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**YOUR WORDS ARE REDOLENT WITH INCENSE [ԽՆԿԵԱԼ ԵՆ ԲԱՆԻՔ  
ՔՈ]: BAN 49 A IN GREGORY OF NAREK'S BOOK OF PRAYERS AND  
THE FRAGRANCE OF TRUE WORSHIP**

In these days, to speak or to write about St. Gregory of Narek's Book of Prayers is to stand on the shoulders of giants: those scholars who have done the meticulous, herculean tasks of manuscript analysis, translation and historical contextualization that make it both possible and *meaningful* to turn our attention rather in the direction of intellectual and spiritual content and form. One is tempted to say literary content and form. That, however, would be a misnomer. Gregory was not first and foremost a poet, though certainly he was that. Or a philosopher, though he was that as well. Or an orator, albeit his rhetorical gifts were great. He was first and foremost a vardapet, a man who devoted his life to the Scriptures and to the liturgy, which together constitute the fundament of his *Book of Prayers*.<sup>1</sup>

In other words Gregory's works, like those of all the Church's great teachers, pour forth from an intensely participatory, hands-on world of profoundly applied biblical study and liturgical practice, passing through the shaping and coloring lenses of the *vardapet's* time, culture and personhood to emerge in a form accessible to others.

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<sup>1</sup> See the following articles published in **J.-P. Mahé, P. Rouhana and B. L. Zekiyan**, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek et la Liturgie de l'Église, Revue Théologique de Kaslik* 3-4 (2009-2010): **A. Granian**, "Saint Grégoire de Narek et la liturgie arménienne," 177-194; **J.-P. Mahé**, "Paroles à Dieu et dialogue avec l'Écriture," 259-274; **B. L. Zekiyan**, "La «Parole sur le saint chrême» (LL93) et les sacrements de l'initiation chrétienne dans le Narek," 277-290; **M. D. Findikyan**, "St. Gregory of Narek's *Book of Prayers* and the Eucharist: Another Holy Communion," 291-311; **C. Gugerotti**, "Narek et le sacrement de la pénitence," 313-332 (All are available online at <http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/handle/2042/42285>). Specifically on the liturgical use of Ban 33D see **J. R. Russell**, "Armenian Spirituality: Liturgical Mysticism and Chapter 33 of the Book of Lamentation of St. Grigor Narekac'i," *REArm* 26 (1996), 427-439, repr. in *idem, Armenian and Iranian Studies* (Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies 9), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 771-783; for the liturgical use of other Narek writings see **H.-J. Feulner**, "The Prayers of St. Gregory of Narek in the Divine Liturgy (Surb Patarag)" in **J.-P. Mahé and B. L. Zekiyan**, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek Théologien et Mystique* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 275), Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2006, 187-203.

In the case of Gregory's *Matean*, that form is prayer. Gregory intended the prayers to be a joint offering to God by himself and by their reader or hearer in whatever time or place. The prayers invite their interlocutor to use them as a vehicle for his or her own unique reentry into the world of spiritual experience and divine conversation, at whatever his or her own current level of knowledge and engagement may be. In other words, Gregory's prayers come forth from his own world of spirit but later reenter that world as the reader's own, having taken on and incorporated into themselves the unique coloration of that person's time and experience. Thus, the eternal world of the divine is not static, but organically active, changing and morphing with each such interaction whilst remaining inalterably itself.

To use a different metaphor, this ebb and flow of shared yet distinct prayer creates a tidal effect of spiritual understanding. The water — the text — remains the same, but the configuration of the individual waves of water differs with the configuration of the mental and spiritual coastline on which they break. Even if all other conditions are equal, no wave replicates itself exactly, and yet all are undeniably and inextricably joined. I am sure that everyone who reads Narek has had this tidal experience, and there is no need to elaborate on it further here.

The ability of his prayers to interact with every person praying them, both individually and corporately, was something Gregory intentionally built into his writing. He intended the prayers to link him with others in a way that benefited both parties and redounded to the praise of God; to the ocean, in other words, in which we all live and move and have our being.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, Gregory makes both implicit and explicit claims for his work that without such a foundational intention would surely sound like grandiose, if not outright inflated claims of his creative ego.

### The eternal quality of Gregory's words

In his colophon to the *Matean*, Gregory asks for the prayers of his readers, saying,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For a slightly different development of these thoughts on what makes Gregory's prayers eternally enduring, see **H. T'amrazyan**, "The Mystery of Enduring Poetry," in *idem*, *Gregory of Narek and the School of Narek* [Հրաչյա Քամրազյան, «Բանաստեղծության հարակալության խորհուրդը», Գրիգոր Նարեկացին և Նարեկյան դպրոցը] vol. 3, Erevan: Nayiri, 2013, 387-418; previously in *Bamber Matenadarani* 22 (2015), 31-47.

<sup>3</sup> The English translations in this article are the author's own. Part of the richness of Gregory's prayers lies in their susceptibility to many different translations, depending on the meaning the translator wishes to bring forth, and the intended audience. The versification follows that in Thomas J. Samuelian's translation, *Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart: Grigor Narekats'i's Book of Prayers*, Erevan: Vem Press, 2001. Hereafter, Samuelian.

Now, we anticipate that you who have eaten from this table  
 Set with many kinds of delicacies will mention  
 Us in upright prayers and appropriate supplications,  
 With sincere love and benevolent thoughts, whereby you too will be recorded  
 In the writing of the book of life. <sup>4</sup>

By referring to his book as a “table” Gregory calls up associations not only with the sacrificial altars [սեղան] of the tabernacle and temple but also with the heavenly banquet table at which Christ says his followers will feast. <sup>5</sup> Particularly apt to Gregory’s solicitous connection with his readers’ experience are the instructions to the master of a feast, given in Sir 3:23: “Take care for the guests, and consider their happiness as your own.”

In Ban 3E Gregory calls upon God, in whose name the prayers have been written, to make his words *a medicament of life* [ղեղ կենաց]<sup>6</sup> and fill them with the divine Spirit:

Cause this volume of lamentations  
 Begun in your name, O most High,  
 To become the salve of life  
 To aid your creatures’ pains of soul and body. <sup>7</sup>  
 Do you complete what I have begun.  
 Let your Spirit be mingled with it.  
 Let the Breath of your power, O great One,  
 Join with this creation granted by you to me...<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Արդ, հայցեմք ի նաշակողացդ յայսմ սեղանոյ / յոգնարեն եւ ւխորժահամ հանդերձելոյ / յիշատակել գմեզ ի մաղբանս ուղիղս եւ ի պատկանատր խնդրուածս՝ / սեռն սիրոյ ի միտս բարիս, որով եւ դոմ էղիջիք գրեալ ի/մատեանս կենաց վերին դպրութեան:

<sup>5</sup> For example, in Lk 22:30.

<sup>6</sup> Gregory may be making a pun here, using the secondary meaning of ղեղ as *ink*: thus, “living ink” or “ink of life” is also a possible reading. He also describes the medicinal efficacy of his words in the Preface to the *Book of Prayers*.

<sup>7</sup> For a readily available article on the medicinal use of the *Book of Prayers* see **Susanna Davtyan**, “Armenian Medieval Philosophy and Medical Science: Narek as Remedy,” *Wisdom* (5. 2) 2015, 61-65; available online at <https://wisdomperiodical.com/index.php/wisdom/article/view/36/96>. For other stories regarding the healing powers of Gregory’s words see J. R. Russell’s introduction to the *Matean Oghbergut’ean (Book of Lamentations)*, Delmar, NY: Caravan Boos, 1981 facsimile edition, ix-xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Շնորհեսցի, Տէր, եւ ինձ ընդ նոսին առ ի քն գղջումն կամաց, / եւ նոցա իմովս ձայնի՛ շունչս բարեհամբոյրս:

In 74C Gregory makes it clear that he can ask for such timeless qualities for his words because God himself moved and inspired him to write. He expresses this claim as follows:

These are yours alone, O Lord!  
By you was I inspired to write them.  
Behold, I plead your own pleas, O blessed One,  
From what belongs to you, grant grace.<sup>9</sup>

In 65B he requests that not only will God make his inspired words effective across the ages among the faithful, but that he will give Gregory's words power against evil:

Through the verses of this book  
Fill the face of Satan with shameful disgrace.<sup>10</sup>

Over and above their source in God Himself and his healing, nourishing power, Gregory intends that his words outlast time. In 66A he asks that whenever anyone prays his words in future, their prayer may be accounted as his own, and that their prayers, not yet spoken, will be somehow implicit in his.

So, whoever takes the medication of the intercessions  
Of this humble book, to pray by means of them,  
If the one who draws near is a sinner  
I too will join him through my prayer,  
While if the one pleading be righteous  
I also through him shall be benefited hereby together with him.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ք՛ն միայնոյ են այտփիկ, Տէր, / ի քէն ազդեցա գրել ինձ գտսին: / Ահա զոյսոյ յատուկ աղերս աղաչեմ, արհնեալ, / ի քոյնց այտի պարգեւեալ շնորհեա. The wording of the Divine Liturgy is obvious in the juxtaposition զքոյս ... ի քոյնց [We offer you what is your own, from what is your own], and its context there is germane to a deeper understanding of this *Ban*: the liturgical prayer continues, վասն ամենայնի եւ յաղագս ամենեցուն [for all and for the sake of all]. Here too is implicit Gregory's intention that his prayers, sourced from God Himself, will be for the sake of all.

<sup>10</sup> Լի՛ց նուագամ այս մատենի / անարգանամ ամաբոյ գղէմսն սատանայի:

<sup>11</sup> Արդ, որ ոք եւ առցէ զայս դեղ մաղթանաց / այս մատենի պարկեշտականի՝ պաղատիլ սովաւ, / եթէ ի մեղատուաց իցէ մատուցեալն, / եղէ՛ց եւ ես իմովս բանիս կցորդեալ նմա, / իսկ եթէ յարդարոց գուցէ յառաջեալն, / գտա՛յց եւ ես սովիմք ընդ նմին ողորմեալ նովաւ:

And in Ban 3C Gregory asks God that he and his future readers may augment one another's spiritual benefits through the words of his prayers:

Together with them may there be granted to me by you, O Lord, repentance of will  
 And to them through my voice [may there be granted] to them a conciliatory spirit<sup>12</sup>

Not content to ask for a symbiotic relationship between himself and others across the ages through the vehicle of his words, he further demands in 90F that his words exert a saving force that is equally timeless, so that anyone, young or old, man or woman, who reads his prayers should receive forgiveness and restoration “to their former state of spotless purity”.

And anyone who reads these pleas of an intercessory voice  
 crying out in expectant prayer,  
 Old or young, maiden or youth,  
 Even if a servant girl implores for love of God,  
 May he or she receive from you equally, without partiality,  
 The blessed portion<sup>13</sup> of liberation from indebtedness,  
 Being reestablished in renewed immaculate purity,  
 Depicting once again your changeless image.<sup>14</sup>

In 88B Gregory requests that in addition to the eternal efficacy of his words in others' hearts and minds, the book itself become an eternal monument to stand before God forever.

And blessing the elemental letter of this book of lamentation, purify it

<sup>12</sup> *Ban 3. e Եւ արացես լինել դեղ կենաց/ Առ հնարս ցաոց հոգոց եւ մարմնոց քոց ստեղծուածոց / Զայս կարգեալ սահման ողբոց մատենի՝/ Սկզբնեցելոյ յանուն քո, բարձրեալ. / Զսկսեալս իմ դու կատարեալ. / Եղիցի հոգի քո խառնեալ ի սա, / Շունչ զարութեան մեծիդ միացի/ Ի քո ինձ շնորհեալ ստեղծաբանութիւնս... Since one of the beauties of the Prayers is their susceptibility to multiple nuances of meaning, the present author has chosen to translate them afresh rather than to follow an existing translation.*

<sup>13</sup> Here Gregory combines the wording of Rom 4:6 and Lk 10:42.

<sup>14</sup> *Եւ որ ոք ընթերցցի զայս աղերս ձայնի / Մաղթանաց գոչման աղաւթից հայցման / Ծերոյ եւ աղայոյ, կոսի եւ երիտասարդի / Եւ եթէ յաղախնոց ոչ պաղատեսցի աստուածսիրաբար, / Հասասարսպէս անաչառութեամբ / Ընկալցին ի քէն մասն երանութեան պարտոց ազատութեան / Հաստեալ վերստին յամարատութիւն նորոց մաքրութեան:*

And inscribe it in writing as an eternal monument  
 Together with the service of those pleasing to you.  
 Let it stand before you eternally  
 And be recalled in your hearing always;  
 Let it be spoken by the lips of your chosen ones  
 And let it be uttered by the mouths of your angels.  
 Let it be laid out before your throne  
 And offered in the court of your sanctuary.<sup>15</sup>

Given that Gregory ascribes such high value, inspiration, healing power and eternity to his words, and since as a *vardapet* he is both a master of words and one who serves the Word, it is only to be expected that none of his words is random or lightly chosen. Gregory's is not a primarily aesthetic purpose. Nor does he intend simply to make his prayers a moving emotional experience for anyone who prays them, although he achieves that masterfully. In fact, each of Gregory's carefully selected words, phrases and images carries with it an array of exegetical connections that guide the alert reader to further levels of meaning below the surface of the text, or in parallel with it.

One of the myriad possible examples of the way in which Gregory creates an organic subtext of exegetical meaning through the use of a word or phrase is found in Ban 49. There, the phrase *Your words are redolent with incense* [խնկեալ են քանիք քո] claims attention with its unusual link between audition and olfaction. The phrase is aesthetically pleasing. Yet when one pauses to reflect upon it, its exact meaning remains elusive. One is tempted to dismiss it as one more example of Gregory's uniquely pleasing, difficult to translate images and move on to the next.

However, its placement within Ban 49A indicates that the phrase is biblically significant. The number 49 is the square of 7, the number of the day of rest following the six days of God's creation. Not coincidentally, the seventh letter in the Armenian alphabet is ի which, as Armenian grammarians and others pointed out, is not only the sole letter in the alphabet to be a complete word in and of itself, but it is also the name God gives to himself in the Armenian translation of Ex 3:14.

In honor of God's day of rest, ancient Israel observed every seventh year as a sabbath or sabbatical year, when land was allowed to lie fallow, slaves were to be freed if they so desired, and all debts between Israelites were annulled.

The 49<sup>th</sup> year was a "sabbath of sabbaths," the culmination of seven sabbaths

<sup>15</sup> Եւ արհնեալ արբեա զտառ մատենի այս ողբերգութեան, / Եւ գրեալ դրոշմեցես յարձան յախտեան / ընդ հանոյականացն սպասատրոսինս: / Կացցէ առաջի քո մշտնջենատր / Եւ յիշատակեցի ի լսելիսդ քո հանապագ, / Բարբառեցի շրթամբք ընտրելոց քոց, / Եւ խաւսեցի բերանովք հրեշտակաց քոց, / Տարածեցի համդեպ արթոոյ քոյ/ Եւ ընծայեցի ի սրահ արբութեան քոյ:

of seven years each.<sup>16</sup> The regulations pertaining to observance of the sabbatical and jubilee years were so fundamental to Jewish existence that, like the ten commandments, they were said to have originated at Sinai. (Lv 25:1)

Moreover, it was in the seventh month of every 49<sup>th</sup> year that the impending year of jubilee was announced. In other words, every 50<sup>th</sup> year was dedicated to the undoing of every kind of oppression in society, whether to land, persons or property. All hereditary land purchased in the preceding 49 years was returned to its original owner or the legitimate heir; all debts were released. Slaves who had refused to go free in a sabbatical year were emancipated as a reminder that no human being is another's servant in perpetuity; perpetual service is owed only to God (Lv 25:55).

Observance of the sabbatical and jubilee years was tied to Israel's life within the Promised Land. Once the Israelites finally possessed the land promised them by God, such observance was a visible sign that the land was not theirs by right, but that like all of creation it belonged to God, who had granted it to his people as "strangers and sojourners" in it (Lv 25:23). As the observance of the sabbatical and jubilee years showed, God's supreme and compassionate nature was honored through liberation and rest. In short, it is to be expected that what is said in Ban 49 is on some level an introduction to the jubilee to be described (at least implicitly) in Ban 50.<sup>17</sup> It will come as no surprise, therefore, that the imagery of խունկ / ինկել in Gregory's work is likewise associated with liberation from captivity.

<sup>16</sup> A detailed description of the sabbatical and jubilee year provisions occupies all of Lv 25.

<sup>17</sup> One recalls that as the disciple of Anania Narekats'i, a man who was not only an accomplished exegete but a numerologist as well, Gregory was familiar with the subtle levels of number symbolism. In his work "Concerning the Explication of Numbers" [*Մակու բացայայտութիւն թուոց*] in *Armenian Writers* [*Մատենագիրք Հայոց*] vol. 10, Antelias: Great House of Cilicia, 2009, 440-445 Anania of Narek indicates that numerical symbolism was not in vogue in other parts of the Armenian thought world. Nonetheless, he advocated for its usefulness, at least as an esoteric tool worthy of a place in a vardapet's exegetical arsenal. "I wanted to do a little study on the significance of numbers, [which has been] neglected by many — not because it is hard to attain or difficult to see, but because they took no heed of it, considering views on the topic to be of questionable value" [կամ եղև ինն սակաւ ինչ աշխատասիրել սակաւ թուոց բացայայտութեան՝ ի բազմաց անտես եղեալ: Ո՛չ յաղագս անհաստատեան կամ դժուարատեսութեան, ա՛յ յաղագս անփոյթ ստնելոյ՝ վարկպարագի համարելով զազգաութիւն սոցայց տեսութեան]. Thus, Gregory knew that while 49 is not itself a prime number, it is the product of the prime number seven multiplied by itself. Thus it not only holds a double portion of the qualities inherent in a prime number, which is by definition self-contained and as Anania says, pristine (անապական), "eternal and without mother", but it holds those qualities in living, gestational form: Anania notes that a [male] foetus is produced on the seventh day of the union of sperm and egg and that unlike infants prematurely born in the eighth month of gestation, those born in the seventh would survive; while seven years was the age when a child may profitably begin his education. On the relationship between Anania's thought and the *Book of Prayers* see also **H. T'amrazyan**, "Anania of Narek and the *Matean* of Gregory of Narek" [«Անանիա նարեկացին և Գրիգոր Նարեկացու «Մատենանր»», *Banber Erevani Hamalsarani* 1993. 2, 134-140.

While it is outside the scope of this paper to fully investigate the liberative implications of the phrase խնկեալ են բանք քն in the context of Ban 49,<sup>18</sup> one may nonetheless pause to make a preliminary investigation of the phrase based on three simple questions: what does the verb խնկեալ mean? What kind of things does Gregory refer to as խնկեալ / խնկելի? What is the խումկ with which one խնկելո? How is it used? What is the context or the occasion for its use?

The answers to these questions constitute one small demonstration of how within one simple phrase an accomplished *vardapet* can offer to readers with differing degrees of biblical and liturgical experience, doors of access to many different levels and aspects of meaning and spiritual experience.

### **First Question: What is the meaning of խնկել/խնկելի?**

Since խնկեալ is a participle, what does its originating verb, խնկեմ, actually mean?

In addition to the expected meanings of *to cense*, or *to honor with incense* the Classical Armenian Lexicon gives a range of other possible translations for խնկեմ,<sup>19</sup> among them: *to anoint, to make fragrant, to sacrifice, to offer*.<sup>20</sup> In other words, it is possible to translate the phrase խնկեալ են բանք քն quite simply as *your words are honored with incense*,<sup>21</sup> whatever that might mean precisely. However, it is also equally possible to translate it as *your words are an offering or an offering is made to them; your words are a sacrifice or a sacrifice is made to them; your words are made fragrant, redolent or imbued with fragrance*,<sup>22</sup> or *your words are anointed*.

<sup>18</sup> Since use of the verb խնկել and the imagery of incense is not confined to the *Matean* but is found throughout Gregory's work, the same questions might be asked in the context of other works as well. In his commentary on Job 39:5 for example, the word խնկեալ is used to describe the desert-dwellers Elisha and John the Baptist as "spiced and fragrant with the salt of truth" [համեմեալ եւ խնկեալ աղիւն նշմարտութեան], combining Mt 5:13 and Mk 9:49 into a single, complex exegetical image. Armenian Authors [Մասնագիրք Հայոց] vol. 12, Antelias: Great House of Cilicia, 2008, 896b.

<sup>19</sup> *New Lexicon of the Armenian Language* [Նոր բարոգիրք հայկազեան լեզուի], 2 vols., Venice: San Lazzaro, 1837. Hereafter, *Lexicon*. Available online at: <http://www.nayiri.com/imaginedictionarybrowser.jsp?dictionaryId=16>

The multiple meanings of խնկել also allow Gregory to enrich his image with other colorations as well. The meaning *to sacrifice, to offer*, allows him to implicitly reference both the Old Testament sacrifices and the Divine Liturgy, while the meaning *to wrap with incense and oils* calls to mind the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

<sup>20</sup> The *Lexicon* notes that the form խնկելի is specific to Narek's vocabulary.

<sup>21</sup> This is the option chosen by Samuelian, 355.

<sup>22</sup> This meaning is evident even where the word խնկեալ is not specifically used; e. g. in Ban 88b where Gregory implores God to "inhale the scent of this bloodless word-sacrifice" [հոտոտեսցիս յայս նուէր բանի անարիւն զոհի, քազաւոր երկնի].



This range of meanings allows Gregory to implicitly incorporate into his carefully structured phrase multiple Christian liturgical and Old Testament sacrificial nuances.<sup>23</sup> It also enables him to call up in the mind of the more learned reader associations with two of Gregory's most frequently cited biblical texts: the Song of Songs, on which as a young man he produced a commentary and which continued to fascinate him throughout his life,<sup>24</sup> and the story related in all four Gospels of the woman who anointed Christ's head with fragrant oil while he was at table in the house of Simon or, alternatively, anointed his feet with tears (Matt 26, Mark 14, Luke 7 and John 12).<sup>25</sup>

Gregory identified personally with the bride of the Song. As part of his extended meditation on the holy chrism he says in Ban 93K:<sup>26</sup>

Together with Solomon, anointed and adopted of God,  
To you, O heavenly Bridegroom, I sing grateful benediction  
with the mouth of the Bride, in my thoughts' desires  
kissing the scent of your oil, better than any incense.<sup>27</sup>

He saw himself as well in the repentant woman of the anointing: In 33B Gregory says:<sup>28</sup>

With redoubled intensity strengthen the perfume  
Of this book's confession, breathing in many,

<sup>23</sup> Extra-biblical associations should be explored as well. For example, one recalls that Philo of Alexandria, to whom Anania Narekatsi refers in his writings, wrote on the use of incense in Jewish worship (e. g. in *Spec Leg* I. 171, 274-276; V Mos II 101, 206).

<sup>24</sup> See **R. Ervine**, *The Blessing of Blessings: Gregory of Narek's Commentary on the Song of Songs*, (Cistercian Studies 215), Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2007, and **L. Pétrossian**, *Grégoire de Narek: Commentaire sur le Cantique des cantiques* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 285), Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> This Gospel story with its attendant interpretations is also the context for Gregory's emphasis on the outpouring of tears, a quality especially prized in monastic circles not for its emotionality but for its connection with this passage. Throughout the *Matean* Gregory cites the Song of Songs and refers to the anointing stories more than a dozen times each.

<sup>26</sup> E. g. Ban 93K, երգեմ բերանով հարսինն երկնատու փեսայիդ բարեբան գոհաբանութիւն՝ համբորեալ ի յիղձս մտաց զհոտ իւղոց ֆոց, քան զամենայն խումկս:

<sup>27</sup> So 1:2. Ընդ Սողոմոնի ամեղոյ, որդեգրեցելոյ Աստուծոյ երգեմ / բերանով հարսինն երկնատու փեսայիդ բարեբան / գոհաբանութիւն՝ համբորեալ ի յիղձս մտաց զհոտ / իւղոց ֆոց, քան զամենայն խումկս:

<sup>28</sup> Այլ արասցենս զարանալ կրկին յանախութեամբ բուրման / խոստովանութեան այս մատենի՝ ի բազումս ազդեալ, / համասպիիտ, ամենատարած եւ աշխարհալիւ տանն տեսակաւ / ըստ արիմակի համեմատութեան նոցայն յիշատակի:

Everywhere dispersed, all-suffusing and filling the world like that house  
In a manner similar to the remembrance of them. <sup>29</sup>

In Ban 33C Gregory puts the penitent woman together with the Myrophores, or Myrrh-bearing Women, who “very early in the morning” of the third day brought spices to anoint Christ’s body after its burial, only to find the tomb empty. (Mk 16:2-8, Lk 24:1-9)

Now, O blessed Compassionate One,  
Joining this worshipful word’s composition,  
Offered to you from the fruits of my soul,  
Together with that of the Myrrhbearers  
Mingle it into the sweet composition of the unguent  
Of the pious woman Mary, whereby she equalled  
In like manner the blessed prostitutes  
Accepted by you with most wondrous honor. <sup>30</sup>

Thus for Gregory, the affirmation *խնկեալ են բանք քո* carried overtones not only of liturgical offering, sacrifice and praise for God’s words but of personal penitence, gratitude, wakeful vigilance and absolute love as well.

### **Second Question: Who or what are the proper recipients of խոնկ?**

What things does Gregory refer to as *խնկելի*— in other words, as the proper recipients of anointing, offering, sacrifice, fragrance and praise?

#### **Words**

In the immediate context of Ban 49A, words are *խնկելի*:

Neither the heavens with their orderliness and the brilliance of the angels,  
Nor the earth and the human race and all the wonders made for their sake,  
Nor the broad expanse of the sea and the creatures within it,

<sup>29</sup> Referring to Mt 26:13 / Mi 4:9 : “Wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in remembrance of her” As the genitive plural pronoun [նոցա] indicates, Gregory is aware that the stories in Mt 26 and Mk 4 differ from those in Lk 7 and Jn 12 and were understood to involve different women.

<sup>30</sup> Արդ, գլարմարոսին պաշտաման բանիս / ի խայրեաց հոգոյս քեզ նուիրելոյ, արհնեալ բարեգոս, / կցորդելով ընդ խնկագգեստիցն զուգամասնապէս / խառնեսցես ի յանուշութիւն կազմութեան / իւղոյն Մարիամու կնոջ բարեպաշտի, / Յոր հաւասարեալ նոյնութեամբ ընդ երջանիկ պոռնկացն / ի վէն ընկալելոց յաւետահրաշ յարգանամբ:

Nor the abysses with their fastenings and the numberless infinitude therein,  
 No; through these many sublime creations you were not exalted as much as  
 [through] your sharing in my pain  
 When you, good Hope of kindness, said through the prophet,  
 “Who is a God capable as I am  
 Of forever releasing sin and blotting out transgressions?”  
 Behold, now your words are fragrant with incense, Merciful one, and your  
 benefactions are confessed;  
 The depths of your mysteries are glorified and the outpourings of grace are  
 worshiped.<sup>31</sup>

The words that Grigor here calls *խնկեղի* are a combination of the prophet’s exclamation in Mic 7:18 (“Who is a God like you!”) and the promise uttered by God in Is 43:25 (“I am the same, the one who blots out your transgressions”) together with the more common phrase “to release sin” [թողուլ զվեղս].<sup>32</sup> Gregory puts this combined utterance into the mouth of God Himself. In other words, Gregory presents this as God’s affirmation of His own nature: He is the God who releases humans from the harm caused by sin and utterly erases unrighteousness. The statement of this liberating reality is worthy of worship, praise, anointing, fragrance and sacrifice.

The words and parables of Christ are also described as *խնկեղի*. In 9C Grigor references the teaching to Simon recorded at the end of the story of Jesus’ anointing in Lk 7:40-50 saying

And as my debts increase,  
 So may the blessed generosity of you the Lender  
 Be ever adorned, as in that fragrant parable of yours.<sup>33</sup>

Inspired as they are by God, Gregory’s own words partake in this same fragrance and share in its qualities (93F):

And now, since grace is yours and to you is befitting

<sup>31</sup> The words benefaction [բարեհարություն], mysteries or councils [խորհուրդ] and outpouring [զեղումն] are all charged with biblical significance derived from the wisdom books and the prophets.

<sup>32</sup> Found in e. g. Sir 2:13 and 17:21; 1 Esd 8:88; Mt 9:6; Mk 2:7, 10 / Lk 5:21, 24 and 7:49 and most famously in the Lukan text of the Lord’s Prayer.

<sup>33</sup> Եւ ի պարտոցն առանելութիւն / նոյնքան փոխատուիդ առատատրութիւն / բարեբանեալ՝ միշտ պսակեցի, / ըստ խնկաւորդ քոս առակի:

Grateful praise, O blessed Son of God,  
 With your beautiful imprint make these prayers,  
 Unctuous, redolent with incense, filled with myrrh,  
 A cause of glory to you and for me a sinner, an occasion of healing. <sup>34</sup>

### God's Nature and Attributes

Throughout the *Matean* God Himself is the most frequent and obvious *խնկելի*. Sometimes, as in 73D, no specific divine attribute is given as the reason for an out-pouring of worship and praise, but rather the full panoply of divine power and purity:

Glorified as Lord, without deficiency and without augmentation,  
 Worshipped [*խնկեալ*] through the uninterpretable mystery in the Holy Trinity,  
 Praised perpetually and yet more, by virtue of the same. <sup>35</sup>

However in 87B God is *խնկելի* specifically because of His mercy:

You alone are lauded in triumph  
 Acclaimed in great power  
 Worshipped [*խնկատրեալ*] in mercy. <sup>36</sup>  
 According to 90A God is *խնկելի* as protective lover of humanity;

O lauded, heavenly God,  
 Sole Creator, Lord of Sabaoth,  
 Awesome Greatness, Compassion worthy to be celebrated,  
 Charity to be confessed, Benevolence to be worshiped,  
 Providence to be revered, Lover of humanity to be celebrated,  
 Protection to whom incense is to be offered, inscrutable exaltation. <sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Եւ արդ, քանզի քո են շնորհի, եւ քեզ վայել են / գոհաբանութիւնք, արհնաբանեալ Որդի Աստուծոյ, / դու ինքն յարմարեա՛ բարենշմար տպատրութեամբ / զաղաշանս իղատրականս, խնկապատարս, զմոսալիս / պատնատ քեզ փառաց եւ ինձ մեղապարտիս՝ առիթ բժշկութեան:

<sup>35</sup> Փառատրեալ տիրապէս, անպակաս եւ անյաւելուած, / խնկեալ խորհրդով անբարգմանելեալ յերորդութեանդ սրբում, / գոհաբանեալ յաւտ եւ ես առ սին. A similar statement is made in 52a: “Blessed as Lord in your Essence / limitless and immutable, truly Good, to be worshiped with incense / and bliss to be confessed to all the earth [Արհնեալ տիրաբար ի քոմդ էութեան, / անսահմանելի եւ անփոխադրելի իսկապէս բարի, պաշտան խնկելի / եւ երջանկութիւն խոստովանելի ամենայն երկրի].

<sup>36</sup> Գովեցեալ միայն՝ ի յաղթութեան, / վերանայնեալ ի մեծ գարութեան, / խնկատրեալ՝ յողորմութեան:

<sup>37</sup> Բարեբանեալ Աստուած երկնատր, / միայն արարիչ, Տէր ամենակալ, / մեծութիւն անեղ, գթութիւն արհնաբանելի, / ողորմութիւն խոստովանելի, բարերարութիւն երկրպագելի, / խնամակալութիւն պաշտելի, մարդասիրութիւն տաւնելի, / պահպանութիւն խնկելի, բարձեալ անքնին:

In 92c God is to be worshiped with incense or offered the sacrifice of fragrance as the One who retrieves humans from the worship of lesser gods:

O you who spare all, I send up to you paeans of praise  
together with the fragrance of incense,  
because on many occasions you fished my indebted soul  
out of the plethora of false idols into worship of you.<sup>38</sup>

According to 93B it is in his role as the bestower of gifts that God is to be honored with incense:

Like angels we celebrate your Wisdom's generous giving of gifts  
With choral song, with purity of mind,  
Offering fragrant frankincense worthy of the Savior  
Through the gladdening oil of unblemished confession.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to God's person and attributes, His name, or the name of His attributes, is itself *խնկելի*. In 92E Gregory specifies the name of God's provident care for humanity as worthy of anointing with oil or sacrificial incense:

Confessed is that name of your inscrutable Philanthropy's  
Provident care, made fragrant with the mystery  
Of utter holiness, O illimitable form of light,

While in 93X it is God's awesome and luminous name that is praised by the incense of those who are pure in faith:

Moreover, your awesome name, luminous,  
Celestial and marvelous, made fragrant by the censer  
Of those who live in purity, with the praise of your ineffable glory.<sup>40</sup>

Using statements from the Creed, Gregory also describes the Spirit as *խնկեալ*, true God and actor in all types of grace and inspiration (34G):

<sup>38</sup> Գովեստ ներբողից բուրմամբ խնկոց վերառաֆեմ / քեզ, ամենախնամ, զի ի ստապատիր կոոցն / բազմաստուածութենէ առաւել յանախագունիւք / որսացար զանձն իմ պարտաւոր ի քն երկրպագութիւն:

<sup>39</sup> Տանեմք պարեգութեամբ հրեշտակաւրէն, / յստկամտաբար, փրկչավայելուչ կնդրկա խնկեալ / պարզեաբաշխ առատատրոփիւն ամենիմաստիդ յիւղ / զուարթ անբիծ դաւանման:

<sup>40</sup> Եւ եւ անունդ քն ահաւոր, լուսաւոր / երկնաւոր եւ զարմանաւոր, ի գովեստ փառաց / անհատից մաքրակրանիչ բուրվատաւ խնկեալ:

Who put force into the Law, inspired the prophets,  
 Was imprinted on the Apostles by the breath of his equal in Nature.<sup>41</sup>  
 Was shown in the form of a dove at the Jordan  
 To magnify the glory of the One who had come,  
 Shone in the scriptures of those who passed them down;  
 Created the understanding, empowered the wise, filled *vardapets*,  
 Anointed kingdoms, gave strength to kings, appointed overseers,  
 Ordained redemptions, granted gifts, prepared sacrifices,  
 Sanctified those baptized into Christ's death as His dwelling place;  
 What Father and Son performed the same did the Spirit also,  
 And He is God, honored with incense as Lord, All in all.<sup>42</sup>

For this reason, our sacrificial, fragrant offerings [խնկեալ] of works and prayer cause the Spirit to unite with us (33G):

Let the rays of your light's grace not be extinguished  
 From the eyes of our understanding's vision,  
 For we have learned that you unite with us  
 By means of prayer and an excellent, fragrant way of life.<sup>43</sup>

In fact the image of God in man is itself խնկելի in the same way as its Prototype and Source. Gregory asks in 78C:

Do not take from my vulnerable self the gift of grace bestowed by you,  
 Do not seize the breath of your all-blessed Spirit,  
 Do not dissolve your royal image's fragrant seal.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Alluding to Jn 20:22.

<sup>42</sup> Որ/ ազդեաց յԱւրէնսն, շնչեաց ի մարգարէսն, փշմամբ ազգակցին / տպատրեցաւ յառաքեալսն, կերպիւ աղանւոյ ցուցաւ ի Յորդանան՝ / ի մեծութիւն փառաց եկելոյն, փայլեաց ի գիրս աւանդականաց, / արար հաննարեղս, զարացոյց իմաստունս, լցոյց վարդապետս, / առ արքայութիւնս, աւժանակեաց թագաւորս, ետ վերակացս, / հրամանատրեաց փրկութիւնս, ընորհեաց ձիրս, հանդերձատրեաց փառութիւնս, / զմկրտեալսս ի մահն Քրիստոսի ի բնակութիւն իւր մահազարդեաց. / Զոր այր եւ օրդի, զնոյն եւ ոգին ներգործեաց, / եւ ինքն է Աստուած, խնկեալ տիրապէս ամենայն յամենայնի:

<sup>43</sup> Եւ մի՛ շիջիցին առ ի մէնջ լուսոյդ շնորհաց փայլմունք / ի տեսականացս աչաց իմաստից. / վասն զի գեղ ուսաք միանալ ի մեզ / ի ձեռն աղարթից եւ ընտիր վարուց խնկելոց:

<sup>44</sup> Մի՛ բառնար ի վտանգելոյս զառ ի կէն պարգեւեալդ շնորհ, / Մի՛ կապտեր զփշումն ամենարհմեալդ Հոգոյ, / մի լուծաներ զխնկեալ զկնիք արհունական պատկերիդ:

### The Virgin Mary, the Church<sup>45</sup>

Gregory's tender, personal relationship with the Mother of God was complex and multifaceted. Having lost his own mother early in life, he felt that the Mother of God, represented by the church named for her in the monastery at Narek and more broadly by the Church overall, was in a very real sense his own mother. As he said of the Church in Ban 74L,

This spiritual, heavenly, luminous mother  
 Comforted me as a son more than any earthly, breathing, physical one.  
 The milk of her breasts is the blood of Christ. If one were  
 To depict her as the Theotokos Herself, he would not be wrong.<sup>46</sup>

At the end of the opening section in Ban 80, Gregory's extraordinary outpouring of devoted love for her, he describes her prayers of intercession to her divine Son as խնկելի:

Receive the pleas of these prayers from me, who confess my faith in you,  
 And together with this my earlier encomium to your greatness;  
 Present them as an offering mingled with your own pleas.  
 Intertwine and unite the bitter weeping of my sinful self  
 With your own blissful and fragrant requests<sup>47</sup>

The ancient identification of the Mother of God with the Church is taken for granted in the *Book of Prayers*, as it was in Gregory's *Panegyric on the Mother of*

<sup>45</sup> On Gregory's understanding of the Church see **J-P. Mahé**, "L'Écclésiologie de Saint Grégoire de Narek," in **J-P. Mahé and B. L. Zekian**, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek Théologien et Mystique* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 275), Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2006, 205-227. Regarding connections between Gregory's *Book of Prayers* and the iconography of the Church of the Holy Cross on Aghtamar see **I. Rapti**, "Les images intérieures dans le Livre de Lamentations de Grégoire de Narek," in **J-P. Mahé, P. Rouhana and B. L. Zekian**, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek et la Liturgie de l'Église*, *Revue Théologique de Kaslik* 3-4 (2009-2010) 453-471. Available online at: <http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/handle/2042/42285>

<sup>46</sup> Այս մայր հոգեւոր, երկնատուր, լուսատուր, քան թէ / երկրատուր, շնչատուր մարմնատուր, զիս զգուեաց որդի: / կարն ստեանց սորա արիւնն քրիստոսի: Եթէ աստուա- / ծնին իսկ պատկեր գոյն ոք գրեցցէ, ոչ անարիւնի:

<sup>47</sup> Ընկալ՛ զմաղթանս այսր աղերսանաց քու դասնողիս / և մատո՛ ընծայեա՛ ընդ սմին խառնեալ / զքանն իմ նախնի մեծիդ ներբողի ի քոյդ պաղատանս: / Հիւսեա՛ միացո՛ զմեղուցելոյս դառն հեծութիւն / ընդ քուդ երջանիկ և խնկատուրեալ հայցուածոց:

God,<sup>48</sup> and in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs*.<sup>49</sup> To speak of the one is to speak of the other. In Ban 75A Mary the individual and Mary the Church are fully intertwined.

Yet since from the womb in which I was conceived  
 She bore me with spiritual birth pains,  
 It is right by the regular rule of speech  
 To register in this book the great and blessed, immaculate Queen,  
 Sovereign of all virgins, my magnificent and praiseworthy Mother,  
 So that the extent of the fragrant One will be made known  
 And shown and told to other future generations.<sup>50</sup>

Everything having to do with the Church is *խնկեղի*. The structure of the Church was made fragrant with incense by the Apostles. In Ban 75G Gregory says:

We confess with right and unswerving, pure faith;  
 With a kiss of the lips greeting  
 This altar built from inanimate stones  
 For the divine dwelling of this constructed church  
 Which is exalted with the cosmic height of heaven,  
 Founded by the very ranks of the Apostles themselves,  
 Made fragrant by the disciples of the Celestial

<sup>48</sup> On this work see **Th. Dasnabédian**, *Le panégyrique de la sainte Mère de Dieu de Grigor Narekac'i*, Antelias: 1995.

<sup>49</sup> The Armenian tradition associates Mary with incense in more ways than one. In his *Analysis of the Cathedral Church and the Created Order within It* [Վերլուծություն կաթողիկէ եկեղեցոյ եւ որ ի նմա յարինեալ կարգաց], *Armenian Writers* vol. 4, Antelias 2005, 349-354, Hovhan of Mayrivank' (ca 575-ca 652) compares her to the incense containing box that is part of the altar service, citing St. Gregory the Illuminator as his source: "As [the box of incense] is filled with the odor of sanctity, so also is she [filled] with the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High" [Lk 1:35]. The work of Th. Dasnabédian has shed much light on Armenian Mariology. See in particular her article "Interprétations multiples du Cantique des Cantiques chez Saint Grégoire de Narek: Marie, figure de l'Église", *Revue Théologique de Kaslik* (USEK) 3-4 (2009-2010), 355-371 (available online at [http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/bitstream/handle/2042/42320/2009-2010\\_3-4\\_355-371.pdf?sequence=1](http://documents.irevues.inist.fr/bitstream/handle/2042/42320/2009-2010_3-4_355-371.pdf?sequence=1)).

<sup>50</sup> Այլ / քանզի յարգանդէն յորում յղացայ՝ հոգեւոր երկամբք / ծնիցեա, զմեծ եւ գերջանիկ ղշխոյ անարատ՝ ամենից կոսից / իսկունի, զպանծալի մայրն իմ գովելի պարտ է կանոնաւ / սահմանի բանի արձանագրել յայսմ մատենի, զի ծանիցի, / ցուցցի եւ այլոց եւս ապագայիցն ազգաց պատմեսցի որքա/նութիւն փառաց խնկելոյն:



It has been served by servants of the Word.<sup>51</sup>

As the mystical embodiment of God's will (75M) the Church institution is խնկելի.<sup>52</sup> Thus the voice of the prophets read in worship (52C) is also խնկելի, although it pales by comparison with the reading of the Gospel.

This fragrant voice of the prophets  
Who foretold the liberating mandate  
Of your coming, and what because of its insufficiency  
It is not possible for the physical tongue to recount;  
They are meager and lesser, ancient and temporal  
Types and similes by comparison  
With the revelation of your Gospel.<sup>53</sup>

The saints celebrated by the Church are խնկելի, as Gregory says in Ban 71A:

And so they [the saints], who are blessed  
By the all-authoritative mouth of the Godhead, Father of Christ,  
The chosen ones, celebrated, honored with incense and praised with benediction,

Served as members of Christ and as the Holy Spirit's prepared dwellings ...<sup>54</sup>

The entirety of Ban 93 is devoted to the mystical action of the chrism in the sacraments of the Church. In the depths of this extensive meditation on its meaning and function the sanctified chrism, naturally redolent with fragrance, is also described as worthy of receiving fragrant worship (93L), and the application of it is interpreted as a tangible sign of God's love (93P).

This oil, itself worthy of fragrant anointing, venerated and blessed, not merely  
As an unguent for the chamber of this brain,<sup>55</sup> and it is proffered

<sup>51</sup> Դասանեմք ի հաւատ ուղիղ եւ անխտորնակ / անբծութեան՝ համբուրի շրթանց ողջունեալ / զկառուցեալս խորան յանշնչական արձանաց՝ / աստուածային բնակութեան եկեղեցոյս շինուածոյ, որ / զերազանց գտաւ եւ երկնի ամենազարդ բարձրութեամբ, / որ ի նոցին իսկ յառաքելականացն դասուց / հիմնեցաւ, յաշակերտաց վերնոյն խնկեցաւ, ի / սպասատրաց բանին պաշտեցաւ:

<sup>52</sup> Կամաց արարողին խնկաւորեալ խորհրդարան:

<sup>53</sup> Այս մարգարէիցն ձայն խնկելի, / որ զարհնեալդ քո գալստեան / զգագատարարդ հրաման կանխաւ ազդէին, / եւ զոր չէ բանիս նիւթէլէն լեզուի / ընդ թիւ արկանել վասն անբաւութեան, / փոքունք եւ եւ նուազունք / արիւնակք եւ նմանութիւնք հինք եւ ժամանակատրք / աւետեացդ քո յայտնութիւն:

<sup>54</sup> Եւ արդ, նոքա, որ արհնեալքն եւ / յամենիշխան բերանոյ աստուածութեան Հաւան Քրիստոսի / ընտրեալքն, տանեալքն, խնկեալքն եւ բարեբանեալքն, / իբրեւ զանդամս Քրիստոսի պաշտեցեալք / եւ իբրեւ զարեւմանս Հոգոյն Սրբոյ հարդարեալք ...

With no benefit to the hair of the head, if it is not  
Sealed with the sign of your lifegiving, lordly Cross.<sup>56</sup>

So in reality and most truly this chrism,  
Brimming with light, filled with fragrance, is  
A vision of your love, O Sublime one. For which reason even Paul  
Considered it appropriate to say plainly in his discourse of thankful praise,  
“It is God who anointed us together with you into Christ Jesus,  
Who also sealed us and gave us the pledge of the Spirit  
in our hearts.”<sup>57</sup>

### Third Question: What makes up խումկ?

What is խումկ itself? Of what is it comprised?

Not surprisingly in the context of the *Matean*'s penitential tone, confession is itself խումկ. In Ban 71E he describes the offering of his words as a fragrant sacrifice, using the term “sweet savor [հոտ անուշից] that denoted the acceptable sacrifices in the Old Testament, and was applied as well to the sacrifice of Christ in the New Testament (Eph 5:2).<sup>58</sup>

The fragrance derives from many ingredients. Among them is the Gospel, which Gregory describes as խումկ in Ban 93M:

Blessed Awe  
Of the Omnipresent Help, ever indescribable  
In words and surpassing scrutiny, to whom  
Incense is offered continually through the Gospel of life, as a newborn  
Anointed in the city of David.<sup>59</sup>

Contrite hearts that see God as their hope are also խումկ (11B):

<sup>55</sup> Compare Gregory's use of the word chamber [սենեակ] in 1. a. Associations with Mark 6:6, Ezek 8:12, 4 Ki 9:6 and So 1:3 further enhance the meaning.

<sup>56</sup> Այս իդ խնկելի, պաշտելի եւ երանելի ո՛չ սոսկ / ամուսն ուղղոյս սենեկի եւ կամ հերաց վարսից / գագաթան նպաստ ինչ մատուցանի, եթէ ոչ / տէրունական կենսատու խաչիդ տեսունագրեսցի:

<sup>57</sup> Compare 2 Cor 1:21-22. Ահա արդարեւ յաւիտ իսկապէս իդս այս / լուսապատար, խնկալի՛ր՝ վերնականիդ սիրոյ / տեսութիւն: Վասն որոյ եւ Պաղոս իսկ պատշան / վարկաւ ի հատ գոհաբանութեանն՝ ասելով յայտնի. Որ / ամ գմեզ ձեւ հանդերձ ի քրիստոս Յիսուս՝ Աստուած / է՛ որ եւ կնկեաց գմեզ եւ ետ զառնաստշեայ Հոգւոյն ի / սիրտս մեր:

<sup>58</sup> Ընկալ՛ զխոստովանութիւն անձնադատ բանիս ի հոտ անուշից:

<sup>59</sup> Աւհնաբանեալ ահատրութիւն / ամենավայր ձեռնկալութեան, որ միշտ անհատ եւ / բանից եւ գերագանցեալ՝ քննութեանց, որ / անտարանան կենաց խնկիս յարակայ՝ իբր նորածին / Ածեալ ի հաղափ՛ Դարփ:

To hope that one might once again, yet again, attain  
 To the glorious adornment of the original gifts,  
 For on God's part that is about to be accomplished among the same [repentant  
 sinners]  
 To bring the good news that the Giver's might is capable of all things.  
 At the smell of this incense God is better pleased  
 Than with any other sweet fragrance,  
 Even what was of old mingled and ground for the service of the tabernacle –  
 Which is the image of humbled souls, brought down by brokenness  
 For a union of the same likeness.<sup>60</sup>

In 55B Gregory also says that there is no խումկ more pleasing to God than heartfelt and sincere prayer on behalf of those one has harmed, and on behalf of one's enemies.

And now, in this and by means of this what prayer shall I offer pleasing to you  
 And what acceptable, savory smoke of incense,  
 O Christ, blessed, heavenly king,  
 Unless I pray that you bless those cursed by me,<sup>61</sup>  
 Release those I have bound, liberate those I have judged,  
 Do good to those I have anathematized, crown those I have insulted,  
 Comfort those I have saddened, tend those I have crushed,  
 Care for those I have caused to leave, defend those I have betrayed,  
 Heal in soul those I have wounded in body.<sup>62</sup>

More broadly, խումկ consists of thoughts and mystical awarenesses that are beyond translation. In 73D Gregory offers a litany of Christ's qualities: exaltedness, authority, endless kingship, benevolence and so on. Following this Gregory adds that He is

<sup>60</sup> Յուսպ վերստին անդրէն միասնգամ նախապարգեւիցն փառազարդութեանց դարձեալ հասանել / Բանգի եւ յատուածուստ անդուստ հանդերձի եւ այս ներգործիլ առ սոյնս, / վասն զի սա գտտողին զարուրիւն ամենահնար ւետարանէ, / յոր խումկ հանութեան մեծապէս հոտտոի Աստուած / Բան յամենայն բորումն անուշից / եւ Բան ի խառնեալն երբեմն աղացմամբ ի սպաս խորանիւն / որ է կերպարան անձանց խոնարհից՝ զիջեալ բեկութեամբ / առ ի միութիւն նոյն նմանութեան:

<sup>61</sup> Although the phrase “by me” it is not repeated, the translation takes it as applying to the whole list of intercessions.

<sup>62</sup> Եւ արդ, զի՞նչ քեզ աղերս հանոյական ի յայսմ եւ ի սոյն / եւ ծուխ անուշից ընդունելի խնկոց մատուցից / զովեալ թագաւոր երկնատր Քրիստոս, / եթէ ոչ զառ ի յինէն անիծեալսն արհմնել աղապթեմ, / զկապեալսն արձակել, ազատել զդատապարտեալսն, / բարեգործել զնգովեալսն, պակել զբշնամանեալսն, / սփոփել զտրամեցեալսն, դարմանել զխորտակեալսն, / խնամել զսարտուցեալսն, պատսպարել զնենգեալսն, / զվիրատրեալսն ի մարմին՝ յոգի բժշկել:

made fragrant with ineffable mystery in the Holy Trinity. <sup>63</sup>

On the physical plane, certain types of tree resin are խումկ; thus խումկ( together with its liquid cousin, chrism) is in itself a symbolic link between the deadly tree in Paradise and life-giving worship (93B)

...So we who were exiled in the shadows of death  
Through the formerly destructive tree  
Of debt, lit with the flame of faith  
By means of its fellow-plant's fruit, will  
Return to the same offering of incense. <sup>64</sup>

In 93H, noting their frequent presence in the Song of Songs, Gregory says that fragrant myrrh and frankincense, two of the gifts brought to the infant Jesus by the magi, (Mt 2:11) symbolize a pure manner of life:

The Song of Songs  
Making known the mystery concerning God as perfumed wine  
In praise of the Bride, the holy Church,  
Brought hither virtue's myrrh together with the original  
Oil, and yet more myrrh, and frankincense  
Of a pure way of life, kneaded with the powder of sweet oils. <sup>65</sup>

In the context of his prayer in Ban 3C for the eternal efficacy of his words, Gregory refers to the combination of his own words with the prayers of his future readers as խումկ:

Through this book will their prayer be offered on my behalf,  
And by this word will their weeping be offered as incense together with mine;  
Through the united tasting of this lament

<sup>63</sup> Խնկեալ խորհրդով անթարգմանելեալ յերրորդութեանդ արբով:

<sup>64</sup> ... զի որ ի ստուերս մահու / տարագրեալ գտամ կանխակորուստ տնկովն / պարտեաց, ի պատճառ իրին ազգակցաւ պտղոյն / ջահատեցեալ հաստոյն վառմամբ ի նոյնն / դարձցով խնկատրութիւն:

<sup>65</sup> ... Երգոցն / երգ, իւղեփեցական զինի զԱստուծոյ ծանուցեալ / զխորհուրդն ի գովեստ հարսին սուրբ եկեղեցոյս, / զմոտս առաքինութեան հանդերձ ամենայն առաջին / իւղովն, եւ եւս զմոտս եւ կնդրով մահութեան / վարուց յամենայն փոշեաց անուշից իւղովն զանգեալ / անդասին եւ այսր յառաջաբերեաց:

May your light's grace, entering in, reside.<sup>66</sup>

In 75C Gregory says that his words are frankincense offered specifically within the Church and at the altar of God's glory:<sup>67</sup>

I beseech you, Lord Jesus, you who are One of the Essence,  
Through tasting whom we learned the knowledge of your Father and Holy  
Spirit!

Since by you were taught the orders of the Church that gives gifts to all,  
Here in this very place of the Light of life and the good things of salvation,  
Spreading forth our hearts with the lifting up of hands,  
We ever offer this verbal frankincense to you who dwell herein,  
Presenting it to you, O Lord of all, by means of this utterance of thanksgiving.<sup>68</sup>

As incense, comprised of precious and costly ingredients, Gregory's words were of a value worthy of the divine treasure. In Ban 88b he asks for his *Book of Prayers*:

Let it be offered as incense to the temple of your name,  
And let its fragrance rise to the altar of your glory;  
Let it be kept in your treasury,  
And be laid up amongst your possessions<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Նովորեցի վասն իմ այսու մատենի պաղատանք նոցին, / եւ բանի այսու հեծութիւն նոցին ընդ իմ խնկեցի, / ընդ համբոյր հաշակման այս ողբերգութեան / շնորհ լուսոյ քոյ մտեալ բնակիցէ:

<sup>67</sup> Gregory's obvious devotion to the institutional Church, to Church worship and even to the structure of the church building is in obvious contradistinction to the accusations made against him of sympathy with the cause of groups who opposed the Church in all its outer manifestations (**M. Mkryan**, *Grigor Narekats'i* [ *Գրիգոր Նարեկացի* ], Erevan, 1955, 122). He refutes their ideas explicitly in 75m as well as implicitly elsewhere in the *Matean*.

<sup>68</sup> Աղաչեմ զեզ, տէր Յիսուս, միդ յեութենէդ, / որով զգիտութիւն հար քոյ եւ հոգւոյդ սրբոյ հաշակեալ, ծանեալ, / քանզի ի քէն իսկ վարդապետեալ զամենապարզե կարգս / եկեղեցւոյ, ի սմին աղաբանոր լուսարան կենաց / փրկութեան բարեաց, տարածեալ զսիրտս ձեռաց / համբարձմամբ՝ զայս կնդրուկ բանի բնակողիդ ի սմա, / տիրողիդ բնափց երեւոյթենիդ մատուցեալ, / յալժ ընծայեցուցանեմք այսու բարբառով բարեշնորհութեան: The word բարեշնորհութիւն is a calque on the Greek term Eucharist. Thus Gregory is indicating the setting of the Ban, or of its inspiration, and also claiming eucharistic value for his words.

<sup>69</sup> Խնկեցի՛ ի տանար անուան քոյ / եւ բորեցի՛ ի սեղան փառաց քոց, / պահեցի՛ ի գանձարանի քոյ / եւ համբարեցի՛ ի ստացուածս քոյ:

Also described as frankincense is the sweat of the martyrs, with whose sacrifice Gregory asks that his own prayers be acceptably joined. In Ban 82B he says,

Disciples of the Apostles and fellow-sufferers with them,  
 Who, having become equal to them through their labors,  
 In utter fullness, without defect,  
 Dance in the merriment of endless bliss.  
 Together with the approved and acceptable pleas of their prayers,  
 Offered with their blood, dedicated with their fatigue, made fragrant with their  
 sweat,  
 Honorably receive me precisely according to their portion,  
 Standing strong in you with salvation incorruptible.<sup>70</sup>

The խոնկ created from the above mentioned ingredients is not merely fragrant and valuable, but powerful as well. Speaking of the sacraments that involve anointing with chrism, Gregory says in Ban 93N.

This word *anointing* carries such awe, and at the same time such Sanctity, such fearsome, unctuous fragrance  
 That just as no heavenly creature can dare to call itself God, but Merely “divine”, and no flesh-bearing person would presume to consider Taking Christ ashes own name, but only “Christian”, even the Baptist,  
 First among the immensely great, the one who invited the Spirit by means of water,  
 Said, “I am not the Anointed, but rather am sent before him.”<sup>71</sup>

#### Fourth Question: How is խոնկ offered?

If Gregory’s խոնկ is comprised of intangible words of thanksgiving, virtue, mystical understanding and a pure life, how is it to be offered?

Incense must be burned; there is no other way. Whether physical or intangible, it must surrender itself utterly to the fire, forfeiting its original structure entirely in order to release its fragrance.

<sup>70</sup> Աշակերտք առաքելոցն եւ շարչարակցք նոցին, / որ հասասարեալ գործովք ընդ նոսին՝ / կատարեալ լրմամբ անպակասելեալ, / պարեն ի խրախնանս անկէտն երանութեան, / որոց հանդոյական եւ ընդունական մաղթանամք, / արիւնքնձայ, վաստականուէր, քրտնակնդրոյկ աղերսիցն յարգմամբ / ընկալ զիս նորոգ ըստ նոցին մասին՝ / անեղծ փրկութեամբ ի քեզ արձանացեալ:

<sup>71</sup> Այնքան ունի անատրոփին, միանգամայն եւ սրբութիւն, իդատրոսական խնկատրոփին սոսկալի / անունս աւծութեան, մինչ զի որպէս ոչ է համարձակել / ուրով յերկնայնոցս Աստուած անուանիլ, այլ / աստուածային, նոյնպէս ոչ բերէ մարմին գճրիստոսոյ անուն անձին համարել, այլ՝ քրիստոնէայն, անտանելի / նախնոյն մեծութեան մրտչին՝ ջուրք գՀոգին / հրափրողին. Բանգի չեմ ես, ասէ, արծեալն, այլ / առաքեալ առաջի նորա:

### The fire

For Gregory, it is God Himself who ignites *ἡμῶν*. As Gregory states in Ban 93S, God is the consuming fire described in Dt 4:24. In combination with John the Theologian's description of God as Light (1 Jn 1:5), the divinity becomes both the igniting force for living, verbal incense and the light emitted from it. The union of God's light and fire is described in Is 10:17. Thus, speaking of the chrism Gregory says in Ban 93S:

...this oil  
 Redoubles its richness, offered with noble frankincense  
 Whose fragrance spreads throughout,  
 Because our God is a consuming fire, as Moses says,  
 And on the other hand, He is Light according to John. Thus Isaiah  
 Rightly refers to the same saying, *Israel's Light will be as Fire.*

The imagery of God as fire is also evident in Ban 93K. Although the subject is the chrism rather than incense in both cases, the relationship between the two substances, established by Gregory in 93B, remains relevant throughout the length of the Ban:

So without confusion by the divided wills of opposing forces  
 Dividing the will of the One, as is shamefully said,  
 But rather through a loving accord are you divinely  
 Contained by us, like us for our sake, in order to  
 Depict that exquisite likeness  
 Whereby this compound substance of a drop of oil  
 By which one is truly united with God  
 Seen by a pure mind, is understood as  
 Good Light warming Fire, heat of Love without the slightest  
 Breath of any uncompassionate coldness.

The burning incense is then offered on the censer of the human will.<sup>72</sup> In Ban 1A Gregory gives this image pride of place by including it within the first section of the first Ban. As will be seen below, the context established there is of prime importance for understanding the *Book of Prayers* as a whole. In lines saturated with references to Isaiah's prophecy he says.

<sup>72</sup> In his Encomium on the Virgin Mary, Gregory applies the image of the censer to her, comparing her purity to "a strong blend of frankincense and choice myrrh." **A. Terian**, *The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016, 292. Hereafter, Terian, *Festal Works*.

The sound of a cry, of weeping sobs of a heart's lament  
 I offer up to you, O Seer of secrets,  
 Proffering the fumes of a wavering mind's desires,  
 Placed on the fire of the soul's flaming anxiety<sup>73</sup>  
 To send to you on the censer of the will. <sup>74</sup>

### The tabernacle

In 51D Gregory lists the sins of Manasseh, the king of Israel best known for having gruesomely put the prophet Isaiah to death by sawing him in two. <sup>75</sup> Among the royal crimes is Manasseh's destruction of the tabernacle where incense is offered to God:

For he did not at all respect  
 The honor of the Creator and rejected the name of the tabernacle in which He  
 dwelt.

Chasing away the Spirit of God  
 He professed himself as Belial's,  
 For he set up that same dominical temple,  
 Precinct of the offering of incense to its Establisher,  
 ... as a shrine for ...Chiun,<sup>76</sup> a four-faced idol. <sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> The subtleties of the word *թախիծ* are understood from its context in Job 10:1, Is 47:5 and 57:17, and Lam 1:7.

<sup>74</sup> Չայն հառաչանաց հեծութեան ողբոց սրտից աղաղակի / Բեզ վերընծայեմ, տեսողդ գաղտնեաց, / եւ մատուցեալ եղեալ ի հոսր թախտութեան անձին տոչորման / զպտուղ ըղձից նենհերոյ սասանեալ մտացս՝ / բուրվառաւ կամացս առաքել առ Բեզ:

<sup>75</sup> The repentant prayer of King Manasseh is read during the Morning Hour in Great Lent and on Holy Thursday.

<sup>76</sup> Manasseh's impious changes to the Temple precinct are described in 4 Ki 21. It is interesting to note that while the name of the deity Chiun [Քեանն] is mentioned in the Hebrew of Amos 5:26, it does not appear in the Zohrab version of the text nor is it included in Nerses Lambronats'i's Commentary [Մեկնութիւն սրբոց երկոսասան մարգարէից], Istanbul, 1825-1826, 74. (Available online at <http://greenstone.flib.sci.am/gsd/cgi-bin/library.cgi?e=q-01000-00---off-0armbook-armenian%2chajgirqn%2chaygirq%2carmbook%2cNo%5fDate%5fBooks%2cazgayinZz-foreign-01-1----0-10-0---0---0direct-10-TX--4-----0-11--11-hy-50---20-about-%d5%ac%d5%a1%d5%b4%d5%a2%d6%80%d5%b8%d5%b6%d5%a1%d6%81%d5%ab+%d5%b4%d5%a5%d5%af%d5%b6%d5%b8%d6%82%d5%a9%d5%ab%d6%82%d5%b6--00-3-1-00-0-4--0--0-0-11-10-OutfZz-8-00&a=d&c=armbook&srp=2&srn=4&cl=search&d=HASH011f1cd981f4df49a17bcdca>)

<sup>77</sup> Քանգի ոչ պատկառեաց երբիք / զստեղծողին պատիւ եւ զանուն յիրաբնակ խորանէն մերժել / հալածեալ զԱստուծոյ Հոգին՝ / Բելիարայ զանձն դասանեաց: / Քանգի զնոյն տանար տիրական՝ / խնկարկութեան հաստողին սանման, ... Բեանայ ումեմն Բառաղիմակի նախանձարկու պատկերի / ... կազմեաց:



As mentioned above, Gregory says in 11B that the tabernacle in which incense is offered represents the humble soul. In Ban 75M he expands on this idea more clearly:

[the Church] is the door of heaven and city  
 Of the God of the living and Mother of all the living,<sup>78</sup> free from  
 Indebtedness and an accurate representation of the nature  
 Of this rational image: the noetic signifies the spirit, and  
 The tangible is an image of the body and the exceeding new holiness  
 Of the inexpressibly sacred things there, crowned  
 With the resplendent Sign of Christ.<sup>79</sup>

#### **Fifth Question: In What Context does Gregory Talk about Offering խունկ?**

Gregory sets the context for incense and its offering at the very beginning of the *Matean*, a position which implies the theme's primary importance.

After describing the nature of the խունկ to be offered, as noted above, he adds that it is a *free-will offering*<sup>80</sup> from myself, the rational sacrifice.<sup>81</sup>

In 1A Gregory also states that the coals on which the incense is offered are those of his own soul's burning anxiety, and the censer is his will.<sup>82</sup>

Gregory's offering of խունկ arises from the depths of his senses and feelings, from the mystical inner room of his being,<sup>83</sup> a location that carries with it associations of Mt 6:6. In other words, the "inner room" where incense is offered is the

<sup>78</sup> Using the phrase "Mother of all living" with reference to the Church connects the Church with Eve, whom Adam named "Mother of all living" in Gn 3:20. Gregory more clearly states the identity of Mary with Eve in his Litany for the Church, Ode on the Assumption, and, §§25-35. **Terian**, *Festal Works*, 99-100, 148.

<sup>79</sup> ... դրոն երկնից եւ քաղաք / Աստուծոյ կենդանոյ եւ մայր կենդանեաց, ազատ ի / պարտեաց, եւ ճշգրիտ տեսակ կերպի երեսակիս / բանականի, իմանալին՝ խորհուրդ հոգոյս, եւ / շաւշափելին՝ պատկեր մարմնոյս, եւ սրբութեանցն անդ / աննաօրից գերազանցեալ նոր սրբոյփն, եւ / քրիստոսեանն նշանաւ պայծառապարծ պատկեցեալ:

<sup>80</sup> The free-will offering is described in Lv 7 as one of the peace offerings. Gregory's terminology for sacrifices and offerings (զոհ, ողջակէզ, ընծայ and so on) remains to be explored.

<sup>81</sup> Կամաւորական նուէր բանական զոհիս:

<sup>82</sup> Մատուցեալ եղեալ ի հուր թախծութեան անձին տոչորման բուրվառաւ կամացս առաքել առ քեզ: More than two hundred years after Gregory, Vardan the Great Arewelts'i (+1271) would contextualize the incense offering specifically within the vespers service, using imagery reminiscent of Gregory's. See "Prayer, Incense and the Evening Sacrifice: Vardan the Great's Commentary on Psalm 140" by the present author (forthcoming).

<sup>83</sup> Ելցէ ի խորոց աստի զգայութեանց խորհրդակիր սենեկիս:

same chamber where Jesus says that mystical communication with God takes place: *But when you pray, enter your chamber and close its doors, and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you openly.*

Moreover, the inner chamber of the self is also the room where the loving act that produced us took place, and where the union of the self with God will also be enacted. As it says in So 3:4: *I found the one whom my Self loves...I held him and did not let him go, until I shall bring him into the chamber of the one who conceived me.*

The utter, fiery consumption of the խունկ offered from this most hidden place of loving, creative divine communion and union is fueled by force of the blessings Gregory has received,<sup>84</sup> and he fully expects God, the compassionate giver of those very blessings, not only to inhale the fragrance of this incense but to find it more pleasing than the cumulative smoke of the Old Testament's whole burnt offerings and to turn his gaze on Gregory favorably because of it.

Yet scenting it, O Compassionate one, may you regard it more  
Than the accumulated smoke  
Of whole burnt offerings completely consumed.<sup>85</sup>

The incense Gregory offers in his *Book of Prayers* resembles neither that described in Is 1:15 nor that decried in Ps 72:6-7:<sup>86</sup>

Do not receive this like the lifting up of the irreverent Jacob's hands,  
As in Isaiah's lament,  
And let it not appear loathsome to you  
Like the wickedness of Babylon  
That the seventy-second Psalm depicts as shameful,<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Ողջակիզեալ գաւրութեամբ հարպոյ, / Որ յիսն է պարարտութիւն Gregory here interprets the phrase հարպ պարարտութեան in light of Ps 62:6, the only verse in which the two words occur together.

<sup>85</sup> Այլ հոտոտեցիս, հայեցիս, գրած, / Քան ի պատարագն բոլորապտող/ Մատուցեալ ծխոյն բարդութեան:

<sup>86</sup> Babylon is not mentioned by name in Psalm 72; however, according to **Vardan Arewelts'i's** *Commentary on the Psalms* [Մեկնութիւն սաղմոսաց Դաւթի], Astrakhan, 1797, 242-246, the Psalm referred to the Babylonian captivity.

<sup>87</sup> Մի՛ իբրեւ զհամբարծումն ձեռաց ամբարշտեալն Յակոբոս, / ըստ բողոքելոյն Եսայեայ, / եւ զանիրատրփինն Բաբելոնի / տաղտկալի քեզ երեւեցի, / զոր առակ երթանասնեւորդի երկրորդի սաղմոսին ազդէ, / այլ իբր զբարեալ խունկն հանոյական՝ ի խորանին Սեղովայ:

As the Ban progresses, it becomes clear that the specific occasion, the primary context, which Gregory envisions for the sacrifice of this incense, and thus for the *Book of Prayers* as a whole, is the tabernacle worship at Shiloh. Specifically, Gregory's chosen context lies in the complex story of the captivity and return of the Ark of the Covenant,<sup>88</sup> told in the first and second books of Kingdoms and repeated in the Chronicles.<sup>89</sup> To resume from the end of the preceding citation:

But rather, [let it be] acceptable to your will  
 As the pleasing, fragrant incense in the tabernacle at Shiloh,  
 Which David reestablished, setting up  
 A resting place for the Ark on its return from captivity —  
 Which is a metaphor for my lost soul's being found again.<sup>90</sup>

The composite story is a familiar one, and Gregory clearly reprises the scenes of Israel's battles against the Philistines in Ban 1B. The Israelites, finding themselves on the losing end of the first battle, send to Shiloh to have the Ark of God's presence brought to them from its place in the tabernacle there, hoping that it will bring them victory. It does not. News of the Ark's capture, more than the news of his two sons' death in the fighting, causes the demise of the high priest at Shiloh, Eli, and precipitates the labor pains of his daughter-in-law.

As he does in other places as well, Gregory identifies himself with the Ark, taken captive because its role as the vehicle of the divine presence has not been

<sup>88</sup> Compare Gregory's Litany for the Church and the Ark of the Lord, **Terian**, *Festal Works*, 121-126, and **H. Bakhchinian**, *Grigor Narekatsi Book of Litanies and Odes: Deciphering and Examination* [Գրիգոր Նարեկացու Գանձարանը: Վերծանութիւն եւ քննութիւն], Lebanon: Chirak, 2016, 159-171.

<sup>89</sup> The story of the Ark's captivity and ultimate return to a resting place in Jerusalem is told in the Books of Kingdoms in two parts (1 Ki 4-6 and 2 Ki 6), and again in 1 Chr 15-16, while the details of worship as reinstated by David are found in 2 Chron 23. On the possibility of an underlying narrative for both see **Erik Eynikel**, "The Relation Between the Eli Narrative and the Ark Narratives," in **Johannes Cornelis de Moor and H. F. Van Rooy**, eds., *Past, present, future: the Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, 88-106.

<sup>90</sup> Այլ իբր զբուրեալ խումկն հանոյական'ի խորանին Սելովայ, / զոր Դաւիթն կանգնեալ նորոգեաց / տապանակին հանգստեան, ի գերութենէն դարձելոյ, / որ ի վերստին գիտ կորուսեալս հոգոյ առակի, / ընդունելի՛ կամաց քոյ լիցի:

respected. The devastating implications of its loss underline the inestimable value of the image and presence of God, whether within an object such as the Ark or a person such as Gregory.<sup>91</sup>

The reclaiming of the ark by King David is thus equivalent in Gregory's experience to his own recovery by David's Son from captivity in sin, and then from a wandering exile in various places that were not his true spiritual home.

David's eventual placing of the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem was accompanied by detailed instructions for re-instituting the worship of God with incense, worship in which the Ark played an indispensable part in the same way that human agency is essential to the offering of incense in the *Book of Prayers*.

For Gregory, then, the offering of incense, in all its forms, is an affirmation that the human ark has been brought back from captivity and is once again been restored to its right purpose and its rightful place, with proper respect for its significance and value.<sup>92</sup>

### Conclusion

In the larger context of the *Book of Prayers*, then, one might summarize the various meanings that Gregory attaches to the words խոսնկ / խնկելի as follows:

Խնկեալ են բանիք քն Իսա statement of affirmation, praise, repentance and love specifically offered first of all to God's words, in acknowledgment of His nature and attributes, to the Theotokos and then to the Church as her image: its liturgies, its structure founded on the Apostles, saints and martyrs, and its ability through the anointing of baptism to give birth to living children of God and to ordain and anoint them for Christ's worship.

The incense offered consists of love and repentance, especially as represented by pure behavior and by sincere prayer on behalf of one's enemies and those one has harmed. It is offered in the loving spirit of the Bride in the Song of Songs, with the gratitude of the prophetically repentant women who anointed Jesus, and in remembrance of the service offered to Christ's body by the Myrophores.

<sup>91</sup> For other thoughts on Gregory's understanding of human nature see **A. Terian**, "Gregory of Narek on the Human Nature," in **J.-P. Mahé and B. L. Zekiyan**, eds., *Saint Grégoire de Narek Théologien et Mystique* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 275), Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2006, 99-111.

<sup>92</sup> During an informal discussion of a homily by Vardan the Great on the Ten Commandments (See **R. R. Ervine**, "Vardan Arewelc'i's Sermon *On the Ten Commandments*," *St. Nersess Theological Review* 8 [2003], 13-83), my most esteemed colleague Abraham Terian reminded me that the Armenian Church celebrates the Feast of the Ark of the Covenant on the Saturday preceding Transfiguration. Although comparison of the *Book of Prayers* with the Church's festal calendar remains to be carried out, one is led to wonder whether perhaps Gregory penned his first Ban on the occasion of that feast.

All offerings of such incense mark the return of God's presence and the re-institution of his right worship in the tabernacle of the self, a re-institution that takes place when the Ark of the Covenant, in its human form, has been brought back from captivity to sin and its respect as the dwelling place of the symbols of God's divine providence and covenant has been restored. This offering of incense, reinstated by David's Son, is made within the innermost room of the self, on the censer of the will, and is ignited by the fire of divine love.

Finally, the complete consumption of this incense produces a fragrance that fills not only the inner room of the soul but the entire house that is the Church in all its aspects.

### ՌՈՒՅՆՐՏԱ ԷՐՎԻՆ

#### «ԽՆԿԵԱԿ ԵՆ ԲԱՆՔ ՔՈ» ԳՐԻԳՈՐ ՆԱՐԵԿԱՅՈՒ ՄԱՏԵԱՆՈՒՄ (ԲԱՆ 49Ա) ԵՎ ԻՍԿԱԿԱՆ ՊԱՇՏԱՄՈՒՆՔԻ ԲՈՒՅՐԸ

Գրիգոր Նարեկացու պոեմում «խունկ / խնկելի» բառերը հանդես են գալիս հետևյալ իմաստներով. «խնկեալ են բանք քո» բառակապակցությունն, առաջին հերթին, հատկապես Աստծո խոսքերի հավաստման, զովքի, դրանց առիթով ծագած ապաշխարության և սիրո արտահայտությունն է՝ ի հաստատումն Նրա բնության ու հատկանիշների: Այն վերաբերում է նաև Աստվածածնին ու նրա պատկերը հանդիսացող Եկեղեցուն, վերջինիս առաքելահաստատ ծեսերին ու կառուցվածքին, սրբերին ու նահատակներին, և Աստծո կենդանի զավակներին մկրտության օժմամբ կյանք տալու և Քրիստոսի պաշտամունքին պատրաստելու ու օժելու նրա ունակությամբ:

Ընծայված խունկը բաղկացած է սիրուց ու ապաշխարությունից, հատկապես եթե այն ներկայացված է որպես անկեղծ աղոթք՝ ի սեր մեկի թշնամիների և իրենից վնաս կրածների: Այն ընծայվում է երգ երգոցի հարսի սիրառատ ոգով, Հիսուսին օժա՛ մարգարեաբար ապաշխարող կանանց գոհությամբ՝ ի հիշատակ Քրիստոսի մարմնին յուղաբեր կանանց մատուցած ծառայության:

Բոլոր նման խնկարկումները նշում են Աստծո ներկայությունը և նրա նշմարիտ պաշտամունքի վերահաստատումը սեփական անձի տապանակում, այն վերահաստատումը, որ տեղի է ունենում, երբ Ուխտի տապանակն իր մարդկային ձևով վերադարձվում է մեղքի գերությունից և նրա՝ որպես Աստծո նախախնամության բնակավայրի խորհրդանիշների և ուխտի պատիվը վերականգնված է: Դավթի Որդու նորոգած այս խնկարկումն արվում է սեփական անձի ամենախորին գաղտնարաններում, կամֆի բուրվառում, և նրա հրի աղբյուրը աստվածային սերն է:

Ի վերջո, այս խնկի սպառումից առաջ է գալիս մի բուրմունք, որը լցնում է ոչ միայն հոգու ներքին սենյակները, այլև տունն ամբողջությամբ, այսինքն՝ Եկեղեցին բոլոր առումներով:

РОБЕРТА ЭРВИН

**ԽՆԿԵԱԿ ԵՆ ԲԱՆՔ ՔՈՒՆ Բ “КНИГЕ СКОРБНЫХ ПЕСНОПЕНИЙ”  
ГРИГОРА НАРЕКАЦИ (49 А) И БЛАГОУХАНИЕ ИСТИННОГО  
БОГОСЛУЖЕНИЯ**

Слова խնկ / խնկելի (ладан / воскурение) в поэме Нарекаци имеют следующие значения: Словосочетание խնկելու եմ բանք քո (“воскурено [благовоение] слов Твоих”) – в первую очередь выражение признания и похвалы слов Бога, вызванными ими раскаяния и любви, в подтверждение Его природы и атрибутов. Оно относится также к Богородице и Церкви как ее образу, к ее чинам и строению, к святым и мученикам, к ее способности посредством помазания крещением породить живых чад господних и уготавливать и помазывать их для служения Христу.

Ладан подношения состоит из любви и раскаяния, особенно если он представлен в виде искренней молитвы за своих врагов или тех, кому ты навредил. Он подносится в любящем духе Невесты из Песни песней, с благодарностью пророчески кающихся жен, умастивших Иисуса, в память о той службе, которую мироносицы сослужили телу Христа.

Все воскурения такого ладана обозначают возвращение божественного присутствия и учреждение заново его правильного почитания в скинии своей личности, когда Ковчег Завета в человеческой форме возвращен из плена греха и честь его, как местопребывания символов божественного промысла и завета, восстановлена. Это воскурение ладана, обновленное Сыном Давида, проводится в самых потаенных глубинах собственного Я, в курильнице воли, зажженной от божественной любви.

Наконец, всеожжение этого ладана производит благоухание, заполняющее не только внутренние покои души, но также весь дом, то есть Церковь во всех ее проявлениях.