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SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF GREGORY OF NAREK'S *BOOK OF LAMENTATION*

Аннотация. В статье посредством рассмотрения ряда из 95 молитв «Книги скорбных песнопений» Григора Нарекаци анализируется восходящий путь духовного и религиозного развития внутреннего и внешнего человека, практики молитв, благодати покаяния и возможности искупительного обожения человеческого существа. Путь развития, избранный автором «Книги», рассматривается с точки зрения средневековых и позднейших (XVIII–XIX вв.) комментариев к молитвам. В основе этого пути человек — внешний и внутренний, и они должны находиться в гармонии, когда вовлечены в молитву. Молящийся вникает в текст молитвы, отождествляет себя с автором, а искреннее сообщество с Богом делает его «непосредственно близким» к Боже-ству, приводя к благодати. «Книга» выражает одну из основ христианской и неоплатонической этики, согласно которой, цель духовного развития человека — стремление к внутреннему благоподобию. Таким образом, духовное и религиозное развитие человека раскрывается через а) прославление, где Бог — наивысшая сущность; б) исповедь, где человек обретается в оппозиции к Богу из-за своей греховной земной жизни; в) моление, которое есть акт раскаяния грешника и поиска им милосердия Божия.

Ключевые слова: Григор Нарекаци, «Книга скорбных песнопений», книга молитв, христианский мистицизм, религиозные молитвы, Св. Дух

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SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF GREGORY OF NAREK'S *BOOK OF LAMENTATION*

Abstract. The article examines the ascending path of spiritual and religious development, encompassing both the inner and the outer man, the practice of prayer, the grace of repentance, and godlikeness. This examination involves analyzing a series of 95 prayers from the *Book of Lamentation* of St. Gregory of Narek. The trajectory of development chosen by the author of the *Book of Lamentation* is evaluated from the perspective of medieval and subsequent (18th–19th centuries) commentaries on prayers. The foundational principle of this path is based on the concept of Man, with his dual manifestations — the external and the internal — harmonizing when engaged in prayer. The suppliant assimilates the text of the prayer, identifies with the author, and sincere communication with God brings him “immediately close”, leading him to the grace of tears. This approach, therefore, represents the sole means by which humanity can attain the divine image. St. Gregory's book elucidates a foundational principle of both Christian and Neoplatonic ethics, asserting that the primary objective of human spiritual growth is to aspire to godlikeness within the confines of human capability. Consequently, the trajectory of human spiritual and religious development can be delineated as follows: a) glorification, where God is regarded as the ultimate essence; b) confession, where the human being is seen as being in opposition to God due to their sinful earthly life; and c) supplication, which denotes the act of a sinner repenting and seeking divine mercy.

Keywords: Gregory of Narek, *Book of Lamentation*, book of prayers, Christian mysticism, spiritual prayers, Holy Spirit

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Introduction

On 12 April 2015, in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, Pope Francis declared the Armenian monastic author Gregory of Narek (ca. 950–1003)¹ a Doctor of the Universal Church, the thirty-sixth person to attain that venerable status [Francis 2015]². The event was historic. The holiness, intercession, and legacy of St. Gregory of Narek became a source of spiritual education and life transformation in the world [Mahé 2015; Zek'iyān 2015].

St. Gregory of Narek produced a substantial corpus of liturgical and devotional poetry in addition to his other writings [T'amrazyan 2008]. His creative output is distinguished by the richness of his distinctive verses, canticles, special psalms, and interpretations [Ervine 2007; Petrossian 2010]³. However, it is in his primary work, the *Book of Lamentation* (*Prayerbook*), a codex of predominantly penitential prayers from the closing years of his life (ca. 1001–1003), that Gregory's greatness is most evident. Furthermore, the canonisation of Gregory of Narek was primarily due to the profound depth of the *Book of Lamentation*, which had already been translated into numerous languages worldwide [Apresyan 2021]. Additionally, Gregory of Narek's being proclaimed a Doctor of the Church of Rome led to new interpretations [Lalayan 2021], translations into Estonian [Volkonski 2017], Armenian [Aramyan 2019], and Lithuanian [Geda 2021], along with editions [Kheranyan 2023], and studies [Papazian 2019] of the *Book of Lamentation*.

The *Book of Lamentation* comprises Tenets of Prayer, 95 Prayers, and a Colophon. The Tenets of Prayer elucidate the reasons, significance, and purpose of the creation of the book. The objectives and concepts are elucidated initially. The book of prayers is a divinely inspired, biblical text that posits a mysterious connection between the author and the readers, acting as a mediator between God and people [Mathews 2014; Arlen 2018]. This is evidenced by the following

¹ Gregory of Narek spent his entire life at the Narek Monastery, where he was given his name. The monastery was subsequently destroyed in 1915. Currently, some caves and monastic cells can be visited in the village of Narek (Western Armenia). The intellectual and spiritual environment that fostered the growth of Gregory of Narek is most accurately described as the School of Narek. The School of Narek was established in the Monastery of Narek during the 30s of the 10th century. It was founded by Anania of Narek, the teacher of the monastery. Prominent figures associated with the School included Khosrov Andzewats'i, Anania of Narek and Gregory of Narek. The School of Narek was one of the largest and most prominent congregations of the time, where notable chroniclers, scholars, interpreters-theologians, and teachers gathered. The school continued to flourish until the migration of Vaspurakan in 1021 [Tamrazyan 2008].

² In accordance with the decree of Pope Francis, February 27 will henceforth be marked in the main Roman calendar as the day of commemoration of St. Gregory, reverend of the Universal Church.

³ The earliest dated book to have survived from Gregory is his interpretation of the Song of Songs, which he wrote at the behest of King Gurgen of Artsruni in 977. It is also the case that Gregory wrote the history of the *Holy Cross from Aparank'* and the four panegyrics or encomia, as well as the *Gandzaran*, a collection of canticles and treasures [Petrossian 2010]. The dissemination of myths surrounding Gregory's life as a saint, and the attribution of numerous miracles to him, became prevalent [Ghanalanyan 1969]. Various episodes of Gregory of Narek's hagiography have been illustrated in both Armenian miniatures and engravings in early printed books [Devrikyan, Devrikyan 2023].

quote from Prayer 54.5: “And thus, along my way of return, I leave this testament of sins committed as a remembrance for readers, that they might pray to God through my words continually” [Terian 2021: 242]⁴. The essence of the book lies in its promise that those who pray with it will find healing from their sins, and those who beg and wish will be saved. This is evident in the following prayer: “And may you make this book consisting of prayers of lament, begun in your name, Most High, into a life-giving remedy to heal your creatures’ ailments of body and soul” (Prayer 3.5, p. 19). This is followed by 95 closely related prayers. The prayers of the book, with the exception of two⁵, are titled “Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart”. The conclusion of the *Prayerbook* contains a statement of its purpose: Although the book will eventually come to an end, its immortality is ensured through the enduring presence of the book. This is evidenced by the following prayer: “May I be deemed to live through the lasting prayers of this book, even though I shall die as a mortal” (Prayer 88.2, p. 401). Furthermore, the concept behind its creation must be considered: through the insights of Gregory of Narek and future generations, each time his prayers and mentions are invoked, he should also be regarded as saved: “And blessing the letters of this book of lamentation, purify it and stamp it as an eternal monument among (books of) worship pleasing to you” (Prayer 88.2, p. 400).

The final section, the Introductory Colophon, states that the text was written at the behest of monastic brothers, celibate fathers, and hermits. In this sense, the book represents the distillation of the ascetic-contemplative life and the aspirations of many individuals seeking perfection. Gregory’s admission in the colophon indicates that he drew upon various sources in composing the book: “During the peaceful interval (of three years), when the enemies of the church were pushed to the brink, I planned, structured, arranged, collected, inscribed, compiled, amplified, established in detail, and assembled into one the many facets of this sacred book” (Colophon, p. 642).

The *Prayerbook* is notable for its structure and content, which can be illustrated by a vertical line. At the base of this line stands Man, the central figure in Gregory’s work, while God resides at the apex, representing the divine. The aim of this article is to illustrate the profound spiritual and religious significance of the *Book of Lamentation*, as it delineates an ascending trajectory from humanity to divinity. At the centre of this linear path, numerous keys and signs lie in wait, revealing the universal significance embedded within the *Book of Lamentation*.

⁴ Examples of this kind from the *Book of Lamentation* and other sources will be included in Abraham Terian’s English translation of Gregory’s work [Terian 2021]. In the text, the prayer and page will be marked.

⁵ Prayer 92 (“Meditation on the blessed plank of wood, the merry chime of the semantron. An imploration composed in conformity with its symbolic significance”) and Prayer 93 (“Interpretive prayer on the light-giving oil of Holy Myron”) stand out from the rest due to their confessional or theological content and less cursive style, which differs from Gregory’s usual wishes and confessions. The author gave these chapters different subtitles, perhaps to reflect their unique characteristics. Noticeably, prayers 92 and 93 are more like didactic discourses modified to fit a prayer form and made part of the book. In them we see examples of prayer as a means of doctrinal teaching.

1. Glorification

The moral teaching of the inner man, which originated with Plato and then passed to Christian mystical theology, found its unique development in the creation of Gregory of Narek [Warne 1995; Benevich, Biryukov 2009]. At the root of the latter is Man, with his two possible manifestations, the external and the internal, who will reach the level of absolute Man through their harmony during his spiritual life. The outer man is opposed to the inner man, the description to that dichotomy of the soul [Tobin 1983]. Gregory reflects on the tragedy of conflicting emotions and confused thoughts in several prayers in his book: "And as for your beloved, those who for your sake delight in respecting someone unworthy as myself — for they look at my attractive religious garb without knowing the concealed defects and call someone pitiful as myself 'blessed'" (Prayer 83.5, p. 387).

This is the unity of the contradiction between appearance and being, outwardly different as well as inwardly distinct: "Two opposite outlets of vision: one for weeping, the other for erring. Two lifted hands: one to strike, the other to shield. Two faces of a sort: one despondent, the other furious" (Prayer 30.3, p. 134). This is a self-immersion, a look into the soul, and then into the outside world, which brings emotional tension to the person praying, addressing his speech to God, or an inner monologue [Stewart 2011]. St. Gregory makes a clear distinction between the inner and the outer life, considering the person as a whole of both, giving priority to the spiritual life. Along with the outer and the inner man, the idea of the old and the new man also appears in Gregory's book. The old man was sinful and had bad habits (arrogance, envy, malice, pride). In parallel, the new man, free from sins, is foreshadowed: "I discovered novelties among my former wrong doings" (Prayer 20.6, 87; cf. Matt 17). In the following verses, Gregory emphasizes that new understandings are not fixed patterns. The old will be destroyed and the human being will reach the new person by crossing the road mentioned above and looking at the Lord God. Since biblical realities participate in the creation of the *Prayerbook* and confirm the thoughts of the author, Gregory explains this according to the relevant part of the Bible [Adrian 2018]: "Truly, 'my sin and lawlessness dwell within me and I am consumed by them', according to the prophet's word against the transgressors and to the Lord's parable of the new wine in old wineskins" (Prayer 62.2, p. 273).

2. Confession

The inner man and outer man are in harmony when engaged in prayer. In commentaries on the *Book of Lamentation*, interpreters addressed the concept of prayer: "Prayer is not merely an appeal to God for divine assistance; it is also a heavenly key that can unlock one's treasures" [Nalean 1745: 1]. Moreover, it has the capacity to alter the course of lives, as evidenced by the accounts of "individuals who were rendered blind who were subsequently able to see, the paralyzed who were able to walk, and the dead who were resuscitated" [Ibid.: 1]. Subsequently, the interpreters directed their attention to the prayer as articulated by St. Gregory, stating: "...his voice is holy, sighing from the depths of the heart" [Ibid.: 1]. St. Gregory initially proposed the concept of the prayer book for his work.

Furthermore, medieval scribes of the *Prayerbook* provided titles for the prayers in the marginal notes of its manuscripts, based on their content: “Prayer of the Holy Mother of God”, “Prayers of Hope for Sin and Salvation”, “Prayer for Last Judgment”, “Prayer for Enemies”, “Prayers for Healing”, “Prayer for Angels”, “Spiritual Prayers”, and so forth [Narekats‘i 1985: 973–1122]. In various sections of the *Book of Lamentation*, the author refers to it: “Please take into account my constant prayers, these newly written characters crying for mercy, the despondent calls in this book of mournful singing” (Prayer 71.5, p. 321), “And may anyone who reads these pleas of an intercessory voice crying out in expectant” (Prayer 90.6, p. 409). This can be interpreted as follows: “Effective medicines for invisible pains... Occasions for tears, causes of prayers” [Samuelian 2001: 29]. The aforementioned item was subsequently addressed as follows: “May earnest supplications be made on behalf of some and good counsel be given to others through the prayers in this book” (Prayer 3.2, p. 16).

In Gregory’s work, the external, physical description of prayer is related to internal, spiritual feelings: “Lord, my supplications in prayer to you, with my hands lifted up, with arms outstretched, with all my viscera, with the sighs of my heart, with the cries of my tongue and lips” (Prayer 93.9, p. 438).

In the previous prayer, St. Gregory expressed his lamentation; in Prayer 27, however, his sorrow is expressed in the form of confession and repentance. In Prayer 50, he provides an example of how to pray: “...not to go and sit in front of the throne of the haughty when the wicked assemble with their vain thoughts <...> instead, to be with those who repent in their heart <...> who have humbled themselves willingly” (Prayer 50.2, p. 221–222). He rejects the self-satisfied, haughty, and arrogant attitude, instead embracing the tendency to always be worthy of God [Maklakov 2001: 16–22].

Prayer is a state of being in which the body and soul are in harmony: “Lord, my supplications in prayer to you, with my hands lifted up, with the sighs of my heart, / <...> with this choice substance but being filled with your Spirit! In this light we shall also see you” (Prayer 93.9, p. 438). The *Prayerbook* provides a physical description of prayer, which becomes accessible to God when the soul joins it: “...unique Light, sign of rejoicing, rain of blessing, Spirit (blown) in our face, strength of our visage, covering of our head, mover of our lips, enabler of speech, charioteer of the soul, lifter of the arm, extender of the hand, holder of the heart’s reins, familiar name” (Prayer 32.3, p. 144). The supplicant assimilates to the text of the prayer, identifies with the author, and sincere communication with God makes him “immediately close”, bringing him to the grace of tears.

The followers of the School of Narek note that the work should have such emotional and penitential images that it can touch the heart of a person and make him cry: “I entered with a word of repentance, with the intention that your heart would be moved to repentance and that you would shed tears” [T‘amrazyan 2016: 137]. The grace of weeping is connected with the experience of prayer, it accumulates penitential charges in the person praying, leading him to emotional tension, followed by inner brightness and luminosity. Only in this way can man approach the image of God: “Accept the dew of my lamentation, the tearful sob-

bing of my lustful eyes, on your immaculate, incarnate feet, O Christ" (Prayer 32.4, p. 145).

A prayer filled with tears holds the power to cleanse the one praying, not only from the burden of sin but also from the ailments of illness. In the words of St. Gregory of Narek, the book of prayer can be considered a "life-giving remedy" (Prayer 3.5, p. 19) and a "testamentary book" (Prayer 9.1, p. 42). It offers its readers: "Heal the souls and forgive the sins of those who read this (book) with a pure heart, release them of their debts and free them from the bonds of guilt" (Prayer 3.3, p. 17).

The divine word is the source of healing, and the healing of body and soul is accomplished by faith in the word, relying on the word as set forth in the book of prayers [Ferguson 1993]: "Upon the dawning of the shadowless rays of your glorious mercy, sins fade, demons are chased away, transgressions are erased, shackles are loosened, chains are broken, the dead are brought to life, ailments are cured, wounds are healed" (Prayer 41.1, p. 187).

The emotion of contrition represents the triumph of light within the human soul. The emotion of contrition gives rise to tears, which in turn result in the creation of Gregory. This is evident in Prayer 27, where the Gregory states: "Having applied the earlier poems to my situation" (Prayer 27.1, p. 115). In his writings, St. Gregory of Narek refers to the *Prayerbook* as an exemplar of linguistic power: "Do not sever the tie that binds me to you with steadfast love. Do not reject the art strongly suited to my tongue" (Prayer 78.3, p. 362). The connection between the God-Man is established through speech, which serves as the conduit between humanity and the divine. The poet elects to utilize the medium of speech as a conduit for communication with the divine.

3. Supplication

One of the embodiments of divine love was *light* [Mikushevich 1981: 65–66], to which we find many references in the *Book of Lamentation*. Light is an ontological category for the author: "Cloaked in your unapproachable light, look down upon me from the heights of heaven" (Prayer 18.4, p. 77), "The light of your mercy surely offsets the darkness of your fury, for you are not affected by vice—not in the slightest" (Prayer 16.2, p. 68).

The author is analogous to God [Gorman 2019]. In the book of prayers St. Gregory of Narek, as a mystic, devotes particular attention to the role of faith. This is particularly evident in Prayer 10, where he posits that the salvation of those "troubled with sins" is contingent not only upon a combination of factors, including strong repentance and desperate self-denial, but also upon repentance accompanied by enlightened faith. For him, faith, hope, and love are concepts that facilitate the attainment of the ideal and the highest on the path of purification [K'yoseyan 2023: 92–102]. The concept of faith (transition from hope to faith) can be interpreted as an expression of the human capacity to embody the divine: "...to become divine by the grace of election and joining you, Creator, by partaking of your lordly body. Uniting with your luminous life is the fulfillment of the blessed promise" (Prayer 52.3: 232–233).

From the very beginning of creation, the human being was created in the image of God: "...resemble God as much as possible for godly people" (Prayer 71.1: 314; cf. Matt 5:48, Luke 6:36). In this instance, St. Gregory requests that God also remember his enemies. He requests that his enemies be remembered with kindness ("Remember my words of confession in this book of lamentation, even for the good of those of the human race who are our enemies" — Prayer 83, p. 382–383), rather than being angry with those who have reproached him ("Do not be angry at them for my sake, Lord, as (you would) at defamers of the saints. On account of your constant love toward me, forgive them as (you would) rebukers and sincere abhorers of evil" — Prayer 83, p. 383).

This anger is analogous to the anger one would feel towards those who spread false and slanderous information about saints. Gregory's preference was to pray for his enemies rather than request favors for his benefactors: As Gregory himself acknowledged: "For this reason, I considered praying for my enemies before asking good for those to whom I am grateful" (Prayer 83.4, p. 386). Conversely, requesting favors for enemies represents a supreme act of nobility, which, according to the author, elevates a man to a state of divinity: "To seek good for those who have done good is the law of nature, a usual, passionate response; and indeed, all manner of people are capable of following this first rule, whereas the second, which is foremost in meeting with your approval, is an emulation of the divine" (Prayer 83.4, p. 386).

God is love, according to St. Gregory of Narek, and thus not angelic, but rather humane: "...direct me toward the good path of your light" (Prayer 81.3, p. 376). Gregory posits that man towards God must reciprocate this love: "You were not called 'angel lover', although you are the founder of their dominion", "Rather, to your greater glory and praise, you preferred to love humankind" (Prayer 35.1, p. 167).

In verse 31 of the 81st Prayer, angels are described as "true prosecutors" (Prayer 81, p. 375). The description employs three adjectives that are essentially synonyms: "true", "fearsome", and "merciless". In accordance with both the traditional understanding and Gregory's interpretation, these characteristics are attributed to angels in relation to those who do not repent, and conversely, to benevolent spirits in relation to those who do repent: "They shall come with your only begotten Son, fearsome witnesses at the judgment (Matt 25:31), true prosecutors of the sins of earthly beings before the frightening tribunal, just revealers of their assignment toward us. There, too, they sympathize (with us), pleading with sighs, in perpetual chant of their voices: 'Have mercy. You created (them). Do not destroy (them)'" (Prayer 81.1, p. 375).

Prayers 75, 92, and 93 and the subsections of chapters 33, 34 and 26 of the *Prayerbook* are characterized by a distinct religious and religious-philosophical nature and content [Russell 1996]. This is evident in their stylistic and spiritual distinctiveness, which sets them apart from the rest of the prayers. The French translator of the *Prayerbook*, J.-P. Mahe, refers to these chapters in his commentary, noting: "It has long been observed that Chapters 34, 75, 92, and 93 of the *Prayer Book* exhibit notable divergences from the prevailing stylistic norms

observed in the remainder of the text. The distinction is contingent upon a number of factors. The style of the aforementioned chapters is less rhythmic and more akin to prose than that of the remainder. The doctrinal and theological content of these chapters is distinct from that of Gregory's typical writings, which are characterized by confessions and prayers. These chapters diverge from the rest in terms of both form and content, with a particular emphasis on their main sections" [Mahe 1986: 100]. In these prayers, the author engages with the concept of death. The latter is initiated with the voice of the bell, which Gregory interprets as a call for someone who has died in a state of sinful ignorance: "...a voice of gladness, a soothing music, a substantial blessing, a means of salvation, an occasion for pardon, a banishment of grief, a freeing from entanglements, a release from anxiety, a letup of cares" (Prayer 92.10, p. 426–427).

As previously mentioned by A. Terian: "Gregory draws a comparison between the guidance offered by the bell and that provided by the Sabek tree (Prayer 92): "...it might become the tree of the thicket". As in Prayer 77.3, Gregory uses the Hebrew word *sēbek* 'thicket' in its transliterated form (Arm. gen. *sabek-ay*). The allusion, as earlier, is to the ram caught by the horns, which became a substitute for the sacrifice of Isaac when about to be offered by his father Abraham (Gen 22:1–19) and which interpretively prefigures the sacrifice of Christ" [Terian 2021: 425].

According to biblical tradition, God hung the ram from the branch of the tree on which Abraham was instructed to sacrifice his son Isaac. The cross-shaped wood (*semantron*⁶) of the tree was believed to offer salvation to the soul. In a metaphorical sense [Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 3], the bell is referred to as a "bridge of yearning" (Prayer 92.11, p. 427) a conduit through which virtuous souls may traverse from this earthly realm to the next, ultimately attaining union with the divine in the afterlife: "to be united with you inseparably" (Prayer 92.11, p. 427). Consequently, the bell's voice serves to rouse the faithful from their spiritual lethargy, prompting them to adhere to the divine commandments and undergo a spiritual transformation [Narekats'i 1985: 1114].

In the same way that salvation is not possible without faith, atonement cannot be achieved without confession. In the concluding section of Prayer 94, Gregory moves from experiencing torment, sadness and extreme despair to developing an affinity with the mystic's concept of salvation, which he expresses through the metaphor of "two dumb eyes" [Mahé 2006]. While acknowledging the presence of his "sins" and the accompanying feelings of remorse and self-righteousness, he also directs his attention towards hope and charity [Avetik'ean 1827: 111]. In the final prayers, the author meets his demise, and dramatic death scenes unfold, including detailed accounts of the agony he endures.

⁶ The "*semantron*", a horizontally suspended plank of wood gaveled percussively to summon the monastics to prayer at the set hours of the day, functioned as a bell. As a plank of wood, it was a constant reminder of the cross, allegorized in this prayer. Gregory equates its call with the sound of the trumpet on resurrection day, the wake-up call from the sleep of death, hence the integral relation of this prayer to the preceding one [Terian 2021: 415].

The *Book of Lamentation* is thus created as a prayer of love to God, with the three divine virtues of prayer (hope, faith, and love) serving as its foundation. In medieval Christian thought, faith, love, and hope were regarded as divine virtues, with faith, hope, and love being likened to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, respectively. Gregory of Narek offers a poetic articulation of this concept in Prayer 10: "...is honored in the name of the glorified Trinity together with love and hope" (Prayer 10, p. 47).

Conclusions

The spiritual and religious significance of the *Book of Lamentation* of Gregory of Narek is revealed both through the examination of the book as a whole and through consideration of each prayer individually, as a discrete image. The book of prayers is explored through three categories: a) glorification, where God is regarded as the ultimate essence; b) confession, where the human being is seen as being in opposition to God due to their sinful earthly life; and c) supplication, which denotes the act of a sinner repenting and seeking divine mercy. Subsequently, an analysis of the content of each prayer, the author's allusions, key terms, and biblical footnotes serves to corroborate the veracity of these assertions. A synthesis of these sources demonstrates that Gregory composed prayers for a variety of temporal and spiritual purposes, including those dedicated to specific times of the day, healing, judgment, salvation, petitioning for enemies, spiritual prayers, and so forth.

All the theory and the knowledge that was created through and about Gregory of Narek became the foundation for the perception, cognition, and development of St. Gregory in the world as well. Due to its spiritual and religious importance Gregory's book of prayers became a universal manual for monks, hermits, solitaries, and all believers. Some of the prayers, particularly the prayer to the Holy Spirit, as well as the canticles, are included in the church liturgy to improve its ritual and ceremony.

The *Book of Lamentation* is an exploration of the spiritual path for the individual, encompassing the development of the inner and the outer man, the practice of prayer, the grace of repentance and tears, and the attainment of godlikeness. In the given work, the author traverses the 95 prayers that comprise the way from man to God, a journey facilitated by the highest expressions of speech, thought, and theological and philosophical reflections found within these very prayers. However, a pivotal factor that enables the ascent towards spiritual perfection is a profound and intense spiritual experience.

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