

**A WAY OF REDEMPTION.
BOOKS AND RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT
IN 18TH CENTURY ROMANIAN CULTURE**

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The analysis of the relationship book-community, besides expressing the evaluation of a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of the sociology of culture (circulation, reading, degree of literacy), at the same time emphasizes the book, and above all, the religious book, reveals the mechanisms of a collective and individual psychology regarding religious piety.¹ The latter is the subject matter of the history of religious feeling which deals with the intensity of the individual and the community's religious experience, with the way in which an individual or a community draw away from, or nearer to the deity, precisely with "the degree of sharing in the divine existence."² Therefore it is not the subject matter of the history of religion or of religious beliefs because Christian beliefs and dogmas are mere circumstances of religious experience.³

Religious sentiment is an outcome of religious beliefs, it is an intellectual and a non-intellectual undertaking of religion through religious education and practice. Inasmuch as religious emotion is a consequence of religious discourse and education, belonging not to an official or notional level ("ce qui dit"), but to a real level ("ce qui est vécu")⁴, it ultimately stands for man's consciously assumed participation in religious values. This partaking of the religious experience is accomplished "either through words or

¹ Our analysis is based on a sample of old religious books in the North-Western part of Transylvania, books in which we can find a series of marginal notes written by readers and owners, laics and churchmen.

² Cf. Goichot, E. H. Bremmond, *L'Historien du sentiment religieux*, Paris, 1982.

³ Cf. Pelet, L, *Le sentiment religieux et la religion*, Paris, 1935.

⁴ Goichot, E, *op. cit.*

through deeds and gestures”⁵. Within the sphere of words the main place is held by the prayer, “an exaltation of the heart towards the deity through invocations and requests”. Generally speaking, religious deeds are “a series of gestures celebrating the deity”. In a broad sense, the sacrifice is the central element within the framework of religious attitudes which stands out as a way of beseeching the deity to get in touch with us, “to become one with us. It is an act of worship... by means of sacrifices through which we supplicate the deity to show goodwill towards us, to fulfill our needs”⁶.

To an extent, the idea of sacrifice undoubtedly includes the offerings, that is, the material sacrifices dedicated to the deity. “A symbol (a cross, an icon, a temple) stands for sharing in the divine in its material configuration proper.”⁷ The book, *vehicle of the divine word*, may be ranged among the same category of the deity’s configurative and transfigurative symbols, but on a much more abstract level: and from this point on, it should be assigned a place on a much higher level within the realm of sacredness. In this respect the holy book, the religious book expresses a *hierophany*. The book, which is bestowed and therefore associated with devotion having its definite place in the sacred space of the church, is likewise regarded with *piety*. In this way “there is an *ontological communion* between the sacred and its material vehicle as far as either the matter of the *sacraments* (books, icon, cross) or the human being are concerned”⁸.

The book partakes of the consubstantiation between the deity and the sacred objects which are nothing else but the deity’s revelation or epiphany in temporal perception. The attitude towards the book is ambivalent because, on the one hand, it stands for a reification of the divine word, consequently of the deity itself and, on the other hand, it is an instrument of the ritual and of the practice of piety. “We proclaim for all those worthy of... that this book hath been bestowed to the church of Chiuești... to consecrate and invest it with *God’s holiness* and for the priests to accomplish the *devotional service*... A.D. 1787” (Missal of Pomi, Blaj, 1789).

⁵ Paquier, J, *Le sentiment religieux. Étude d’histoire et de psychologie*, Paris, 1926, p.81.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p.86.

⁷ Evdochimov, P, *Arta Icoanei, o teologie a frumuseții*, București, 1993, p.111.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

That is precisely why the act of offering includes at the same time the manifestation of piety, henceforth of religious sentiment; it is altogether an *objectifying of religious feeling*. Thus, the offering of religious books becomes an act of worship and “the believer shares in the effectiveness of the ritual by means of an interchange between man and the supernatural”.⁹

The act of book offering as an expression of religious sentiment displays three types of connotations:

- a. In the first place, the offering may be assimilated to an “*ex-voto*”, the book expressing the gratitude for the “deity’s miraculous and redemptive intervention”.¹⁰
- b. The donation act may have the connotation of an “*apportatus*”, namely an offering, oblation, the parishioners’ regular and voluntary contribution.¹¹
- c. In the third place we may also emphasize a phenomenal level in the perception of the religious book because the book was read or listened to as a *norm of Christian life*, because “for piety’s sake it was useful that the people should read religious books translated in the vernacular language”, and because in the premodern period the reading and the study of religious books became the Christian’s first duty.”¹²

Consequently, the rhetoric of nuncupation also includes a rhetoric of the religious feeling expressed in different ways. The book is the vehicle of this religious experience; at the same time it is the expression of *reverence and devotion* and, on the other hand, it is a *mediator* in the relationship between man and deity. This intercession revealed by the book is manifested through the act of offering which was basically meant to be an attempt to get in touch with the deity by means of mentioning and thus *perpetuating* the offerer’s name as follows: “This holy book, namely Octoith... bestowed

⁹ Soboul, A, *Sentiment religieux et cultes populaire pendant la Révolution*, in: *Archives de sociologie des religions* I, nr. 2, 1956, p.76.

¹⁰ Dubois, D, Lemaître, J, *Sources et méthodes de l’hagiographie médiévale*, Paris, 1993. p.338.

¹¹ Toussaert, J, *Le sentiment religieux au Flandre a la fin du Moyen Age*, Paris, 1963. p. 129.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 71.

upon the holy church of Racșa... by Tonche Maria to the everlasting remembrance of her house, by Mihen Toader, to cherish the memory of their kindred for ever... April the 1st 1804” (Octoith from Racșa, Blaj, 1792).

The perpetuation of the offerer’s name by mentioning it in the house of God is differently emphasized in the syntax of the nuncupation according to the *number of generations* named and mentioned in the remembrance act.

A first category is made up of the recollection of *seven kindred or generations*. Seven is a number taken from the Old Testament where seven generations stand for an important enough entity as far as extension and strength are concerned. In Deuteronomy (7,1) seven nations are mentioned “greater and mightier than thou”.¹³ Thus, on a Gospel (Negrești-Oaș, Blaj 1765) we may read: “This holy Gospel was bought by God’s servant... so that the fruit of her womb up to the 7th generation be for ever remembered... 1768 A.D., the month of September, 14 days”.¹⁴

A second category of kindred mentioned in the syntax of offering is the one which consists of *fourteen generations or lineage*. This is also a sacred number taken from the Bible, constantly mentioned in Abraham’s genealogy: “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David to the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations, and the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matt.: 1,17).¹⁵ On a Gospel from Valea Seaca (Lvov 1680) we may identify the sacred number fourteen in the offerer’s genealogy: “In the name of the Father, Amen, and of the Son, Amen, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen... for the redemption of the sins of all those mentioned above, forgiveness to the *fourteenth generation*... for those who perished by sword, cord or fire, wild beast or water, in the path or on the hill... A.D.1741, 22th day of November”.¹⁶

The third category of generations to perpetuate the memory consists of one *thousand kindred or ancestors*. In the biblical arithmetic this is an all-

¹³ *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură. Cu trimeri și concordanță biblică*, Societatea Biblică, 1973.

¹⁴ *Depozitul de carte veche românească (DCVR, Satu Mare county)*, Negrești-Oaș parish inv. nr.12.

¹⁵ *Biblia...* p.923.

¹⁶ Pop, D, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

embracing number including all the nations created by God; it is a number extending to the dimension of an entire humanity created and protected by the deity. This number also expresses a sacred relationship between 1 (God) and 1000 (people): “He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations” (Ps.: 105,8).¹⁷ The number 1000 is a *summum of God's creative act*. On an Octoith from Tarna Mare (Blaj, 1774) there is the following note regarding the 1000 generations: “This book, namely Octoith, has been bought by me, Pop Ion... as offering for the forgiveness of the sins of my seed, fathers and forefathers to the seventh and *thousandth generation*. A.D. 1783, the 7th day of the month of May”.¹⁸

In certain instances the remembrance or perpetuation was referring to the “seed or generation” in general without specifying or quantifying the ancestry or posterity that should enjoy the remembrance or forgiveness: “This book hath been bought by Jucan Mihai... in A.D. 1732 February 24... for ever to his *lineage and seed*, Amen”. (Euhologhion from Botiz)¹⁹

Henceforth, there is an *ascending order* in the ranging of individuals or genealogies in the perpetuation list, developed on the following levels:

- I. The owner of the offering, his family in a restricted sense
- II. The generations, in an immediate perspective
- III. The 7th generation
- IV. The 14th generation
- V. The 1000th generation

A second stage in the evaluation of religious sentiment through the book is the one in which the offering sanctions an *act of forgiveness, expiation and redemption*. In the syntax of the offering, the remembrance and the perpetuation are generally associated to forgiveness, but it also points out a range of characteristics by which the act of forgiveness is particularly and explicitly emphasized. The forgiveness is asked in the name of the interchange between mankind and deity mentioned before. On the other hand, the invocation of forgiveness through offerings may be ranged among the general rhetoric of “deliverance from Evil through the believer’s

¹⁷ *Biblia...* p.614.

¹⁸ *DCVR* (Satu Mare county), Tarna Mare parish inv. nr.7.

¹⁹ Pop, D, *op.cit*, p.21.

complete dedication to God and his kingdom”, which represents a spontaneous but “intensely perceived moment of religious sentiment”.²⁰

The book offered to the church takes on the connotations of a *redemptive act*, an act of restoration and deliverance from sin. “... this book hath been bought by Bălată Olexă for the redemptions of his sins and for Grigore Nedele’s... and for the sins of Anuța, his first wife and for Ileana’s 1710” (Slavonic Minei from the monastery of Bixad).²¹

The emergence from sin is expressed in the offering of *one hundred books* which is the *ideal formula* of redemption. The sacred number 100 is also taken from the biblical text where this number has the connotation of an *ideal sum* referring to the amount of fruit and seed (Matt.: 13, 8, 23), of talents (Matt.: 18, 28), and sheep (Matt.: 18, 12),²² to the “mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight” (John: 19). A fortune is evaluated to one hundred goods or an act of offering stands for “a hundred pound weight” of myrrh to anoint Christ’s crucified body.

The offering of 100 books is dedicated to the “treasure house” of Heaven, and the one who offers such oblation is granted forgiveness. Thus, on a Slavonic Missal we may read the following: “... this book, namely Missal, hath been bought by Coste Simion... and his spouse, Todora, Lord Jesus forgive their sins. *Treasure in Heaven...* for it was said: the one *who bestows 100 books in his name* will be rewarded accordingly...1701”.²³

Sometimes forgiveness is asked for in *crucial moments* in every Christian’s life, namely death. In such moments the book is offered as expiation for the dead’s sins: “... as her husband, Băiaș Gligor, son of Băiaș Ioan, *passed away* in the plague of 1745, she hath bought this Trifolio with 44 florins for the redemption of their sins and of their seed... Băiaș Ioan bought with his own money a Trifolio, a Triod and an Octoith for the church of Bixad, from Tătar Mihai, Avas County”.²⁴

²⁰ Toussaert, J, *op.cit.*, p.211, cf. Moldovan, *Noțiunea de iertare în soteriologia ortodoxă și actualitatea ei ecumenică*, in: *Studii teologice*, XXVI, nr.2, 1974, pp.250-252.

²¹ Pop, D, *op.cit.*, p.23.

²² *Biblia...* passim

²³ Pop, D, *op.cit.*, p.22.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

The death and the psychosis of death provides the religious experience with a *higher degree of intensity* as for medieval man the evangelical exalted happiness, expression of piety, goes hand in hand with everyday life irreverence towards the sacraments. We may find the same intensity of religious sentiment with all its manifestations at the opposite poles of human life: baptism and funeral (including the dying man's wish to share in God's glory and might).²⁵

Henceforth, by objectifying itself in the rhetoric of the offering, the book stands for a good example which may be taken into account in the outlining and evaluation of religious sentiment. Among the same category of exceptional offerings we may also range the book acquisitions made in those moments of intense religious participations which characterise collective piety, namely feasts regarded as paradigmatic moments or opportunities when collective devotion expressed by offering *intensifies religious experience*. Thus, in a note on a Missal from Petea (Blaj 1770) we may read that the donation has been offered during the celebration of the patron saint of the church: "This holy book, holy Missal, was bought by all the villagers for the church of Petea *during the holy festival of saint Basil the Great, the patron saint of this church...1776*". By choosing such moments when an auspicious agreement occurs as collective piety is reinforced by feasts, the offering becomes paradigmatic.

Another category of proofs concerning the intensity of religious sentiment revealed by the book is the one furnished by offerings which mention *the commitment or the remission*²⁶ in moments of breach in Christian biography, of rupture in Christian ontology. Such moments may be restored either through the so-called hierurgies or through the act of donation, in this case book offering, engaging a will or a wish, the breaking of which would bring about divine punishment: "This book, namely Octoith, was offered by me, Marișca, daughter to Pop Irina, committed to

²⁵ Toussaert, J, *op. cit.*, p.595, cf. Febvre, L, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle*, Paris 1942, p.426.

²⁶ Cf. Bănescu, N, *Funcționalitatea "dezlegării" în Sfânta taină a Pocăinței*, in: *Mitropolia Banatului*, nr.7-9, 1971 and Munteanu, G, *Despre legământul preotului*, in: *Mitropolia Ardealului*, nr.1-3/1978.

Bărgăuanu... and the one who would steal it... 1787” (Octoith, manuscript of Mecențiu, 18th century).²⁷

An interesting instance of redemption by book offerings may be found in a note on a Slavonic Octoith from Bixad, 1700, where we read how the priest Mihai was set free to get married through book offering, namely, through a donation offered in order to make up for the “impropriety” of his wish: “It was in that time that Mihai the priest wanted to get married, but this was not allowed so he entrusted himself to his confessor; and this one, seeing his determination, set him free provided that he should bestow a book, an Octoith, to make up for the impropriety and thus God entrusted him with a wife, Marie and mother-in-law... and they bought this holy book ...”²⁸ Thus the book offering undid the bond and God granted him the permission to get married.

The rhetoric of curse, of imprecation as a typical example of the manifestation of religious sentiment may be assigned a place within the same realm of the binding, of the implacable. The anathema or curse are, in most cases, phenomena belonging to the sphere of *popular extraecclesiastical religion*. They were gathered together in malediction books which did not enter the body of ritual books but were still in the keeping of certain priests: “The common people stand in great awe of them; and when they are in great strait, when they are abused or suffer a loss because of a certain evil man, they make use of them against the evil one”. In common popular usage anathema is different from excommunication which means a disciplinary canonical punishment. In this instance anathema means nothing but malediction or the opposite of blessing.²⁹

In the marginal notes of the books, we may identify a series of elements fashioning the rhetoric of imprecation which condemns the possible damages inflicted upon the donations in different ways: *parting with, theft,*

²⁷ Ștrempele, G, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești*, vol.III, București, 1978, p.395.

²⁸ Pop, D, *op. cit.*, p.23.

²⁹ Ciuhandu, Gh, *Cărți de afurisenie sau blestem*, in: *Revista teologică*, XVII, 1972, nr.22, p.331, cf. Catrina, A, *Cărți de afurisenie sau blestem folosite în trecutul bisericii noastre*, in: *Studii Teologice*, S.II, XVIII, 1965, nr.9-10; Petreună, I, *Anateme*, Arad, 1947; Dragoș, G.M, *Cărțile sfinte “Însemnări ieșene”* III (1938), vol.VI.

spoiling, selling off, mortgaging, etc. All these are included into the wider framework of the *simony phenomenon*, namely the selling off of church properties. These actions are associated with sin, henceforth they are subjected to penalty of anathema. They are active manifestations of sin, attitudes which stand against Christian ethics. Another constitutive part of sin is also mentioned, this time a passive one. Inasmuch as those mentioned above belong to the sphere of sacrilegious deeds, the word as part of the triad: thought, deed and word, may be regarded likewise as sinful. Thus, on an Apostle Book of Pomi (Buzău 1704) there is the following note: "...anathema and curse upon the one who would purloin it from the holy church of Pomi... *no one may say* it is mine or thine, but it once and for all belongs to the holy church of Pomi...1797".

The stigmatisation and the condemnation of sin are displayed in accordance with the polymorphic aspect of sin in the Christian dogma. Therefore *the semantic diversity of anathema* reveals a deep religious sentiment.

The actions subjected to execration are either mentioned in distinct notes or are gathered together in the syntax of the same note. Regarding the topic of the note, they are generally placed at the end; at the same time they stand for an ending phrase or a sanctioning of the offering. In a note on a Gospel from Negrești-Oaș (Blaj 1765) most of the deeds submitted to anathema are mentioned: "This holy Gospel was bought by God's servant, Todora... anathema upon the one who would *take it away* or *purloin it, sell it off* or *buy it*, anathema upon the one who would spoil it or move it from the above mentioned church of Negrești... A.D. 1768 the month of September 14 days".³⁰

In other notes instances of mortgaging are mentioned: "I, Gavril the priest... have taken a bock, Trifolio, into the church of Aciua... and no one dare sell it off for his debts... It was taken in the month of September, 14 days, 1789" (Minologhion from Drăgușeni, Blaj 1781).³¹

The curse is directed against the simony doers as well as against the accomplices, especially as the selling of books belonging by rights to the church is concerned. The curse is also directed against the sacrilegious

³⁰ DCVR (Satu Mare county), Negrești-Oaș parish inv. nr.12.

³¹ Idem, Drăgușeni parish inv. nr.115.

buyers of the books, and thus its meaning is extended by receiving *interactive connotations*: “...curse and anathema upon the one who dare move it or purloin it, *sell it or buy it...* A.D.1768” (Gospel from Negrești-Oaș, Blaj 1765).

The second aspect of the rhetoric of imprecation is made up of the penalties or punishments inflicted upon those who are guilty. The topic of the imprecation generally includes *the curse of the 318 holy fathers of Nicaea directed against Arius*. In an Octoith from Cărașeu there is an *exhaustive formula or a prototype* of the rhetoric of the imprecation: “... would anyone take it away or purloin it from the holy church of Cărașeu may he be execrated to the end of time, anathema and curse upon him... I, the humble priest Dimitrie, cast a curse upon him and together with me the 318 holy fathers of the Council of Nicaea, and above all the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the Blessed Virgin, and the Holy Apostles, Martyrs, Pious Learned Men and Hierarchs and the whole angelic company for ever... Amen”.³²

Thus, the complete formula of imprecation reveals the fact that the structure of the imprecation is pyramidal:

- 8.The Holy Trinity
- 7.St Mary
- 6.St Apostles
- 5.St Martyrs
- 4.The Pious Lerved Men
- 3.St Hierarchs
- 2.The Angelic Host
- 1.The 318 Holy Fathers of Nicaea

At the same time, the types or means of punishments are gradually displayed according to the *intensity of the deprecation* in the rhetoric of the imprecation. This gradualness may be illustrated by ten varieties:

- 1.*Curse on him* (Strasnic from Tarna Mare, Blaj 1773)
- 2.*Malediction on him* (Octoith from Racșa, Blaj 1792)
- 3.*Anathema upon him* (Apostle Book from Boinești, Blaj 1767)
- 4.*Anathema and curse upon him* (Penticostar from Sățmarel, București 1743)

³² Pop, D, *op. cit.*, p.35.

5. *May the saints cast a curse upon him* (Apostle Book from Someșeni, Buzău 1743)

6. *May he stand under the curse of the Holy Trinity and of the Holy Fathers* (Gospel from Piscari, Blaj 1776)

7. *May he be judged and punished with canonical penalty* (Triod from Soconzel, Blaj 1800)

8. *May he stand in judgement in front of God* (Missal from Satu Mare, Lvov 1691)

9. *Anathema, curse, doom and damnation upon him* (Gospel from Negrești-Oaş, Blaj 1765)

10. *May he not enjoy the blessing of Lord Christ* (Gospel from Boghiș, București 1742).

The 10th degree of the curse rhetoric represents the highest degree of imprecation, although its expression is rather less violent. It suggests something irrevocable in man's Christian destiny, the excommunication by *separation from the deity*, from the communion with the deity. Thus the possibility of *becoming one with God*, the ultimate end of Christian teleology is annihilated. This gradation of sin expresses, on the one hand, the piety towards the donation offered to the church which has strongly marked the community's consciousness, and on the other hand, the appearance of a real consciousness in the realm of *morality* which has developed in the life of the village and which has accompanied and reinforced the ecclesiastical institution as a sacred and invulnerable place. It is a morality which preserves the prestige of the religious myth and, within the framework of popular religion, it is expressed in the syntax and rhetoric of the imprecation through "the prophets' sacred anger uttered with the hyperbatic loftiness of one endowed with the power to cast a curse".³³

Thus, within the realm of religious sentiment there are coercions, prescriptions and a censorship which stands under the sign of the divine sanction or that of a "Christian moral law" since beside the dogma and ritual Christianity means a human reality of a "*rigorous realism*".³⁴

³³ Cioculescu, S, *În marginea Întâii cronici a Țării Românești*, in: *Biserica Română LXXIX*, nr.1-2, 1961, p.102.

³⁴ Toussaert, J, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

Inasmuch as there is a malediction exclusively formulated in a biblical terminology or in a lexical sphere taken from the ritualistic discourse, there are instances in which this rhetoric of imprecation is associated with a *secular discourse* which shows the fact that punitive measures are imposed by the *community's ethical* values according to which the guilty runs the risk of being ostracised and excluded from the community. A mutual relationship is being established between religious sentiment and a strong extrareligious moral consciousness. Thus, in a note on an Anthologion (Râmnic 1737) from Călinești, the man submitted to anathema is put in a contemptible, marginal position ("may he be humble servant", "may he be stranger") in relation to the community: "Holy book called Minei... to belong to the church... and the one who would purloin it or take it away *may he be humble servant... stranger he be* and curse upon him for breaking the law... the year 1759 June 23..."³⁵

In this way an anthemization discourse appeared in almost every ritual book. This fact brings about the outlining of an *awe-inspired context* in which the book is being placed. On the one hand, there is a world doomed by curse psychosis and, on the other hand, a world is set towards its restoration through offerings to the church.

Another category which puts into evidence religious sentiment associated to the book is the one arising from the way in which time reveals itself through the book. The expression of time designated in the book is generally established according to religious discourse dedicated to time. In Christian dogma time is a materialisation of duration and transcendence to plenitude, namely, it is a "process of being into being or rather the human being's processional evolvement to self-fulfilment". Temporal duration is assigned the value of a "time for salvation".³⁶

For the premodern community of the 17-18th centuries, time is ecclesiastical; a time pertaining to the church.³⁷ It is an *eschatological* linear time measured by creation, apocalypse and salvation to which man

³⁵ Socolan, A, *op. cit.*, p.230.

³⁶ Ciobotea, D, *Timpul și valoarea lui pentru mântuire*, in: *Ortodoxia*, XXIX nr.2/1977, p.196.

³⁷ Cf. Le Goff, J, *op. cit.*

constantly relates to.³⁸ Religious time in its implacable development is a time encompassing man who is consubstantial with it; therefore it is a “participative eternity”.³⁹

According to the community’s point of view, the religious book endows the temporal duration with a religious value. Time in general is at the disposal of the divine will, for whom *the time of the book is proportional to the time of the village and of the church*. It is a blending of sacred time (God’s will) and profane, real time, the time of the village, of the church and of the book. Thus, on a Missal from Cuța (Blaj 1776) there is a note mentioning this dimension of the time of the book: “This holy Missal hath been bought by Negre Time... and hath been bestowed upon the holy church of Cuța until Cuța will endure and until God the Merciful will spare our church of Cuța... and nobody may take it away”⁴⁰ or on a Bible from Cărașeu (Blaj 1795): “... to stay forever in the holy church of Cărașeu *until this church will endure and this people will last... Amen*”⁴¹

In other instances popular piety identifies the time of the book with eschatological time, namely the time of the book is equal to the *duration of God’s world of creation*. Thus, on an Apostle Book from Pomi, Buzău 1704, we read: “This holy book, namely Apostle Book, belongs to the holy church of Pomi. Offering for ever to the end of this world... and let this book perish only when the church falls into ruin and the Judgement Day comes and all the things perish one by one... The year 1797 January, 29 days”⁴²

Sometimes the book is bestowed upon the church for ever and ever, thus incorporating in itself the *dimension of eternity*: “...This book was bought by me, Pop Iacob, with my wife Irina ad bestowed upon the church for ever and ever...” (Penticostar from Gherța Mare, București 1743).⁴³

In this way the book, subject of popular piety and religious sentiment, influences the perception of time within the framework of the small world which comprises it. This time is, in most cases, an ecclesiastical one which also includes profane time.

³⁸ Muchembled, R, *op. cit.*, p.62, cf. Febvre, L, *op. cit.* p.367.

³⁹ Chaunu, P, *op. cit.* p.42.

⁴⁰ Pop, D, *op. cit.* p.44.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p.36.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p.71.

⁴³ DCVR (Satu Mare county), Gherța Mare parish inv. nr.20.

Manifestations of religious sentiment in relation to the book may be perceived in the piety directly expressed in *manuscripts*. This piety appears in the case of the copyist who created a rhetoric incorporated in the following elements: *author-book-religious sentiment*. The parts of this manifestation of religious sentiment are: *humility, the devotion* of a work dedicated to God, God's *worship* through the specific features of a certain occupation, that of a scribe.

The first component, *humility* or *kenosis*, is illustrated in the syntax of a phrase frequently occurring in the scribe's discourse: "And I wrote this, God's *humble servant and sinner above all*, priest Vasile Moldovan from Bociocel... A.D.1700" (Varlaam's Cazania, manuscript from Satu Mare).⁴⁴ Another variety of the expression of humility related to God's almightiness is the following: "I, priest Lupu, have written these holy prayers with *my sinful hand made of dust... in... 1734*" (Moltivenic from Satu Mare, manuscript from 1734)⁴⁵ or "God's *most sinful servant*, priest Chirilă from Aciu... hath written..." (Triod, manuscript from Satu Mare 1733).⁴⁶

The devotional component is indicated within the framework of the same phrases and expresses God's support in the making of the manuscript as well as the dedication of this activity to the deity: "I, Gavril the deacon, have written this book for the fasting days *with God's great help... therefore I thank the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost* as they gave health and strength to accomplish the task of writing this holy book..." (Triod, manuscript from Terebești, 1730).⁴⁷

The third component, worshipping through the writings of religious books, bears the mark of doxology, of a metaphorically expressed celebration of the Lord: "*I confess thee with my pen*". At the beginning, in the syntax of the veneration there is a praise to the Lord as the work of the scribe is accomplished, then worshipping is expressed by means of the writing: "Together with the angels I praise Thee, Lord, for helping me finish

⁴⁴ Radosav, D, *Copii-manuscrite ale Cazaniei lui Varlaam în nord-vestul Transilvaniei*, in: *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Historia*, nr.2/1980, p.21.

⁴⁵ Idem, *Manuscrite româneşti din sec. al XVIII-lea în părţile sătmărene*, in: *Satu Mare - Studii şi comunicări*, vol.V-VI, 1981-1982, p.221.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p.224.

⁴⁷ Pop, D, *op. cit.* p.93.

this book... Receive me, my Lord, me the sinner, to be Thy servant in this world as long as I am in health, to honour and praise Thy name... and I confess Thee from the bottom of my heart through my pen” (Varlaam’s Cazania manuscript from Satu Mare, 18th century).⁴⁸

The religious sentiment expressed by these verses adds to the sources furnished by the notes on old religious books, thus making possible the shaping of a comprehensive spiritual universe revealed by the community’s book patrimony.

⁴⁸ Radosav, D, *Copii-manuscrite...*, p.17.