. It is often intended to explain a passage of Scripture related to a liturgical day or feast commemorated by the Church on that day. Errors can include a lack of consistency with the liturgy or a misinterpretation of the text in the context of liturgical celebration. Expository sermons may be more closely related to the current needs and concerns of the community and not necessarily to the liturgical activities of a particular Evangelical community. Errors may include a lack of practicality in the sermons or an inadequate application of Scripture to the current issues affecting community life. Errors can result from insufficient consideration of the liturgical context or the practical needs of the community, which can affect the relevance and usefulness of preaching the word of God.

5) Spiritual and Moral Challenges

The homilist should focus on properly understood morality (salvific indicative), emphasizing spiritual life and religious practices (moral imperative). Errors can result from inadequate teaching on morality or the religious practices, which can lead to an incomplete or erroneous understanding of spiritual requirements in the Christian life. Expository sermons often focus on personal conversion, relationship with God, and morality. Errors can include a misunderstanding of biblical principles or a lack of effectiveness in encouraging a personal life of faith; this can lead to a superficial approach to morality and conversion. In both traditions, errors can result from incomplete or inadequate teaching on spiritual and moral challenges, which can affect the proper understanding and practice of the faith.

Conclusions

The preaching of the word of God in the Catholic tradition (homily) and the Evangelical tradition (expository sermon) differ in their approach to Scripture, style and form of preaching, interpretation of teaching, liturgical context, and spiritual and moral challenges. Catholic homilies are deeply rooted in Tradition and liturgy, while expository preaching in the Evangelical tradition focuses on the direct application of Scripture to daily life and personal experience of faith. Both homiletic traditions struggle with various errors in preaching due to their specific theological and practical frameworks. These challenges include errors related to kerygmatic, didaskalia, mystagogical, existential, and moral content in the perspective of Catholic homilies, and distortions of text, audience reference, or God's presence in the context of evangelical preaching. Understanding these differences and striving for greater precision and authenticity in preaching can help minimize errors and improve the quality of preaching in both traditions. Effective preaching requires not only fidelity to the biblical text but also the ability to tailor the message to the spiritual and existential needs of the audience in order to lead them to a deeper encounter with Christ and an understanding of His saving work in their lives.

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