



## Gnomes of Gregory of Nazianzus as Part of Didactic Literature – an Inspirational Source of Homilies?<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The term *didaktikos*, first used by the ancient Greeks, referred to someone who was able to teach. However, not only in the sense of providing information and knowledge, but effectively conveying them so that they serve practical purposes. The aim of the contribution is to find out whether the gnomes of Gregory of Nazianzus formally meet the basic standards of didactic literature and thus to point out whether it is appropriate to use them as an inspirational source for writing sermons. By means of analytical and comparative method, we assess the presence of the basic features of homilies as well as whether they can be identified in the gnomes of Gregory of Nazianzus. The analysis confirms that homiletic texts are compatible with the gnomes by Gregory of Nazianzus and can be thus used as an inspirational source for writing sermons. Nazianzus' gnomes – the subject of our research – are also interesting for the readers today and have a lot to offer. Even if it is unlikely that the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus attracts broad readership, the sermon can be the tool that conveys the author's moral legacy.

**Keywords:** Gregory of Nazianzus; sermon; gnomes; didactic literature

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The etymology of the phrase didactic literature refers to the Greek διδάσκω (I teach). The basic characteristic of didactic literature is the effort to teach a lesson. The reader directly or indirectly learns lessons from the text, depending on the topic or genre. Didactic literature conveys different messages and shapes moral, ideological and worldview beliefs of the reader. The typical genres that bring such a lesson are fables, gnomes, maxims, georgics or parables. Nevertheless, the origins of didactic literature date back to antiquity and span across poetry, prose and drama. The founder of didactic poetry is Hesiod (the end of 8th and beginning of the 7th century BC). His two epics, *Theogonia* (*The Birth of the Gods*) and *Erga kai hémērai* (*Works and Days*) differ in tone. *Theogonia* reminds of Homeric epics and can be seen as a polemic take on Homer himself: what Homer presents chaotically, Hesiod structures and organizes. This very structuring of information to be conveyed could be already seen as having didactic elements, while the organizational principle permitting clearer understanding of the complex relations within Hesiod's epic is genealogy. Hesiod's sense of order is visibly reflected in the work of *Works and Days*, which has a looser structure and is therefore easier to read. This epic is a true representative of didactic epic. It provides advice, lessons and guidance on work and life. Among other things, Hesiod offers instructions on how to maintain both house and field and offers guidance on astronomical observations. Hesiod offers practical lessons that are embellished by folklore elements, occasional puzzles, gnomes, proverbs or the oldest known European fables, parables and myths. These very beginnings of didactic literature show that in order to instruct, the author deems gnomes or proverbs appropriate. We can find gnomes also in the work of Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389). The essence of his message is to convey learning in a convincing and comprehensible way. That is why he supported his reasoning in favor of the teachings of the church also in the form of moral poetry in *Poemata moralia*. St. Gregory of Nazianzus is a representative of the golden age of patristic literature in the 4th and 5th centuries BC. In the Western world, it was St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Hilar and St. Jerome. In the East, it was the Cappadocian fathers (St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Nazianzus) or St. John Chrysostom. The importance of their work is both theological and literary and represents a huge spiritual wealth that still stands at the heart of research, since it offers the historical, cultural and social thesaurus of the early Middle Ages. The goal of our paper is to determine whether the works of Gregory of Nazianzus, namely his gnomonic poems, are still attractive and relevant today. Methodologically, we are bas-

ing the research on a comparison of the formal characteristics of gnomes and homilies, indicating both common features and differences. Pertaining to the content, we strive to highlight the timeliness of Gregory's gnomonic poems as an inspirational source of homilies.

The gnome is a concisely formulated wisdom, saying or generally valid idea with a moral undertone, written usually in verse or in rhythmic prose<sup>4</sup>. For the purposes of this paper we use an umbrella term *gnomic tradition* to include Gregory of Nazianzus' poems and didactic writings using gnomes. The gnomonic tradition includes thus didactic poetry, some philosophical works, but includes as well different forms, e.g., creations of folk wisdom. From a strictly literary point of view, the latter are not gnomes but they border and overlap with them. Within the framework of poetic creation, we distinguish didactic poetry and gnomonic poetry. The aim of both is to educate the reader about the chosen topic, but gnomonic poetry differs in that its theme is ingrained in ethics. It is important to note though that to an author whose main objective is to write didactic poetry it is not an obstacle to address topics outside the scope of didactics. As an example, we can use again Hesiod's work *Works and Days*, in which we find instructions and these belong to the gnomonic tradition. The Greeks themselves regarded Hesiod as the founder of both didactic and gnomonic poetry<sup>5</sup>.

Gregory of Nazianzus was the first Christian author to use gnomonic form. However, it is believed that he was inspired by two lesser-known authors, Naumachius and Phocylides. Both are considered to be gnomonic poets, however, only snippets of their work have survived to these days<sup>6</sup>. Gnomonic poetry, or literature in general, like the gnomes themselves, deals with topics targeting ethics and morality by projecting them into human behavior, attitudes, fulfilling the obligations of a citizen within the fabric of social relations and family life. Talking about gnomonic poems, it is important to remember that the authors used but a few verses in order to convey their message and that the length of the poem was not the author's primary intention<sup>7</sup>. As an example of gnomonic poetry, we can cite the Bible and its ancient Book of Proverbs and the Book of Wisdom. Greek literature was enriched by the gnomonic poetry of Hesiod, Theognis, Phocylides. Later, the

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<sup>4</sup> F. Štraus, *Slovník poetiky*, Bratislava 2007, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> T. Vítěk, *Sedm mudrců a jejich výroky*, Praha 2010, p. 124.

<sup>6</sup> H.L. Davids, *De gnomologieën van sint Gregorius van Nazianze*, Nijmegen Utrecht 1940, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> W.T. Wilson, *The Mysteries of Righteousness: The Literary Composition and Genre of the Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*. Eugene 2013, p. 18.

style, customized content and forms of gnomic poetry occur in the works of other important authors such as Solon, Pindar, Menander or playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides<sup>8</sup>. Gregory knew their work and drew inspiration from it. He enriched his own writing with the ideas and forms he encountered. *Patrologia Graeca* refers to Gregory's four gnomic poems (I, II, 30; 31; 32; 33). Their content is targeting ethical issues and the questions of the rightful life. This fact is not surprising, because culture in antiquity absorbed gnomic poetry as an ethically educational and aesthetically pleasing genre. Thanks to popularity, the authors of gnomic poetry were able to spread their ideas, while the choice of poetic form made their message more expressive and memorable. Gregory of Nazianzus sought the same effect in his poetry<sup>9</sup>.

Since we are interested in the gnomic poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus and its appeal to the recipient in the 21st century, we will try to determine whether it could be used as a topic in homilies. At this point, it would be convenient to ask whether something like this even needs to be explored, since the theme of the homily can be practically anything. But is that really the case? Such a view of the homily would be at best superficial, because like any other genre – the homily has its characteristics. The field of religiosity and spirituality is characterized by several genres such as psalm, prayer or song. They occur mostly in the Bible, religiously motivated literature and press, liturgical texts, theological texts. Homilies, sermons, pastoral letter have their obligatory place during the liturgy<sup>10</sup>. For a better understanding of the homilies, it is useful to add the J. Mistrík's distinction between catechetical and confessional genres. Catechetical genres educate people in areas such as religion, history of religion, morality and apologetics. It is in this category that homilies, sermons and catechism belong. Confessional genres, i.e., those by which believers declare their creed, are personal prayers, sacraments, etc. Their intent is didactic, since insufficient mastery of the topic on the part of the believer is assumed<sup>11</sup>. The transition from the form of a traditional (more deductive rather than inductive) homily to the homily as seen today was marked not only by the changes within the social classes, but also by the development of various philosophical, religious or political groups and

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<sup>8</sup> Wilson, *The Mysteries of Righteousness*, p. 19-22.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *The Mysteries of Righteousness*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> K. Bieleková, *Homília ako žánr a text*, Prešov 2020, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> J. Mistrík, *Štylistika*, Bratislava 1997, p. 484.

schools of thought<sup>12</sup>. Nowadays, a homily reflecting expectations of the recipients does not choose verbatim sentences from the Bible, but distills the main idea and builds on it. The foundation of the homily is the Bible as an example or proof of the truthfulness of the preacher's words. If the excerpt from the Bible hadn't been included in the homily, it would have been just a sermon or a morality speech<sup>13</sup>, where the sermon offers topics unknown to Jesus and the apostles. Sermons are thus texts not rooted in the exegetic tradition and can be divided according to their object and character (e.g., social sermon, dogmatic sermon, morality sermon). The sermon is understood in a broader sense as any speech following the reading of the Gospel, where the homily is the most accomplished representation of sermon, since the homily is based directly on the gnostic truth and events written in the Bible. The sermon mostly responds to current questions of society and also relies on church dogmas. At present, we can see a preference for homily in churches at the expense of thematic sermons<sup>14</sup>.

What are the basic characteristics of the homily? The description of the homily is a rather complex and complicated matter. An important role in it is played by a rhetor/priest (the subject), whose task is to convincingly state objective facts, biblical truths (the object). However, the connection between the subject and object is rather complicated because the question of faith is a personal topic and each individual experiences faith in the context of his or her own existence and life experience that depend on the degree of understanding and identification with biblical truths.

When addressing the composition, it is necessary to organize the material pertaining to homilies into a single thematic unit. The modern composition of homilies, applied from the mid-1950s, highlights above all its dialogic structure, spontaneity, clarity, dynamic nature of presenting ideas, length and exegesis of the text. The Bible serves as an example or proof of the truthfulness of the preacher's words, nevertheless, it is not a verbatim copy of biblical passages that are included into the homily (it would be the case of the so-called exegetical homily, which explains one verse after another, but since the content of individual verses is often diverse, the homily itself becomes heterogenous). Instead, the homily distills the

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<sup>12</sup> K. Bieleková, *Vývoj homílie a jej súčasné žánrové zaradenie*, in: *Epištoly o jazyku a jazykovede*, Prešov 2012, p. 197.

<sup>13</sup> J. Vrablec, *Najplnšia forma kázne*, Bratislava 1990, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Bieleková, *Vývoj homílie a jej súčasné žánrové zaradenie*, p. 199-200.

main idea that is then offered to a recipient. This idea is processed by the priest in the deep structure of the text according to the following structure: kerygma – announcement, didascaly – instruction, paraklesis – influence or encouragement, mystagogy – unification with God, which is the culmination of the homily<sup>15</sup>.

Homily is most often built on the principle of an argumentative essay. It focuses on the analysis of the nature of a phenomenon, on clarifying relationships and context. Its basic characteristics are cohesion, successiveness, gnomic character, objectivity, but the most significant feature is their explicative nature, which is linked to cohesion in that it is achieved by a strong bond between motifs, their logical and semantic intertwining. The resulting text is thus more comprehensive. The successiveness, i.e., the organization of arguments that follow from one another, is yet another means of achieving coherence of the treated topic, that in turn gains gnomic validity. The argumentative essay often builds on the dichotomy between objectivity – subjectivity, nevertheless, it is the objective approach that is favored. Homily differs in that it applies more freely and deliberately subjective approach to the reading to the archetypal material which is the Bible. Persuasion and promotional function, clarity, ornamentality, suggestiveness, but also extralinguistic factors (e.g., official tone, the presence of the addressee) point to the rhetoric side of the homilies, for which didactic (use of definitions, exemplification, enumeration, actualization) and literary style (abundant use of sentence modality, idioms, expressiveness) are characteristic<sup>16</sup>.

Finally, we consider the means by which the rhetorical nature of the homilies is shaped. Their choice depends on what function they perform in the text. Theoretically, any lexical unit can be used in the homily. The notional lexical units form the core of the homilies, but for reasons of emphasis Latinisms, Greekisms, archaisms, occasionalisms, dialectic words, as well as diminutives and euphemism can be used. Everything has its merits and significance in a specific text and for a particular recipient. By all these means of expression, the objective of the preacher is to achieve suggestiveness, to elicit positive emotions in the recipients. Literary means of expression are also used for the same purposes. Of these hyperbole, gradation and repetition are used prominently. Another important feature of the homilies is that they model and illustrate a certain point including ex-

<sup>15</sup> K. Bieleková, *Kompozičná stavba homílie*, “*Studia Philologica*” 13 (2008) p. 96-97.

<sup>16</sup> Bieleková, *Kompozičná stavba homílie*, p. 97.

amples. Comparisons, personal experience, testimonies, anecdotes, fables or allegorical stories, everything is permitted. In short, the preacher must have a rich vocabulary<sup>17</sup>.

All the means of expression used by the preacher are part of his idiolect. It is formed individually and reflects his education, interests, personal inclinations and, of course, it is inspired by the works of other authors on both thematic and literary level. When creating a homily, the preacher naturally reaches for works that inspire him, but at the same time instruct him and serve as a basis for his own testimony. Gnostic poems by Gregory of Nazianzus could be such inspirational texts for preachers and their homilies. However, in order not to leave this claim only at the level of impression or presumption, we will point to the relevance of Gregory's by analyzing his gnostic works. Gregory's moral poems cannot be described as uniform. They are diverse in that they are intended as encouragement (I, II, 1; 2; 3; 6; 8; 9; 10), others are warnings (I, II, 24, 25; 26; 27; 28; 29) or laments (I, II, 12; 14; 15; 16; 37; 38). Gregory does not avoid gnostic poems (I, II, 17, 31; 32; 33; 34) intended solely for moral instruction either. Yet three poems even have an unconventional form of dialogue (I, II, 8; 11; 24)<sup>18</sup>.

The first gnostic poem is Poem I, II, 17 *Variorum vitae generum beatitudines* (The blessings of different paths through life). This gnostic poem can attract the reader by developing the theme of blessings. Verses 1-32 deal with the blessings of specific ways of life and virtues. In them, Gregory praises celibacy, solitude and those who have embarked on a journey seeking Jesus Christ. Verses 33-54 encourage the reader to follow one of the blessed paths of life presented in previous verses. However, Gregory points out that if a life in celibacy brings pride and looks for worldly pleasures, it is worse than a married couple living virtuous lives. Verses 55-66 recall that although there are several paths, only a narrow path gives one's life a true meaning. Thus, in terms of content, the poem is a reference to blessings (Mt 5,3-12; Lk 6,20-23) that Jesus delivered in his speech on a mountain (Mt 5-7) and is thematically suitable for the homilies. The poem is interesting also from the standpoint of the use of a stylistic figure, namely anaphor. Almost every second verse begins with a word *blessed*. As mentioned above, the use of anaphor fulfils two tasks – on the side of the content as well as stylistics. By repetition and accentuation, it achieves emphasis.

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<sup>17</sup> Humbert z Romans, *O formaci kazatelů*, Praha 2016, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> E. Brodňanská – A. Koželová, *Gregor z Nazianzu: morálna poézia*, Prešov 2020, p. 28.

- Požehnaný, kto v pustine žije, s ľuďmi vo svete  
vôbec sa nestýka, no v myšlienkach Boha len má.  
Požehnaný, kto s mnohým hoci sa potýka, mnohé  
nenaháňa, lež srdce celé on Bohu len dal.
- 5 Požehnaný, kto Krista za všetok majetok kúpil,  
majetkom je mu len kríž, nesie čo vysoko ho.  
Požehnaný, kto poctivo získaný majetok vlastniac  
podáva strádajúcim dľaň, čo mu naplnil Boh.  
Požehnaný je život blažených nezadaných, čo
- 10 blízko sú pri čistom Božstve, tela keď zvládli sa striasť.  
Požehnaný, kto zákonom manželstva málo sa poddal,  
hojnejší podiel lásky Kristovi darúva v ňom.  
Požehnaný, kto nad ľuďom vládnuce vedie skrz svoje  
obety sväté a veľké ku Kristu smrteľníkov.
- 15 Požehnaný, kto iných na pastvu božského Krista  
privádza, bezchybný v stáde, hoci len jahňaťom je.  
Požehnaný, kto silnými poryvmi čistej mysle  
nádheru nebeských svetiel dokáže vnímať a zriet'.
- 20 Požehnaný, kto rukami ťažko pracujúc ctí si  
Pána a pre mnohých je príkladom, jak sa má žiť.  
Všetko toto sa stalo náplňou nebeských lisov,  
ktoré našich duší ovocie prijímajú,  
inakšia zdatnosť odvádza zase na iné miesto.  
Pre mnohé spôsoby života mnohé aj príbytky sú.
- 25 Požehnaný, komu veľký Duch nadelil núdzu na vášne,  
ten, koho život na zemi smutný a žalostný je,

Ὁλβιος, ὅστις ἔρημον ἔχει βίον, οὐδ' ἐπίμικτον

Τοῖς χαμαὶ ἐρχομένοις, ἀλλ' ἐθέωσε νόον.

Ὁλβιος, ὃς πολλοῖσι μεμιγμένος, οὐκ ἐπὶ πολλοῖς  
Στροφᾶτ', ἀλλὰ Θεῶ πέμπεν ὅλην κραδίην.

Ὁλβιος, ὃς πάντων κτεάνων ὠνήσατο Χριστὸν,  
Καὶ κτέαρ οἶον ἔχει σταυρὸν, ὃν ὕψι φέρει.

Ὁλβιος, ὃς καθαροῖσιν εἰς κτεάτεσσιν ἀνάσσων,  
Χεῖρα Θεοῦ φέροι τοῖς ἐπιδευομένοις.

Ὁλβιος ἀζυγῶν μακάρων βίος, οἱ Θεότητος  
Εἰσὶ πέλας καθαρῆς, σάρκ' ἀποσεισάμενοι.

Ὁλβιος, ὃς θεσμοῖσι γάμου τυτθὸν ὑποείξας.

Πλειοτέτην Χριστῶ μοῖραν ἔρωτος ἄγει.



Ὀλβιος, ὃς λαοῖο φέρων κράτος, εὐαγέεσσι  
 Καὶ μεγάλαις θυσίαις Χριστὸν ἄγει χθονίοις.  
 Ὀλβιος, ὅστις ἐὼν ποιμνης τέκος, οὐρανίοιο  
 Χώραν ἄγει Χριστοῦ, θρέμμα τελειότατον.  
 Ὀλβιος, ὃς καθαροῖο νόου μεγάλῃσιν ἔρωαῖς,  
 Οὐρανίων φαέων δέρκεται ἀγλαΐην.  
 Ὀλβιος, ὃς χεیرهσσι πολυκμήτοισιν Ἄνακτα  
 Τίει, καὶ πολλοῖς ἐστι νόμος βιότου.  
 Πάντα τάδ' οὐρανίων πληρώματα ἔπλετο ληνῶν,  
 Αἱ καρποῦ ψυχῶν δέκτρια ἡμετέρων,  
 Ἄλλην ἀλλοίης ἀρετῆς ἐπὶ χώραν ἀγούσης.  
 Πολλαὶ γὰρ πολλῶν εἰσι μοναὶ βιότων.  
 Ὀλβιος, ὃν πτωχὸν παθέων μέγα Πνεῦμ' ἀνέδειξεν·  
 Ὅστις ἔχει ζωὴν ἐνθάδε πενθαλέην· (I, II, 17, 1-26; PG 37, 781-783).

These verses, or a part thereof, may be used when writing a homily. Gregory speaks to the reader in a way he or she understands. He explains the blessings by including minute stories inspired by life, which is in fact one of the forms of homilies. Some of the verses could even be seen as a personal prayer (Blessed are those, of the pure mind, who can perceive the beauty of celestial lights). Simultaneously, all verses underline the gnostic nature of the poem. The wisdom of life and the moralizing tone of Gregory of Nazianzus are intertwined.

Poem I, II, 31 *Distichae sententiae* (Two-verse statements) are defined by ethical teachings. They relate to themes that are symptomatic of Gregory's works: gluttony and moderation, wealth and poverty, artificiality and nature, marriage and virginity, virtues and vices. Gregory's source is primarily the Bible, but there are statements that can be attributed to ancient Greek authors as well. They share the authorship of an archaic aphorism γνῶθι σεαυτὸν (gnōthi seauton – know thyself).

Gregory points to it in the 7th verse:

Poznaj sám seba,<sup>19</sup> najdrahší, odkial' si, ako si vznikol,  
 prvotnú krásu totiž dosiahneš poľahky tak.

Γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, ἄριστε, πόθεν καὶ ὅστις ἐτύχθης,

ῥεῖά κεν ὧδε τύχης κάλλεος ἀρχετύπου. (I, II, 31, 7-8; PG 37, 911)

This verse provides the possibility to incorporate Greekism into the homily, which the composition of the homily permits as means of at-

<sup>19</sup> A Delphic maxim *Gnōthi seauton*.

tracting attention of the recipient. From the point of view of content, Gregory's poem is an inventory of ideas, reflections on life as well as wisdoms of life. Virtually every two-verse can motivate the recipient to reflect and contemplate on, to be a theme a sermon. Each two-verse is a separate gnome and is usable individually, e.g., as a homily motto or as a part of a longer poem. As an example, we select verses with allusions to the Bible:

- Zlato sa totiž skúša vo vyhni, dobrý muž v strastiach;<sup>20</sup>  
 neporušenosť je často omnoho ťažšia než bôľ.  
 Poľahky zriekne sa veľkého Boha, kto zrieka sa Syna;  
**kto ťa zbožnosti učí, máš si ho otca jak ctíť.**
- 55 **Červy stravujú všetko;**<sup>21</sup> ty to, čo máš, nenechaj hrobom –  
 priaznivé meno mať, to je pri pohrebe česť.  
 Χρυσὸς μὲν χοάνοισι δαμάζεται, ἄλγεσι δ' ἐσθλός·  
 Ἄλγος ἀπημοσύνης πολλάκι κουφότερον.  
 Ῥεῖά κεν ἀρνήσαιτο Θεὸν μέγαν, ὃς γενετῆρα·  
 Ἴσθι δὲ καὶ γενέτην ὡς πατέρ' εὐσεβίης.  
 Σῆτες ἔδουσιν ἅπαντα· λίπης τὰ σὰ μηδὲ τάφοισιν·  
 Ἐξοδίη τιμῆ, δεξιὸν οὖνομ' ἔχειν. (I, II, 31, 51-56; PG 37, 914-915).

This gnomic poem is typical for Gregory by its ending – the final verses draw attention to the Trinity.

- Pod' teda, celý svet zanechaj tuto, jeho tiež bremä,  
 60 k životu nebeskému rozostri plachtu ty hneď.  
 Všetky vždy najlepšie diela, hodné čo Boha sú, dokonč,  
 ale o Trojicu najviac zo všetkých starať sa hľad'.  
 Δεῦρ' ἄγε, κόσμον ἅπαντα καὶ ἄχθεα τῆδ' ἀπολείψας,  
 Ἴστίον ἐς ζωὴν οὐρανίην πέτασον.  
 Πάντα μὲν αἰὲν ἄριστα θεοπρεπὲς ἔργα τελείσθω,  
 Ἡ δὲ Τριάς πάντων ἔξοχά σοι μελέτω. (I, II, 31, 59-62; PG 37, 915).

In every difficult situation, as several of his poems prove, Gregory turns to the Trinity especially when revealing his human weakness or

<sup>20</sup> See. Sir 2,5. Since gold is tested in the fire, and the chosen in the furnace of humiliation.

<sup>21</sup> See. Sir 7,17. Be very humble, since the recompense for the godless is fire and worms; Mk 9,46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

helplessness. This, too, is one of the hallmarks of homilies, namely the encouragement of the recipient and his/her assurance in positive feelings. Gregory's gnomic poem possesses this characteristic.

Poem I, II, 33 *Tetrastichae sententiae* is the next in a series of Gregory of Nazianzus' gnomic poems. Unlike poems I, II, 312 and 32, which bear the Greek name Γνώμαι (*Gnómai*; Statements), this is called Γνωμολογία (*Gnómologia*) – a collection of gnomes. In this sense, the term *gnomologia* has been in use only since the Middle Ages. Before that, the word defined merely gnomic style, and from the Hellenist period it was understood as gnomelike – a brief statement having a generally valid ethical content by a wise person<sup>22</sup>. Maxims in four verse stanzas represent Gregory's symbolic almanac. It is instructive and its common theme are the common situations of life. The author portrays alternately common situations related to everyday life, as well as serious topics that one argues, contemplates and deliberates about constantly. In these four verse stanzas, Gregory therefore gives the reader a moral compendium for every day. In the context of the homily the poems are interesting from the point of view of the syntactic structure. The structure without specific connotations that objectively states facts is the traditional theme/rheme organization of the sentence. By changing and disrupting this sentence order, the sentences acquire emotional coloring and emphasis. In such cases, the preacher would first say the points to be highlighted and accented, while the highlighting could be done for various reasons – because of the information itself, or because of pragmatic reasons. The recipient can be alerted by inverse statements or peculiarities in word order e.g., placement of the verb at the end of a sentence, attached sentence constituents, etc. Gregory's verses in Slovak translation precisely offer such syntactic singularities. As an example, we could use is the whole of Gregory's poem, therefore what follows are but a few representative passages:

- 20 Ved' ak je svetlo toľké, koľká bude tma?  
 Je skutok bez slov viac, než slovo nečinné.  
 Zdvihnutý nebol nikdy nik bez života,  
 Εἰ γὰρ τὸ φῶς τοιοῦτον, τὸ σκότος πόσον;  
 Ἄφωνον ἔργον κρεῖσσον ἀπράκτου λόγου.  
 Βίου μὲν οὐδεὶς πρόποθ' ὑψώθη δίχα· (I, II, 33, 20-22; PG 37, 929)

<sup>22</sup> T. Víték, *Sedm mudrců a jejich výroky*, Praha 2010, p. 123.

- 65 Pred milých piesní šteklivými obratmi,  
 pred slovom zlým si voskom uši uzavri,  
 no otvor ich pred pekným, dobrým zakaždým.  
 Sú blízko seba vravieť, konat', poúvať'.  
 Κηρῶ τὰ ὦτα φράσσει πρὸς φαύλους λόγους,  
 Ὠδῶν τε τερπνῶν ἐκμελῆ λυγίσματα·  
 Τοῖς δ' αὖ καλοῖς τε κάγαθοῖς ἀεὶ δίδου.  
 Εἰπεῖν, ἀκοῦσαι, καὶ δρᾶσαι, μικρὸν μέσον. (I, II, 33, 65-68; PG 37, 933).
- 80 Mrav zronený je lepší, ako hýrivý.  
 Hľaď pokladať za krásu mysle spôsobnosť'.  
 Nie tú, čo kreslia ruky, či čas uberá,  
 lež mysle rozvážnej, čo pohľad spozná ju.  
 Za hanbu nespôsobnosť mysle považuj.  
 Κρεῖσσον κατηφές ἦθος, ἢ τεθρυμμένον.  
 Κάλλος νόμιζε τὴν φρενῶν εὐκοσμίαν,  
 Οὐχ ὁ γράφουσι χεῖρες, ἢ λύει χρόνος,  
 Ὅψει δ' ὅπερ νοῦ σώφρονος γνωρίζεται·  
 Αἴσχος δ' ὁμοίως τὴν φρενῶν ἀκοσμίαν. (I, II, 33, 80-84; PG 37, 934).

Like two or four-verse maxims (I, II, 31; 33), *Definitiones minus exactae* is characterized by biblical and philosophical content. Although all moral poetry is Gregory's testimony, this gnomic poem is even more personal in tone than usual, which gives it authenticity. This characteristic is natural and desirable for homilies. Here, too, Gregory can serve as an inspiration. For illustration purposes we include verses in which Gregory of Nazianzus reveals his weakness as well as his willingness to fight vices. Such affinity is likeable and invites the recipients to espouse the author's attitudes:

- Kam chcem len pohnúť sa, je vôľou slobodnou.  
 Ak hnutie rázne je, ho volám horlivosť;  
 no neochotné tyraníou vôle zveň.  
 40 Viem, úsudok je vecí rozoberanie.  
 A túžba chuťou je na dobré či na zlé.  
 Ἡ δ' οἷ θέλω κίνησις, ἐξουσιότης.  
 Τὴν σύντονον δὲ καὶ προσθυμίαν λέγω·  
 Τὸ δὲ ἀκούσιον, βουλήσεως τυραννίδα.  
 Λογισμὸν οἶδα πραγμάτων διαίρεσιν.  
 Πόθος δ' ὄρεξις ἢ καλῶν ἢ μὴ καλῶν. (I, II, 34, 37-41; PG 37, 948).

Analysis of gnomic poetry and homilies shows that they are compatible. It follows, that the didactic intent of the gnome can naturally permeate homilies. Not only the content, but also the formal aspect of gnomic poetry is compatible with this type of texts. Didactic intent, moral teachings, sharing and spreading of the wisdom of life by means that are accessible to a large number of recipients, such as the use of personal examples and experience, is the goal of both gnomic poetry and homilies. The gnomic poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus, which belongs to his writings on morals, can be inspiring for writing homilies. The timelessness of his work, which is largely due to the intimacy and openness, amazes recipients even today. Many of Gregory's words may be included in the homilies. On the other hand, it is also true that the moral poetry of one of the church's fathers, dating to the 4th century, cannot aspire to a status of a bestseller. Nevertheless, the power of the homiletic texts could help the spread and reception of Gregory's poetry and of his ideas. Gregory's work can appeal to today's recipient through its emotional charge as well as general truths that it conveys. The spread of Gregory's writings and the interaction between gnomic and homiletic works could be moreover aided by the sainthood of the author.

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