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A Hierarchy of Voices in the Pulpit: Scripture, Tradition, and Classical Wisdom in Stanisław Bielicki, SJ's Preaching

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ABSTRACT: This study reconstructs the hierarchy of sources in Stanisław Bielicki, SJ's *Niedziele kaznodziejskie* (1712). Close reading of the original edition shows that Scripture provides the normative and liturgical horizon; patristic and scholastic voices mediate interpretation and moral distinctions; Polish historical memory localises obligation; and classical exempla intensify persuasion. Latin quotation and Polish paraphrase reveal deliberate adaptation to differentiated audiences. The article argues that Bielicki's authority is enacted as entrusted mediation rather than private possession of theological truth, while also noting uncertain attributions, decontextualisation, and the risk that prestige may replace argument.

KEYWORDS: Stanisław Bielicki; Jesuit preaching; Scripture; patristic reception; classical exempla

1. INTRODUCTION

The sources used in a sermon are never merely a bibliography concealed within oral discourse. They indicate what counts as knowledge, which voices can authorise an interpretation, how a preacher imagines the competence of an audience, and how inherited language is translated into present obligation. In early modern preaching, citation was therefore both intellectual practice and pastoral action. A biblical motto could define the horizon of a sermon; a sentence from Augustine could stabilise an interpretation; a scholastic distinction could order moral causality; a chronicle could locate the hearer within providential history; and an anecdote about a pagan philosopher could make an otherwise abstract claim memorable.

The sermons of Stanisław Bielicki, SJ offer an unusually rich field for analysing this process. His *Niedziele kaznodziejskie* (1712) is saturated with biblical phrases, Latin sententiae, patristic names, scholastic arguments, historical notices, medical analogies, and exempla drawn from Greek and Roman antiquity. This abundance can easily be described as Baroque erudition or as the habitual compilatory practice of a Jesuit preacher. Such descriptions are not false, but they remain incomplete. They do not explain why certain voices are allowed to define the norm while others merely illustrate it, why Latin is sometimes retained and sometimes paraphrased, or how sources from incompatible intellectual worlds can coexist without appearing to Bielicki as a contradiction[1].

The central claim of this article is that Bielicki's homiletic use of sources forms a hierarchy of voices governed by pastoral purpose. Scripture supplies the normative and liturgical horizon. Patristic writers mediate the ecclesial memory of interpretation. Scholastic authors provide conceptual distinctions and disciplined causal reasoning. Polish theologians and chroniclers localise universal claims within the history and political imagination of the Commonwealth. Pagan philosophers, poets, historians, physicians, and artists contribute testimony about human nature and rhetorical exempla, but their authority remains subordinate to revelation. These layers are not sealed compartments. Bielicki places them in interaction, yet he assigns each a different communicative function.

This hierarchy may be reconstructed through five operations: normative grounding, interpretive mediation, conceptual ordering, cultural localisation, and affective amplification. Normative grounding establishes the scriptural text from which the sermon speaks. Interpretive mediation connects that text with received ecclesial reading. Conceptual ordering clarifies distinctions such as grace and freedom, virtue and passion, intention and external effect, justice and power. Cultural localisation links the universal message to Polish history,

[1] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 27, 73, 118, 148, 160, 194, 228, 314, 483, 533, 592, 661–662.

institutions, ceremonies, and collective memory. Affective amplification uses stories, images, paradoxes, and classical maxims to move the will and secure recollection.

The resulting model also sheds light on the nature of preaching authority. Bielicki does not speak as though theological truth originated in his individual insight. His authority depends precisely on receiving, arranging, and applying voices that precede him. In this respect the pulpit displays a form of entrusted or fiduciary authority. Piotrowski's reconstruction of post-Tridentine moral theology describes legitimate authority as relational, office-bound, and communicatively enacted rather than proprietary[2]. Applied to preaching, this suggests that the preacher's competence consists not in owning the Word, but in serving its intelligible and responsible mediation.

The article first situates Bielicki within early modern homiletic culture and explains its method. It then examines the distinct roles assigned to Scripture, the Fathers, scholastic theology, local historical authorities, and pagan learning. A further section analyses Latin quotation and Polish paraphrase as audience design. The discussion synthesises these findings into a fivefold architecture of authority and evaluates the limitations of Bielicki's intertextual practice.

2. HISTORICAL AND SCHOLARLY CONTEXT

Post-Tridentine Catholicism gave renewed importance to preaching, catechesis, sacramental discipline, and the formation of clergy. Within the Society of Jesus, rhetorical education was not autonomous from theology and spirituality. The arts of invention, arrangement, memory, and delivery were expected to make doctrine available to a concrete audience and to lead knowledge toward decision. The Jesuit preacher was therefore trained to move between biblical exegesis, theological commonplaces, moral cases, historical exempla, and the requirements of liturgical time.

Polish preaching inherited this European programme while developing within the multilingual and multiconfessional culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Latin remained the language of schools, ecclesiastical learning, and much elite communication, while Polish enabled broader pastoral address. The preacher's repertoire could include not only Scripture and the Fathers, but legal traditions, chronicles, political maxims, devotional literature, natural philosophy, medicine, and classical history. The pulpit functioned as a point where differentiated stores of knowledge became orally accessible and morally ordered.

Panuś emphasises the broad doctrinal, formative, and cultural role of preaching in Poland from the Middle Ages to the Baroque[3]. Pawlak's work on early modern homiletics demonstrates how church rhetoric combined theoretical reflection, received topoi, and post-Tridentine pastoral priorities[4]. Prejs draws attention to the oral and mnemonic conditions of late Baroque culture: textual materials were designed for performance and recollection, not only for silent reading[5]. Recent analysis of Franciszek Kowalicki further shows that the concept, exemplum, and sensory image in Saxon-period Jesuit preaching formed deliberate literary strategies rather than random ornament[6].

These studies make it possible to move beyond two reductive interpretations of Bielicki. The first treats the abundance of references as evidence of encyclopaedic learning without asking how they function. The second treats citation as superficial display, assuming that a crowded sermon necessarily substitutes authority for thought. Bielicki can certainly overload a passage, and some attributions are difficult to verify. Nevertheless, a functional analysis reveals a consistent ordering principle: sources are selected and transformed according to the pastoral work they are expected to perform.

3. METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The principal source is Bielicki's *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, printed at Częstochowa in 1712. The study used the complete digital facsimile and cites the printed pagination visible in the volume rather than the repository's image sequence[7]. The collection comprises a liturgically ordered cycle of sermons and thus allows his source repertoire to be observed across different seasons and theological themes. The study does not attempt a

[2] P. PIOTROWSKI, "The communicative structure of justice", 6–8.
[3] K. PANUŚ, *Kaznodziejstwo, II*, 202–230, 340.
[4] W. PAWLAK, "Od Sokołowskiego do Szylarskiego", 15–39.
[5] M. PREJS, *Oralność i mnemonika*, especially 15–45.
[6] K. PRABUCKI, "Z dziejów kaznodziejstwa 'czasów saskich'", 159–178.
[7] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*. Digital facsimile: Podlaska Biblioteka Cyfrowa, https://pbc.biaman.pl/dlibra/publication/50432/edition/48950 (accessed 21 August 2026).

statistical concordance of every name or biblical book. Instead, it uses historical-theological close reading and rhetorical-intertextual analysis to examine representative passages in which multiple authorities are coordinated.

Each passage was considered through four questions. First, what status does the cited voice possess: revealed, ecclesial, theological, historical, philosophical, or exemplary? Second, what transformation occurs: direct quotation, paraphrase, translation, compression, allegorical application, or anecdotal adaptation? Third, what rhetorical function does the source perform: thesis, interpretation, distinction, proof, illustration, emotional intensification, or mnemonic closure? Fourth, how is the source positioned in relation to the audience and to the sermon's governing scriptural text?

The term 'hierarchy of voices' does not imply a modern, explicit theory formulated by Bielicki. It is an analytical description of patterned differences within his practice. Scripture is not merely cited more frequently than Aristotle; it controls the theological end to which Aristotle is made to speak. Augustine does not appear only as another learned name; he mediates an ecclesially received interpretation of Scripture. A Polish chronicler is not treated as a source of revelation; he localises moral obligation in collective memory. Hierarchy therefore concerns function and normativity, not only frequency or prestige.

'Intertextual authority' refers to authority enacted through relations among texts and voices. A citation may authorise the preacher, but it may also limit him by placing his claim under a prior norm. The relationship is consequently not one-directional. Bielicki mobilises Augustine, Aquinas, Cicero, or a Polish chronicler, yet their presence also signals that his sermon is answerable to inherited testimony. Communicative authority arises from this accountable mediation rather than from isolated rhetorical force.

The method remains critically alert to uncertainty. Early modern sermons may quote from memory, rely on florilegia, compress arguments, alter wording, or repeat an anecdote whose textual origin is unclear. The analysis therefore distinguishes the function assigned to an authority within Bielicki's sermon from the historical accuracy of the attribution. It does not infer direct consultation of an original work where the evidence supports only reception through an intermediary.

4. SCRIPTURE AS NORMATIVE AND COMPOSITIONAL HORIZON

Scripture is the primary material and governing horizon of Bielicki's preaching. Most sermons begin from a biblical motto, commonly associated with the liturgical reading of the day. The motto does more than provide a theme. It establishes a verbal centre around which theological exposition, moral application, and exempla are arranged. Even when the sermon travels through patristic commentary, Polish history, or classical anecdote, it is expected to return to a scripturally defined conclusion.

The Gospel of Matthew appears with particular prominence. Its presentation of Jesus as teacher, its discourse on the kingdom of heaven, the Sermon on the Mount, moral antitheses, and parables make it especially adaptable to Bielicki's formative aims. Calls to perfection, love of enemies, vigilance, justice, and care for the vulnerable allow him to connect the kingdom of God with the government of passions and the obligations of social life. Matthew 5:48, for example, becomes not an abstract command to impossible flawlessness but a horizon for courage in the struggle with temptation and for the ordering of love by reason and virtue.

Luke contributes the universal scope of salvation and a repertoire of figures through whom mercy, poverty, delayed conversion, and social reversal can be interpreted. John becomes especially important in Passion preaching. The declaration 'It is finished' (John 19:30) condenses fulfilment, sacrifice, and the completion of Christ's earthly mission. Mark appears less frequently, but the cry of abandonment in the Passion allows Bielicki to unite Christ's human suffering with the fulfilment of the Psalms. Pauline letters supply language for grace, sin, freedom, ecclesial unity, charity, and consolation, while Revelation intensifies eschatological judgment and the final defeat of evil.

The Old Testament is not treated as an exhausted religious past. Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Job, the Exodus, the prophets, and the Psalms form a typological and moral archive. Creation and fall explain the damaged condition of desire. Abraham models obedient faith and hospitality to grace. Exodus becomes a figure of deliverance from spiritual slavery. David provides language of repentance and trust. Solomon embodies both wisdom and the danger of a heart divided by wealth and desire. Prophetic warning translates national catastrophe into a summons to conversion.

The Psalms possess special homiletic flexibility. Their first-person voice allows Bielicki to move between Christological prophecy, ecclesial prayer, and the experience of the individual hearer. Psalm 23 presents Christ as shepherd and destination; Psalm 107 supplies the image of life as navigation toward the desired harbour. Biblical speech thereby becomes not simply evidence cited from outside but language that the congregation can inhabit.

Bielicki frequently omits modern-style references to chapter and verse. This is not best explained as simple negligence. The sermon belongs to a liturgical and oral environment in which the pericope, phrase, or image could be recognisable without bibliographical apparatus. The goal is application rather than documentation. Scriptural words are woven into the preacher's syntax so that they may pass into the hearer's memory and action. Yet this practice also creates ambiguity. Paraphrase can blur the boundary between biblical text and homiletic expansion, and the absence of precise attribution makes critical verification difficult.

The normative primacy of Scripture therefore coexists with considerable freedom of arrangement. Bielicki does not practise modern historical-critical exegesis. He reads canonically, typologically, morally, and christologically. The criterion of interpretation is pastoral and ecclesial coherence rather than reconstruction of an author's original historical setting. This difference should be acknowledged without dismissing the sophistication of the resulting theological synthesis.

5. PATRISTIC VOICES AS INTERPRETIVE MEMORY

The Fathers of the Church form the second layer of Bielicki's hierarchy. Augustine, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Gregory the Great, Origen, Tertullian, Peter Chrysologus, and others appear as witnesses to a received way of reading Scripture. Their words are usually brief: a maxim, interpretive key, striking image, or compressed doctrinal judgment. They rarely become the object of historical exposition. Their function is to make ecclesial memory audible within the present sermon[8].

Augustine is especially important because his work allows Bielicki to unite biblical exegesis, moral psychology, grace, freedom, ecclesiology, and eschatology. The image of the *civitas Dei* enables the preacher to contrast a community built by violence, pride, and possession with one formed by divine mercy. The City of God is not invoked as a detached theory of political history; it becomes a pastoral image of belonging. Hearers are asked which city their loves, habits, and loyalties are constructing[9].

The maritime image based on Psalm 107 provides another instance of interpretive mediation. Bielicki turns the psalmic harbour into an image of safety and treats the human will as the point at which a voyage can be directed or ruined[10]. The allegory makes a theological claim about freedom spatially imaginable. What matters here is not proof that Bielicki consulted Augustine directly, but the way a received interpretive vocabulary is compressed into pastoral exhortation.

Other patristic voices perform more specialised work. Chrysostom supplies models of preaching, moral urgency, and the formative use of fear. Gregory the Great connects theological contemplation with pastoral government and vigilance. Jerome can support ascetic discipline and the guarding of innocence. Ambrose offers compact moral and sacramental formulations. Peter Chrysologus represents clarity and the integration of doctrine with pastoral practice. Bielicki sometimes coordinates several Fathers as though their consonance formed a choir around the biblical text[11].

A related model appears in Bielicki's image of an organ whose different registers form one harmony. He applies the image to differentiated gifts and social functions, arguing that unity does not require identical voices[12]. The metaphor mirrors his intertextual method: coherence emerges from coordinated difference, not from the erasure of distinctions.

Patristic citation nevertheless remains selective. Bielicki normally gathers convergent opinions and avoids extended presentation of interpretive disagreement. The result is doctrinal clarity and rhetorical economy, but also a reduction of historical plurality. The Fathers become a harmonised tradition rather than participants in

[8] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 24–25, 73, 118, 146, 152, 194, 592.
[9] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 592.
[10] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 483.
[11] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 24–25, 73, 118, 146, 152, 194.
[12] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 160.

unresolved debates. This selectivity is intrinsic to his pastoral genre, yet it reminds the modern reader that received 'consensus' may partly be an effect of homiletic arrangement.

6. SCHOLASTIC ORDERING AND THE DISCIPLINE OF DISTINCTION

Scholastic authors occupy a third layer. Thomas Aquinas, Anselm of Canterbury, Nicholas of Lyra, and Bernard of Clairvaux do not all belong to one intellectual school, but Bielicki receives them as mediators of disciplined Christian reasoning and spiritual formation. Their role differs from that of the biblical motto and from the brief patristic gloss. Scholastic material often provides distinction, causal sequence, or a structured account of moral agency[13].

Aquinas appears where the preacher must distinguish temptation from consent, external circumstance from inward act, legitimate power from abuse, or intention from material outcome. In sermons concerning vigilance, Bielicki insists that prayer against temptation remains incomplete if a person voluntarily remains within the occasion of sin. The point is not that circumstance mechanically destroys freedom, but that prudence governs exposure. Solomon's fall then becomes a biblical exemplum confirming a moral distinction articulated through scholastic reasoning[14].

The widow's offering supplies another example. The Augustinian formula that God attends not only to external effect but to *affectus* directs attention toward intention. Bielicki then invokes Aquinas to argue that an offering pleasing to God must be personal, free, and actual rather than deferred indefinitely to a testament[15]. Material amount is not irrelevant, but it is interpreted within agency, sacrifice, and love. Scholastic voices protect the sermon from a simplistic equation of visible quantity with moral worth.

Bernard of Clairvaux contributes less a technical system than an affective theology of hope and conversion. In a sermon on Christian hope, Bielicki draws on Bernard's distinction between the charity of adoption and the truth of retribution, then develops a maritime image: between presumption and despair, the hearer must cast anchor on Christ—on his feet, hands, and heart—while Marian intercession appears as a further harbour of hope. Bernard's authority thus helps Bielicki translate doctrinal hope into an affective map for perseverance.[16]

Nicholas of Lyra enters a sermon on justice and kinship through a legal-exegetical gloss. Bielicki uses him to insist that a just person must not allow family ties to displace impartial judgment. The example shows that medieval commentary could provide more than philological information: it could furnish a compact distinction immediately applicable to the ethics of office. Yet the sermon normally conceals the longer chain of transmission through which such a gloss reached the pulpit.[17]

Scholastic ordering thus performs an epistemic service. It prevents moral exhortation from remaining a series of emotional reactions by giving relations and causes a stable form. At the same time, Bielicki does not reproduce the *quaestio* in the pulpit. Objections, alternative positions, and technical resolutions are compressed into distinctions that can govern conduct. Scholasticism is translated from disputation into pastoral judgment.

7. LOCAL MEMORY AND THE TRANSLATION OF UNIVERSAL CLAIMS

The hierarchy of voices also includes Polish theologians, political writers, chroniclers, and accounts of local religious custom. These sources do not compete with revelation. Their function is cultural localisation: they show what a universal norm means within the remembered history, institutions, and ceremonies of the Commonwealth.

Bielicki also places episodes attributed to Polish chroniclers and historians inside the moral argument of his sermons. For example, a notice introduced through Wincenty Kadłubek is not allowed to remain antiquarian information: it is redirected toward a warning about avarice and the inability of material possession to satisfy desire[18]. Such examples make the remembered history of the Commonwealth available as a repository of conduct, failure, and warning. The pulpit thereby places local history within a providential horizon without granting the chronicler the status of revelation.

[13] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 148, 194, 327, 533, 661–662.
[14] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 148.
[15] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 661–662.
[16] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 327.
[17] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 533.
[18] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 473.

The account of the seven candles used in Polish Rorate worship is especially revealing. Bielicki explains the ceremony by relating the candles to differentiated estates of the Commonwealth appearing before divine judgment. The king, clergy, senate, nobility and other representatives bring their lights to one altar and declare readiness for judgment[19]. A local ceremony thus becomes a compact political theology: hierarchy is retained, yet every estate is placed under a common eschatological accountability.

Localisation is not neutral. Providential history may sanctify inherited arrangements or reduce complex political conflicts to moral exempla. The reliability of some names and anecdotes is also uncertain. Yet the communicative function is clear. Without localisation, universal doctrine risks abstraction; through local memory, the hearer encounters obligation within a recognisable world.

8. CLASSICAL WISDOM AS A SUBORDINATE SOURCE

Bielicki's use of Greco-Roman authors is the most striking test of his hierarchy. Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Pliny, Euripides, Galen, Valerius Maximus, and numerous rulers, artists, jurists, and sages enter explicitly Christian sermons. Their presence does not indicate religious syncretism or an autonomous philosophical programme. Pagan wisdom is admitted as a limited witness to the natural intelligibility of virtue, passion, mortality, political responsibility, and the instability of fortune[20].

This layer performs three principal functions. First, classical testimony confirms that some moral truths are accessible to reason beyond explicit revelation. Aristotle's definition of envy, Stoic restraint, or Ciceronian reflection on civic speech can be received as partial knowledge of human conduct. Second, classical stories supply memorable exempla. The difference between a slowly created work and hurried abundance is dramatised through Euripides and Zeuxis; the transience of power through rulers and philosophers; the danger of gossip through the reported collapse of Athens into appetite for novelty. Third, pagan figures create contrast. Their insight may shame Christians who possess revelation yet live beneath the ethical level recognised by antiquity[21].

Bielicki consistently subordinates this material to a Christian telos. A classical maxim does not determine the meaning of salvation, sacrament, grace, or final beatitude. It is redirected toward conversion. The phrase momentaneum quod delectat, aeternum quod cruciabit—what delights is momentary; what will torment is eternal—turns temporal contrast into eschatological warning[22]. Ancient reflections on fame, pleasure, and mortality become preparatory language for Christian judgment.

The preacher can also use classical material ironically. In one passage Plato is sent back to the shepherd's staff when philosophical subtlety is contrasted with biblical pastoral wisdom[23]. The comparison does not abolish natural reason. It marks a limit: philosophy may illuminate human conduct, but it cannot replace revealed participation in divine life.

Classical political and civic examples also allow Bielicki to address speech and collective judgment in a register recognisable to educated hearers. He recalls the Athenians' appetite for novelty, associates it with civic ruin, and immediately turns the ancient example into a warning against gossip and untested reports[24]. The ancient republic functions as a mirror for the Commonwealth, but the homiletic application remains Bielicki's own.

Medical and artistic figures expand the sermon's moral imagination. References to Galen supply bodily analogies in several contexts, while the story of Euripides' slowly composed verses and Zeuxis' claim to paint 'for eternity' turns artistic labour into an argument for durable, responsible speech[25]. Such exempla compress argument into a sensory scene.

The risks are evident. Anecdotes can be historically unreliable, names corrupted, and complex philosophies reduced to convenient sayings. Pagan authors may become ventriloquised witnesses for conclusions they did not hold. From the standpoint of intellectual history, these transformations require correction. From the standpoint of reception history, however, the distortion itself is evidence: it shows how classical culture was domesticated within a Christian pedagogical economy.

[19] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 6–7.
[20] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 20, 27, 73, 118, 194, 228, 304, 314, 475, 525, 533, 584.
[21] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 27, 118, 314.
[22] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 32.
[23] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 73.
[24] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 314.
[25] S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 27; see also 20, 228, 525, 533, 584 for Galenic and medical analogies.

9. LATIN, VERNACULAR PARAPHRASE, AND AUDIENCE DESIGN

The language of citation reveals how Bielicki imagined differentiated audiences. Latin functioned as the transregional language of Scripture, theology, education, law, and elite culture. Retaining a Latin phrase could preserve precision, signal learned affiliation, activate the memory of educated hearers, and add rhythmic authority to a conclusion. It also marked the preacher as a participant in an intellectual tradition larger than the local congregation.

Yet Bielicki does not use Latin uniformly. He frequently translates, paraphrases, or immediately explains a foreign sentence in Polish. This movement between codes is not a secondary editorial convenience. It is pastoral accommodation. The preacher maintains contact with learned sources while preventing the sermon from becoming wholly inaccessible to listeners without advanced schooling[26].

Code-switching may also stage the act of interpretation. A Latin maxim is pronounced, then unfolded into vernacular images and practical consequences. The audience hears both the density of inherited formulation and its translation into ordinary moral life. Authority is therefore not produced by leaving the source opaque; it is completed when the source becomes intelligible and actionable.

The balance remains unstable. Untranslated Latin can exclude and may convert learning into display. Conversely, free paraphrase can obscure textual boundaries and make the preacher's expansion appear identical with the authority cited. Bielicki's best practice holds prestige and accessibility together. His weaker practice relies on the aura of a learned language where explanation would be more responsible.

10. DISCUSSION: A FIVEFOLD ARCHITECTURE OF INTERTEXTUAL AUTHORITY

The analysis supports a fivefold model of Bielicki's use of sources. The first function, normative grounding, belongs principally to Scripture. The biblical motto defines the sermon's horizon, and later materials remain accountable to its theological direction. This primacy is not merely quantitative. Classical and historical material may occupy many lines, but it cannot independently determine the sermon's account of salvation.

The second function is interpretive mediation. Patristic voices represent the historical memory of ecclesial reading. They connect the preacher's present application with an inherited community of interpretation and protect Scripture from appearing as the private possession of an individual expositor. Their authority is relational: a Father is cited because his reading belongs to, and has helped form, the Church's reception.

The third function is conceptual ordering. Scholastic voices provide distinctions, causal relations, and disciplined accounts of agency. They help Bielicki move from a vivid biblical image to judgments about intention, consent, prudence, office, justice, grace, and responsibility. The scholastic disputation is compressed, but its demand for intelligible order remains.

The fourth function is cultural localisation. Polish historians, theologians, political writers, and customs translate universal claims into the memory of a particular community. The result is a moral geography in which the hearer's nation, church, office, and liturgical practice become sites of accountability. Local history is not revelation, but it becomes a field in which revelation is received and tested.

The fifth function is affective amplification. Pagan maxims, anecdotes, medical analogies, artistic images, paradoxes, and memorable Latin phrases give moral claims sensory and emotional force. They make abstraction visible and help the sermon survive beyond the moment of delivery. Natural reason and cultural memory become servants of recollection and decision.

These functions establish hierarchy without eliminating plurality. Bielicki's pulpit is neither a monologue of isolated clerical invention nor an undifferentiated collage. It is a staged conversation in which voices possess unequal but complementary roles. The preacher's craft lies in arrangement: selecting a voice, assigning it a function, translating it for hearers, and returning it to the governing scriptural purpose.

This arrangement clarifies why communicative authority should be understood as entrusted rather than proprietary. Bielicki's sermon is strongest when the preacher remains accountable to the differences among revelation, interpretation, theological reasoning, history, and rhetorical illustration. Authority becomes distorted when those differences collapse—when anecdote is treated as evidence, prestige replaces explanation, or the

[26] Representative examples include S. BIELICKI, *Niedziele kaznodziejskie*, 6–7, 27, 32, 73, 118, 148, 160, 314, 483, 592, 661–662.

preacher's paraphrase becomes indistinguishable from Scripture. The hierarchy of voices is therefore also an ethics of citation.

Four criteria follow. First, attribution should be sufficiently accurate for the authority invoked. Early modern practice cannot be judged by modern bibliographic standards alone, but false attribution still weakens intellectual responsibility. Second, contextual transformation should preserve the source's relevant sense rather than merely recruit a famous name. Third, the status of a voice should remain clear: philosophy may illuminate human experience but does not function as revelation. Fourth, adaptation should serve the hearer's understanding and agency rather than learned self-display.

Bielicki meets these criteria unevenly. His synthesis often creates genuine theological insight, especially where Scripture, Augustine, and pastoral imagery mutually illuminate grace, freedom, love, and conversion. His use of classical political and ethical material can widen the moral field and expose Christians to judgment by truths recognised outside explicit faith. Yet compressed citation, uncertain anecdotes, harmonisation of patristic disagreement, and confessional selectivity sometimes turn tradition into a reservoir of confirmation.

The limitations should not obscure the historical significance of the practice. The sermon acted as a technology of knowledge translation before modern disciplinary separation. Biblical exegesis, metaphysics, moral psychology, political memory, medicine, rhetoric, and art could be coordinated around the formation of life. The pulpit did not simply popularise academic knowledge. It changed its genre, scale, audience, and practical end.

11. CONCLUSION

Stanisław Bielicki's preaching reveals a homiletic practice of considerable breadth, but breadth alone does not explain its coherence. His biblical, patristic, scholastic, historical, and classical references form a hierarchy of voices ordered toward pastoral conversion. Scripture grounds the norm; the Fathers mediate ecclesial interpretation; scholastic theology disciplines concepts; local history situates obligation; and pagan learning amplifies moral recognition through natural reason and memorable example.

This architecture allows heterogeneous materials to coexist without equalising their authority. Plato and Cicero may illuminate virtue, speech, or political responsibility, but they do not determine the meaning of grace or salvation. Polish historical memory may localise obligation, while Augustine and Aquinas are received as ecclesial and theological mediators. In each case, Bielicki returns inherited learning to practical exhortation.

The study has also shown that citation is a communicative act. Bielicki's choice between Latin retention and Polish paraphrase positions audiences, distributes access, and stages interpretation. The sermon's intertextuality is therefore inseparable from its pastoral ethics. A source is responsibly used when its status is clear, its sense is not arbitrarily reversed, and its presence helps the hearer understand and act.

Bielicki's practice has real limitations. Attributions are not always precise; anecdotes can overwhelm evidence; patristic plurality is frequently harmonised; and inherited authorities may be used to close questions rather than open understanding. His Christianisation of pagan sources can illuminate reception while obscuring their original intellectual contexts. These limitations call for critical historical analysis, not dismissal.

The enduring importance of Bielicki's practice lies in its vision of the pulpit as a place of mediated knowledge. The preacher is neither the origin of truth nor a passive conduit. He is an arranger and translator responsible for preserving differences among voices while directing them toward the spiritual and moral formation of a community. In this sense, Bielicki's 'theological-philosophical architecture of the word' offers a historical model of entrusted communication: authority is credible when it acknowledges its sources, submits rhetoric to truth, and converts erudition into service.

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