Can We Hear the Spoken Words of Gregory of Nazianzus?

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Summary

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, of great repute in the Orthodox Church as a theologian, was also an outstanding preacher whose style was honed by some of the greatest teachers of rhetoric of his day. We have scripts of forty-four of his homilies (orations), issued to posterity from his retirement. Their often complex style and thought has led some scholars to deduce that he heavily reworked them and to question whether we can any longer hear what he actually said. Yet his powerful employment of rhetorical figures, particularly in his festal orations, but also elsewhere, and his frequent use of direct speech to individuals, groups, or his whole audience, suggest that here at least we can hear his actual spoken words.

Keywords

Gregory of Nazianzus – preacher – orations – rhetoric – sophists – figures of thought – figures of speech – direct speech

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-c. 390), one of the ‘Cappadocian Fathers’, was accorded the title ‘the Theologian’ by the eastern church for his classic exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity. He was also an outstanding preacher. Born into a Christian family in Cappadocia, he received a fine classical education. At Athens he was taught rhetoric by the Christian Prohaeresius and the pagan Himerius,¹ leading exponents of the Second Sophistic. This training,

1 Socrates, *H.E.* 4.26.6; *Sokrates. Kirchengeschichte*, ed. by G.C. Hansen (GCS, NF 1), Berlin, 2011, p. 260.

finding fertile soil in his logical mind, his sensitive nature, and a certain dramatic flair, produced in him such oratorical powers that he has been called “a Christian Demosthenes” and recognised as “the most important figure in the synthesis of classical rhetoric and Christianity”.² After his training he stayed on in Athens for a while teaching rhetoric before returning home where, after briefly displaying his oratorical talents to admirers, it seems he was baptised and joined the small monastic community founded by his friend Basil. The contemplative life drew him then, and subsequently he retreated to it after every crisis in his life. At Christmas 361, against his wishes, he was ordained presbyter by his father to assist him in ministry at Nazianzus. In 372 his father joined with Basil, by then bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to persuade him to accept consecration as bishop of Sasima for the furtherance of the Nicene cause; in fact, for various reasons he never took up that charge, preferring instead to serve as assistant bishop to his aged father in Nazianzus. His father died in 374 and, the following year, Gregory left Nazianzus to join the community of Thecla in Seleucia. There he stayed until, in 379, he was invited to shepherd the small Nicene congregation in Constantinople. He lived in his cousin Theodosia's villa, dedicating part of it as the church of Anastasis.

Arianism had dominated the imperial capital for forty years and Gregory's arrival was at first barely noticed. His forthright trinitarian preaching, however, increasingly attracted attention and after the emperor Theodosius, an avowed Nicene, entered the city in late 380, soon Gregory was placed on the throne of the basilica of the Holy Apostles. His reign was to prove brief as, in the face of opposition at the Council of Constantinople in 381, he resigned. Yet his short ministry ensured the victory of Nicene Christianity in the eastern empire. Half his extant sermons were delivered in Constantinople. After his resignation he took up oversight of the church in Nazianzus for two years before withdrawing to contemplative seclusion on his family estate, where he composed many lines of elegant verse lamenting the tragedies of his life, wrote many letters and, it seems, edited his sermons for posterity before his death in 390 or 391.

Gregory's forty-four extant sermons³ are generally known as ‘orations’ because of their highly rhetorical nature. They are of differing types: some are apologetic explaining his actions, some panegyric (including four funeral orations), some are doctrinal discourses (the most famous being *Orationes* 27–31 on the Godhead), several celebrate festivals of the church, two are invectives against the emperor Julian ‘the Apostate’, and one is expository. But if only one

2 G.A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, Princeton, 1983, p. 215.

3 The corpus of Gregory's sermons is numbered 1–45, but *Oratio* 35 is widely held to be not from him.

actually expounds Scripture, all are shot through with numerous scriptural quotations and allusions. Most end with a doxology.

Gregory's heritage was so valued by the Byzantine Church that his works are quoted more often in its literature than any other Christian source except the Bible. From the ninth century, sixteen of his orations were allocated in the Byzantine calendar for public reading on various holy days. His sermons were translated into Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Georgian, Latin, Slavonic, and Syrian, but their very popularity has proved a hazard for establishing their original text. Today researchers are fortunate to have critical editions of *Orationes* 1-12 and 20-43 in nine volumes of *Sources Chrétiennes*.⁴ For the rest there is the text of Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*.⁵ All orations have now been translated into English.

But how far do the Greek texts we have represent the actual words Gregory spoke? "Their very complexity of style and thought," declares Daley, "suggests at least a heavy reworking, and we have no way of knowing which, or which parts, were delivered orally in their present form."⁶ Meredith believes that their careful composition for reading or recital accounts for their lack of liveliness compared with the homilies of John Chrysostom.⁷ But Gregory's sermons vary so much in nature and content that no such sweeping judgements are satisfactory.

Some orations' very length suggests that what we have is an amplification of the original homily. *Oratio* 2 (117 paragraphs) constitutes not only an explanation of why Gregory fled after his ordination in 362,⁸ but also an extended account of the challenges and needs of worthy preachers. *Oratio* 4 (124 paragraphs) with *Oratio* 5 (42 paragraphs), Gregory's invectives against the emperor Julian, appear to have been *intended* for circulation in written form.⁹

4 Grégoire de Nazianze. *Discours*, ed. and trans. by J. Bernardi, G. Lafonatrne, J. Mossay, P. Gallay, M. Jourjon, C. Moreschini, and M.-A. Calvet-Sebasti; SC, 247, 250, 270, 284, 309, 318, 358, 384, and 405, Paris, 1978-1995.

5 PG, 35-36.

6 B.E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (The Early Church Fathers), London-New York, 2006, p. 62.

7 A. Meredith, "The Three Cappadocians on Beneficence: A Key to Their Audiences," in: *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. by M.B. Cunningham and P. Allen (New History of the Sermon, 1), Leiden, 1998, p. 91. He is speaking here of the homilies of all three Cappadocian Fathers.

8 Remodelled and amplified, it seems, following Gregory's later retreat from Constantinople in 382, according to J. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, Crestwood, N.Y., 2001, p. 106.

9 They bear the title *steliteutikoi* "as if they were to be inscribed on stone as a public indictment against Julian," according to Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric*, p. 221. They have no concluding doxologies.

Oratio 14 (40 paragraphs), ‘On the Love of the Poor’, Meredith believes to be a conflation of several homilies;¹⁰ as it stands he thinks it would have taken ninety minutes to deliver. *Oratio* 43 (82 paragraphs), ‘On Saint Basil the Great’, he estimates would have taken little short of three hours to deliver. Many believe it to be an amplified version of Gregory’s original panegyric. In composing his Christian funeral orations Gregory seems to have adapted the basic pattern of *Epitaphios logos* of Menander Rhetor passed on to him by Himerius.¹¹ Gregory’s funeral oration for his father (*Oratio* 18) is also lengthy (43 paragraphs) and McGuckin describes the text we have as “refined into a literary masterpiece” from the original eulogy.¹² If inordinate length then suggests later reworking, relative brevity may generally characterise an undoctored sermon.

Since sustained theological argumentation would appear more appropriate to a lecture than to a service of worship, it is to be doubted whether *Orationes* 27–31, a classic exposition of the trinitarian Godhead, were delivered as homilies.¹³

But there are two further elements within Gregory’s orations that do have the ring of the preacher: (1) the powerful use of rhetorical figures, and (2) direct address in the form of comments or questions to specific individuals or groups present or even to his whole audience.

1 The Powerful Use of Rhetorical Figures

The sophists incorporated into their speeches many literary figures to attract and persuade their hearers. As a Christian Gregory saw little merit in secular rhetoric *per se*,¹⁴ but in practice he recognised its value, Christianized with bib-

10 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, p. 145, calls it probably “a refined and polished form of that initially preached” and he suggests it was “the church’s official money-raiser for the Caesarean Leprosarium ... delivered in several places”.

11 See M.R.P. McGuire, “The Christian Funeral Oration” in: *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*, trans. by L.P. McCauley et al., (FC, 22), Washington, D.C., 1953.

12 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, p. 224.

13 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, p. 278, calls them ‘evening lectures’. That neither *Orat.* 28 nor 30 have doxologies seems to confirm this.

14 See for instance the statement in Gregory Nazianzus, *De sua uita* (*Poema* 2.1.11) lines 1240–1246; *Gregor von Nazianz. De vita sua. Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, ed. by C. Jungck (Wissenschaftliche Kommentare zu griechischen und lateinischen Schriftstelen), Heidelberg, 1974, p. x: Χωρίς τὰ Μυσῶν καὶ Φρυγῶν ὀρίσματα, | Χωρίς τὰ τῶν ἔξωθεν, τῶν τ’ ἐμῶν λόγῶν. | Τῶν μὲν γάρ εἰσι πρὸς ἐπίδειξιν οἱ λόγοι | Ἐν μειρακίσκων συλλόγοις καὶ

lical instead of classical allusions, to communicate Christian truth. No other church father decorated his sermons with so many figures. Kennedy says of his orations:

In form and style they resemble the speeches of the sophists but greatly surpass them in the power of thought and intensity of conviction. The Christian orator had an important new message for the world; he had something to say that the sophists could not match in their nostalgia for the fading Hellenic tradition.¹⁵

Gregory frequently uses both figures of thought and figures of language (speech).¹⁶ Amongst figures of thought he constantly uses exclamations and rhetorical questions, and he finds paradox (oxymoron) very valuable particularly to express the mystery of the incarnation. For example, early in his homily 'On the Theophany' (*Oratio* 38) he declares:

I shall cry out the power of this day: the fleshless is made flesh, the Word becomes material, the invisible is seen, the intangible is touched, the timeless has a beginning, the Son of God becomes Son of Man – "Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, the same also for all ages!"¹⁷

Later in this homily, after introductory exclamations, he restates this more reflectively:

πλάσματος, | 'Εν οἷς μέγ' οὐδὲν ἢ ἀτυχεῖν ἢ τυγχάνειν | Σκιας – σκιάς γὰρ οὐδὲν εὐσθενέστερα | 'Ημῖν δ' – ἀληθεύειν γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ σκοπὸς ... ("The borders of the Mysians and Phrygians are far apart | and so too are my words and those of the pagans. | For their rhetoric aims at display | and is full of fictitious arguments which impress young boys. | To them it does not matter whether one hits or misses | the shadow – for their fictions have no more substance than a shadow. | But as for me, my aim is to speak the truth ...") English translation in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Autobiographical Poems*, trans. by C. White (Cambridge Medieval Classics, 6), Cambridge, 1996.

15 G.A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, Princeton, 1994, pp. 261-2.

16 Quintillian, *Inst. or.* 9.1.17, says that, though some do not make this distinction, most authors agree: a figure of thought is "of the mind, feeling or conceptions" (*mentis uel sensus uel sententiarum*), while a figure of speech is "of words, diction, expression, language or style" (*uerborum uel dictionis uel elocutionis uel sermonis uel orationis*); we conceive ideas before expressing them in words.

17 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 38.2; SC, 358.106: 'Εγὼ βοήσομαι τῆς ἡμέρας τὴν δύναμιν. 'Ο ἄσαρκος σαρκούται, ὁ Λόγος παχύωεται, ὁ ἀόρατος ὁράται, ὁ ἀναφῆς ψηλαφᾶται, ὁ ἄχρονος ἄρχεται, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου γίνεται, 'Ιησοῦς Χριστός, χθὲς καὶ σήμερον, ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. English translation in Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*. See Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 9.2.23.

O new mixture! O unexpected blending! He who is has come to be, the uncreated one is created, the limitless one is limited, through the mediation of a rational soul standing between divinity and the coarseness of flesh. He who is rich becomes poor – for he becomes poor with my flesh, that I might become rich with his godhead! He who is full has emptied himself – for he emptied himself of his own glory for a while that I might partake of his fullness.¹⁸

Another figure of thought Gregory delights to use is *mimesis*. Through this device people are encouraged to imitate and identify themselves with people and events from the past. It too was an inheritance from the sophists.¹⁹ We find examples in *Orationes* 38 and 45. In the first of these listeners are called to become participants in the nativity story:

Right now ... accept his [Christ's] conception and leap with joy – if not like John in the womb, then like David when the ark came to rest. Revere the census, by which you were enrolled in heaven; be in awe of that birth, by which you were released from the bonds of your birth Run with the star; with the Magi bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh – as for a king, for God, and for one dead for you! With the shepherds give glory, with the angels sing praise, with the archangels dance! Let there be a common festival for the powers of heaven and earth! For I am persuaded that they, too, are rejoicing and holding festival along with us today²⁰

18 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 38.13; SC, 358.134: "Ὡς τῆς καινῆς μίξεως, ὡς τῆς παραδόξου κράσεως. 'Ὁ ὢν γίνεται καὶ ὁ ἄκτιστος κτίζεται καὶ ὁ ἀχώρητος χωρεῖται, διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς νοεράς μεσιτευσούσης θεότητι καὶ σαρκὸς παχυότητι. Καὶ ὁ πλουτίζων πτωχεύει· πτωχεύει γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν σάρκα ἵν' ἐγὼ πλουτήσω τὴν αὐτοῦ θεότητα. Καὶ ὁ πλήρης κενοῦται· κενοῦται γὰρ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ δόξης ἐπὶ μικρόν, ἵν' ἐγὼ τῆς ἐκείνου μεταλάβω πληρότητος. Modified translation from Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*.

19 Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.2.58–59.

20 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 38.17; SC, 358.142–144: Νυνὶ δέ μοι δέξαι τὴν κύησιν καὶ προσκίρτησον· εἴ τοι καὶ μὴ ὡς Ἰωάννης ἀπὸ γαστροῦ, ἀλλ' ὡς Δαβὶδ ἐπὶ τῇ καταπαύσει τῆς κιβωτοῦ. Καὶ τὴν ἀπογραφὴν αἰδέσθητι, δι' ἣν εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀπεγράφης, καὶ τὴν γέννησιν σεβάσθητι, δι' ἣν ἐλύθης τῶν δεσμῶν τῆς γεννήσεως Μετὰ τοῦ ἀστέρος δράμε, καὶ μετὰ Μάγων δωροφόρησον, χρυσὸν καὶ λίβανον καὶ σμύρναν, ὡς βασιλεῖ καὶ ὡς Θεῷ καὶ ὡς διὰ σέ νεκρῷ. Μετὰ ποιμένων δόξασον, μετὰ ἀγγέλων ὕμνησον, μετὰ ἀρχαγγέλων χόρεθσον. Ἔστω κοινὴ πανήγυρις οὐρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων θνῶμεων. Πείθομαι γὰρ κάκεινας συναγαλλέσθαι καὶ συμπανηγυρίζειν σήμερον. Modified translation from Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*.

In the second case, Gregory's last paschal sermon, listeners are called to see their sufferings as a means of imitating and sharing in Christ's suffering on the cross:

Let us sacrifice ourselves to God, or rather offer sacrifice every day and in every movement. Let us accept all things for the Word. By sufferings let us imitate his suffering, by blood let us exalt his blood, let us willingly climb up on the cross. Sweet are the nails, even if very painful. For to suffer with Christ and for Christ is preferable to feasting with others.²¹

Another figure of thought Gregory uses is *anamnesis*. This term is used by Plato and others to mean 'calling to mind, reminiscence',²² but for Gregory it involves participation in what is remembered. Harrison says it is "re-presentation of God's saving works so that the worshipers can participate in these events as present realities and thereby receive the eschatological salvation, new life and sanctification divinely accomplished through them."²³ This enriched meaning appears to come ultimately from Judaism.²⁴ Let us look at two examples. In Gregory's early Easter oration we are drawn first into the drama of Israel's escape from Egypt then into sharing in Christ's crucifixion, burial and resurrection:

Yesterday the lamb was slaughtered, and the doorposts were anointed, and Egypt lamented the firstborn, and the destroyer passed over us, and the seal was awesome and venerable, and we were walled in by the precious blood. Today we have totally escaped Egypt and Pharaoh the harsh despot and the burdensome overseers, and we have been freed from the clay and the brick-making. And nobody hinders us from celebrating a

21 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 45.23; PG, 36.656: ... ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς θύσωμεν τῷ θεῷ· μᾶλλον δὲ, θύωμεν καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν καὶ πᾶσαν κίνησιν. Πάντα ὑπὲρ τοῦ Λόγου δεχώμεθα, πάθει τοῦ πάθος μιμώμεθα, αἵματι τὸ αἷμα σεμνύνωμεν, ἐπὶ τον σταυρὸν ἀνίωμεν πρόθυμοι. Γλυκεῖς οἱ ἦλοι, καὶ εἰ λιάν ὁδυνηροί. Τὸ γὰρ μετὰ Χριστοῦ πάσχειν, καὶ ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ μετ' ἄλλων τρυφᾶν αἰρετώτερον. English translation in *Festal Orations [of] St Gregory of Nazianzus*, trans. by N.V. Harrison, Crestwood, N.Y., 2008.

22 E.g., Plato, *Phd.* 72e and 92d; and Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.2.106.

23 Harrison, *Festal Orations*, pp. 24-25.

24 See the interesting discussion of "History and Memory" in ch. 5, *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's HAGGADAH*, Hebrew and English text with new essays and commentary by J. Sacks, New York, 2006. Sacks starts by quoting from the Mishnah tractate *Pesachim*: "In every generation, each of us must see ourselves as if we personally had come out from Egypt, as it is said, 'It is because of this that the Lord acted for me when I came out of Egypt.'"

feast of exodus for the Lord our God Yesterday I was crucified with Christ, today I am glorified with him; yesterday I died with him, today I am made alive with him; yesterday I was buried with him, today I rise with him.²⁵

Again, at the opening of Gregory's Christmas address listeners are challenged to respond personally to Christ's birth:

Christ is born – give glory! Christ comes from heaven – rise up! Christ is on the earth – be exalted! "Sing to the Lord, all the earth!"²⁶

Gregory also frequently employs 'Gorgianic' figures of speech including *anaphora* (beginning a series of statements or questions with the same word),²⁷ *homoiooteleuton* (ending a series of words or phrases with the same syllables),²⁸ and *parison* (*isocolon*) (parallelism in the number of syllables in successive phrases).²⁹ *Anaphora* is evident in the opening of *Oratio* 1.4 quoted above in English; the Greek reveals Gregory has combined this figure with another, alliteration:

Χθές συνεσταυρούμην Χριστῷ, σήμερον συνδοξάζομαι· χθές συνενεκρούμην, συζωοποιούμαι σήμερον· χθές συνεθαπτόμην, σήμερον συνεγείρομαι.

Ruether says further that this use of *σήμερον* at the beginning of one phrase, then at the end of another, then again at the beginning of a third, is an instance of a verbal pattern called *climax*.³⁰ Elsewhere Gregory uses *anaphora* in a series of rhetorical questions to extol the virtues of his dead sister Gorgonia:

25 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 1. 3-4; SC, 247.74-76: Χθές ὁ ἀμνὸς ἐσφάζετο καὶ ἐχρίοντο αἱ φλῖαι καὶ ἐθρήνησεν Αἴγυπτος τὰ πρωτότοκα καὶ ἡμᾶς παρήλθεν ὁ ὀλοθρεύων καὶ ἡ σφραγὶς φοβερά καὶ αἰδέσιμος, καὶ τῷ τιμίῳ αἵματι ἐτειχίσθημεν. Σήμερον καθαρῶς ἐφύγομεν Αἴγυπτον καὶ Φαραῶ τὸν πικρὸν δεσπότην καὶ τοὺς βαρεῖς ἐπστάτας, καὶ τοῦ πληοῦ καὶ τῆς πλινθεΐας ἡλευθερώμεθα, καὶ οὐδεὶς ὁ κωλύσων ἡμᾶς ἐορτάζειν Κυρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν ἐορτὴν ἐξ ὁδίων ... Χθές συνεσταυρούμην Χριστῷ, σήμερον συνδοξάζομαι· χθές συνενεκρούμην, συζωοποιούμαι σήμερον· χθές συνεθαπτόμην, σήμερον συνεγείρομαι. Modified translation from Harrison, *Festal Orations*.

26 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 38.1; SC, 358.104: Χριστὸς γεννᾶται, δοξάσατε· Χριστὸς ἐξ οὐρανῶν, ἀπαντήσατε· Χριστὸς ἐπὶ γῆς, ὑψώθητε. "Αἰσατε τῷ Κυρίῳ, πάντα ἡ γῆ. Modified translation from Harrison, *Festal Orations*.

27 Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.3.30.

28 Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.3.77-79.

29 Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.3.80.

30 R.R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, Oxford, 1969, p. 63. She uses the spelling 'klimax'. See Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.3.54-57.

Who was more worthy to appear in public? But who appeared less frequently ...? Who knew better than she the limits of both gravity and joy ...? Who was her equal in knowing how to temper the eye ...? Who kept a better watch over the doors of her hearing? Who was so open to the words of God ...? Who has imposed such order on her own lips?³¹

In his festal oration on baptism, Gregory introduces a series of no less than nine biblical incidents with the word φῶς, the first three being:

φῶς μὲν ἦν ἐκ πυρός τῷ Μωϋσει φανταζόμενον, ἥνικα τὴν βάρυν ἐδαιε μὲν, οὐ κατέδαιε δέ ... φῶς δέ, τὸ ἐν στύλῳ πυρός ὁδηγήσαν τὸν Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἡμερῶσαν τὴν ἔρημον· φῶς τὸ Ἡλίαν ἀρπάσαν ἐν τῷ τοῦ πυρός ἄρματι καὶ μὴ συμφλέξαν τὸν ἀρπαζόμενον³²

He might have learnt to use *anaphora* from Himerius who was clearly adept at its use.³³ At the beginning of *Oratio* 38.2 Gregory brings *anaphora*, *parison*, and *homoioteleuton* together, likening Christ's incarnation to Israel's exodus from Egypt:

πάλιν τὸ σκότος λύεται, πάλιν τὸ φῶς ὑφίσταται, πάλιν Αἴγυπτος σκότῳ κολάζεται, πάλιν Ἰσραὴλ στύλῳ φωτίζεται.³⁴

Ruether comments, "In this example of parison we notice a contrast of sense, darkness against light, Egypt against the promised land. This device of antithetical parison, which combined parallelism of structure and contrast of meaning, was a favourite with the sophists."³⁵

As 38.2 nears its end *parison* and *homoioteleuton* again appear together in a terse statement of those who protest against the incarnation:

31 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 8.9; SC, 405.262-264: Τίς μὲν ἦν φαίνεσθαι μάλλον ἀξία; Τίς δὲ ἦττον ἐφάνη ...; Τίς μάλλον ἔγνω μέτρα κατηφείας τε καὶ φαιδρότητος ...; Τίς μὲν οὕτως ὀφθαλμὸν ἐσωφρόνισεν; ... Τίς μάλλον ἀκοῇ θύρας ἐπέθηκεν; Τίς δὲ τοῖς θείοις λόγοις ἠνέωξε ...; Τίς τάξιν οὕτως ἐστείλατο χειλεσιν; English translation in Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*.

32 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 40.6; SC, 358.206-208.

33 For instance, in his lament for his dead son Rufinus, Himerius begins a series of clauses with τίς (*Oratio* 8.7); elsewhere he again uses τίς to extol the virtues of Musonius (*Oratio* 39.15).

34 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 38.2; SC, 358.104.

35 Ruether, *Gregory*, p. 66.

Ἰουδαῖοι σκανδαλιζέσθωσαν, Ἕλληνες διαγελάτωσαν αἰρετικοὶ γλωσσαλγείτωσαν³⁶

Gregory indeed combines *parison* and *homoioioteleuton* so frequently that Norden calls this “the signature of his style”.³⁷ Himerius too was adept at combining such figures.³⁸

Gregory’s constant use of figures of thought and speech, often couched in short, sharp, rhythmic phrases was then, in large measure, a heritage from the sophists. Norden characterises his style as a ‘moderate Asianism’ contrasting with the more measured Attic style of Gregory’s contemporary Libanius.³⁹ It generated such excitement that his audience could break into applause (*Orat.* 42.24 and 26), and Gregory complained he was besieged for orations at every festival (*Orat.* 19.1-4). Such a style was intended for the ear, not the eye, and so there can be little doubt that, when we find it in the scripts of his sermons we are encountering his actual spoken words.

2 Direct Address of Comments and Questions to People Present

Another notable element in so many of Gregory’s orations is direct speech, personal comments or questions to his audience or someone within it “making for liveliness and focussing of attention”.⁴⁰ Let us consider some examples. In *Oratio* 3 he complains that such a small congregation has come to hear him on his return from self-inflicted exile and says that, in his indignation, he nearly withheld his sermon. In *Oratio* 12, his first sermon to the church at Nazianzus after he declined to take up ministry in Sasima, he addresses first his elderly father asking whether his weakness is physical or spiritual (12.3), and then speaks to the whole congregation (particularly it seems the monks present⁴¹) asking them to support him in his ministry to the church (12.4). Again, in *Oratio* 16 he speaks personally to his father, dumb in the face of a succession of disasters that have struck the local area, asking him to offer some words of

36 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 38.2; SC, 358.106.

37 E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, vol. 2, Leipzig, 1909, p. 566.

38 How powerfully, for instance, Himerius, *Orat.* 41.3, uses *anaphora* and *homoioioteleuton* in his praise of Constantinople! ὦ τὸν ἐλεύθερον πυρσὸν ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν ἀνάψασα· ὦ τὰς εὐτρεχεῖς ὠδῖνας καὶ κυησαμένη καὶ λύσασα· ὦ κρείττονα τόκον καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς μητροπόλεως φήνασα·

39 *Die antike Kunstprosa* 2.564 and 566. I acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of Helmut Wilhelm of Lichtenberg, Berlin in translating Norden’s work here.

40 Ruether, *Gregory*, p. 74.

41 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, p. 205.

comfort to his people (16.4, cf. 20); later he calls upon the whole congregation to beg God's mercy and to amend their lives (16.13). *Oratio* 19 was commissioned by Gregory's fellow student Julian, now an imperial tax assessor. He is present and Gregory tells him to be just in his assessment of taxes for Nazianzus (19.12); later he enquires what Julian is writing down (19.16).⁴² In *Oratio* 21, in the course of his eulogy in memory of Athanasius, Gregory asks Athanasius' admirers present to assist him by each naming a virtue of the great man (21.10).⁴³ In *Oratio* 25, as he begins his eulogy addressed to Maximus the Cynic, Gregory says to him, "Come, stand at my side near the holy objects and this Eucharistic table as I celebrate through them the mystery of deification."⁴⁴ It is noticeable that this whole oration is free from sarcastic comments, an indication surely that it was not subsequently revised in the light of Maximus' treachery.⁴⁵

In *Oratio* 34 Gregory addresses the sailors of the Egyptian corn fleet who have bypassed the Arian basilicas in Constantinople and come to worship instead at his little church of Anastasis. He says they have not only brought with them physical food but the spiritual food of the sound doctrine of Athanasius (34.2-4). In *Oratio* 36, his first sermon before the emperor Theodosius in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople in late 380, Gregory addresses those present who "fired with anger and zeal, set me upon this throne" (36.2-4), and towards the end he has special messages in turn for the emperor, his courtiers, the aristocracy, the intellectuals, the rich and finally the whole church (36.11-12). *Oratio* 42 is Gregory's valedictory sermon at the Council of Constantinople in 381. He speaks respectfully to the assembled bishops, defending his decision to resign and committing his flock to them. After stating once more the doctrine of the Trinity as three *hypostaseis* in one divine *ousia*, he bids farewell to all. Bernardi⁴⁶ has questioned whether this sermon was ever preached, but McGuckin believes it to be a polished version of what Gregory originally said.⁴⁷

42 One can imagine this as a spontaneous question in church. Did Gregory add this to his script shortly after delivering this sermon?

43 This is *communicatio*, a rhetorical device developed by forensic orators (Ruether, *Gregory*, p. 76). See Quintilian, *Inst. or.* 9.2.20-25.

44 Gregory Nazianzus, *Orat.* 25.2; SC, 284.160: Δεῦρό μοι στήθι τῶν ἱερῶν πλησίον καὶ τῆς μυστικῆς ταύτης τραπέζης κάμοῦ τοῦ διὰ τούτων μυσταγωγούωτος τὴν θέωσιν English translation in *Gregory Nazianzus: Select Orations*, trans. by M. Vinson (FC, 107), Washington, D.C., 2004.

45 Contrast his caustic description of Maximus in *De sua uita*, 750-754; ed. by Jungck, p. x, in his bitter account of the whole affair.

46 J. Bernardi, *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours* (SC, 384), Paris, 1992, pp. 7-17.

47 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, p. 361, n. 368.

Whilst direct speech in the orations does not *guarantee* we have the authentic spoken words of the preacher, its very freshness leads us to suspect that, in many cases, we do have them.

Conclusion

Let us now draw together the threads of this paper. We have inherited from Gregory of Nazianzus, renowned theologian and preacher, a corpus of forty-five orations. Of these *Oratio* 35 is generally believed to be not authentic. *Orationes* 4 and 5, invectives against Julian, are not homilies. They have no doxologies. *Orationes* 27–31 contain much sustained theological argument and appear to be lectures rather than homilies. The other orations appear to have been composed for delivery within services of worship; almost all close with doxologies. *Orationes* 2 and 43, and to a lesser extent 14 and 18, are so lengthy that they may be augmented versions of what was originally preached. Oration 42 too is thought to have been subsequently ‘polished’. If these verdicts are correct it was surely during his final retirement (383–c. 390), that, after choosing which sermon scripts should be preserved for posterity, Gregory undertook such revision work. In this he had some assistance.⁴⁸ But the fact that *Oratio* 25 was not altered in the light of Maximus’ subsequent treachery suggests Gregory did not readily change his scripts.

This present paper has suggested that, whatever revision was done, we may still be able to hear the actual voice of the preacher in the rhetorical figures he so frequently uses. These, in the main an inheritance from the sophists, were intended to attract, hold and persuade audiences. Their clever verbal tricks and often terseness were intended for the ear rather than for the eye. Gregory’s epistolary style is in contrast far simpler and lacks such ornamentation.⁴⁹ Another prominent feature of Gregory’s orations is his constant address of comments and questions to his congregations or groups or individuals within them, a homiletic strategy so valuable, the world over, for establishing rapport between preacher and people. Does it enable us here to enter the very scenes of the original homilies? Quite possibly, though proof is lacking. Further careful study may discover other linguistic means for showing how far the texts we have of Gregory’s orations represent his *ipsissima verba*.

48 The title of *Orat.* 13 indicates Eulalius, Gregory’s cousin who succeeded him at Nazianzus, edited this homily. Perhaps he edited others too.

49 Cf. Ruether, *Gregory*, p. 59.