

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360699449>

Curses, Incantations, and the Undoing of Spells. The Romanian Priest as Enchanter (Transylvania, 19th Century)

Chapter · January 2019

CITATIONS

0

READS

111

1 author:



[Cosma Valer Simion](#)

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu

33 PUBLICATIONS 50 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

C Charms and Charming

Studies on Magic in Everyday Life



Edited by Éva Pócs

S T U D I A
MYTHO
LOGICA
S L A V I C A
S U P P L E M E N T A
S U P P L E M E N T U M 15

Zbirka / Series: STUDIA MYTHOLOGICA SLAVICA – SUPPLEMENTA
Supplementum 15

Uredniki zbirke / Editors of the Series: Monika Kropej, Andrej Pleterski, Vlado Nartnik

Edited by Éva Pócs Charms and Charming. Studies on Magic in Everyday Life

Jezikovni pregled / Proofreading: James Kapaló, Louise S. Milne, Charles Somerville

Fotografija na naslovni strani / Cover photo: Preparation of curing the evil eye (presentation for the collector), Gyepce (Pajištea) County Băcau, Romania. Photo by György Takács, 1996.

Oblikovanje in prelom / Graphic and art design: Jernej J. Kropej

Izdal / Published by: Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, Inštitut za slovensko narodopisje
/ Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences
and Arts, Institute of Slovenian Ethnology

Zanj / Represented by: Ingrid Slavec Gradišnik

Založnik / Publisher: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU

Zanj / Represented by: Oto Luthar

Glavni urednik / Editor-in-chief: Aleš Pogačnik

Tisk / Print: Cicero, Begunje, d. o. o.

Naklada / Print run: 350

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

398.47(4)(091)(082)

133.4(4)(091)(082)

CHARMS and charming : studies on magic in everyday life / edited by Éva Pócs ; [izdal]
Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti = [published by] Scientific Research
Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. - Ljubljana : Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2019. - (Zbirka
Studia mythologica Slavica. Supplementa ; suppl. 15)

ISBN 978-961-05-0215-9

I. Pócs, Éva

COBISS.SI-ID 301154560

The publication of this volume has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) / ERC grant agreement No. 324214.

Studia Mythologica Slavica

Spletna stran / Webpage: <http://sms.zrc-sazu.si>

© Inštitut za slovensko narodopisje, Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU

C Charms and Charming

Studies on Magic in Everyday Life

Edited by Éva Pócs

English language editing by
James Kapaló, Louise S. Milne and Charles Somerville

ZNANSTVENORAZISKOVALNI CENTER SLOVENSKE AKADEMIJE ZNANOSTI IN UMETNOSTI
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH CENTRE OF THE SLOVENIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS

LJUBLJANA 2019



Curses, Incantations and the Undoing of Spells: The Romanian Priest as Enchanter (Transylvania, 19th Century)

Valer Simion Cosma

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginnings of Romanian historiography, historians have been interested in topics such as the history of the church and religious life. This is especially relevant in the case of Romanians from Transylvania, where, up until the nineteenth century, two churches – Orthodox and Greek Catholic or Uniate – were their sole institutions, whose hierarchs were the sole representatives of the people.¹

If, during the communist regime, such topics were not popular among historians, the immediately following period, after the 1989 Romanian Revolution, witnessed a genuine effervescence regarding studies dedicated to Romanian church history.² An important part of these investigations aimed for the restitution of the historical past of the Greek-Catholic Church, which was dissolved and banned at the beginning of the communist regime.³ Most of these works approached the institutional history of the two Romanian churches and the biographies of several hierarchs. The focus of this type of historical investigation was on the institutional development and on the political and cultural activity of the clergy. Moreover, these studies concerned how both clerical activity and the religious life of the congregations were regulated, in accordance with post-Reform and post-Trento principles of religion and society.

These works created a portrait of the Romanian priest and his activity that, unfortunately, mainly reflects the normative discourse of the two churches, and reflects much less everyday life within rural society, the complexity of modernization and

¹ Hitchens 2013: 247.

² Ciocian 2000; Ghitta 2001; Miron 2004; Andrei 2006; Vulea 2009, etc.

³ Miron 2004: 28.

its effects on peasant' religious life, or differences between "official religion" and "practiced religion". Historians have written very little generally about folk religion, magic and sorcery, and, where these topics are mentioned, they rarely exceed simplistic descriptions based on antagonistic attitude of the clergy. The latter represented lawfully institutionalized sacred faith, so wizards or witches were seen as representatives of a culture of paganism and the archaic primitive faith. As Ioan Pop-Curșeu stated in his work dedicated to magic and witchcraft in the Romanian culture, "ethnographic research on witchcraft is extremely well represented, while the historical approach is misrepresented". Thus, an interdisciplinary approach, combining "synchronic and diachronic perspective[s]" is required.⁴

In this study, I propose an analysis of a small piece of this complex topic, probably one of the most delicate subjects, namely how the Romanian priest might be considered as an enchanter in some specific situations, and the connection between charms and church benedictions, rituals and healing and apotropaic prayers. I intend to approach mainly the Orthodox priest and the Orthodox doctrine and liturgical literature, taking into consideration the church view on charms, charming and witchcraft. Also, I present some cases involving Greek-Catholic priests, to reflect similitudes that exist at the level of "practiced religion".

To begin with, this study makes two main assumptions. First of all, beyond the official discourse of both churches, which aimed to catechize the flock and purify religious life, labelling a large number of popular beliefs⁵ and practices as pagan remnants or superstitious (in a post-Enlightenment sense),⁶ many clerics believed in what they were fighting against: the power of magic. On the other hand, as I argue

⁴ Pop-Curșeu 2013: 38.

⁵ According to Rolf Schulte: 'So-called popular belief encompasses everything that the majority of a population imagines to be true of a world beyond the realm of their everyday experience. It includes religious belief in a modern sense, as well as belief in the effectiveness of magic. This is necessarily a diffuse concept because it describes heterogeneous phenomena, but it differs from the widely used term "superstition", for popular belief in the early modern period embraced far more than the church's official concept of what constituted deviation from Christian beliefs. There is no sharp delineation between magic and religion, and any assertions to the contrary misjudge the realities of both mediaeval and early modern religious practices; clerics, too, believed in what they were fighting against: the power of magic.' (Schulte 2009: 160–161).

⁶ According to Euan Cameron: "The term "superstition" derived from classical antiquity, and nearly always contained a pejorative sense – it implied "bad" as opposed to "good" or "correct" belief or practice in the realm of religion. Though its etymology was never clear, it always presupposed an opposite, or even a cluster of opposites.⁵ In the late Roman Empire, pagans described Christianity as superstition in one sense; Christians described paganism as superstition in another.⁶ In general "superstition" could be opposed to other forms of putatively "wrong" religion, such as idolatry, heresy, or fanaticism. It could also be opposed to putatively "right" or valid religion, to terms such as "piety", "true religion", "orthodoxy", or "reasoned faith". Finally, it can be used as it is typically used in modern secular society: as a pejorative term to describe *any* belief system that falls short of the speaker's chosen standard of "rationality". At the high water-mark of modern confidence in scientific rationalism, "superstition" has become the preferred term of abuse used by any secular atheist to describe religion of any kind. The resurgence of religion as a factor in world politics, and postmodern aversion to the condescending attitudes of Western rationality towards the rest of humanity, have made such aggressive uses of the term rarer; but the connotations persist. However it is used, the term has the effect of driving sharp distinctions, where the need may be more for subtle shades than hard lines." (Cameron 2010: 4–5).

in the following pages, in church teachings and liturgic literature, charms, maledictions and other forms of magic and witchcraft are perceived as real threats, not just as “superstitions” and “primitive” habits and beliefs. In this regard, church tradition established a series of rituals and prayers designed to prevent and combat their harmful effects. These were still in use, despite the growing fight against “superstition”, after the Reformation and Enlightenment.⁷

Secondly, in spite of the role ascribed to priests, as defenders of the faithful and opponents of sorcerers and charmers, church documents from the nineteenth century refer to cases of priests accused of performing rituals forbidden by church laws, and so considered as witchcraft. In addition, numerous folk materials gathered by folklorists in the nineteenth century depict customs, practices and popular beliefs involving clerics, which, from the church point of view and also from an anthropological point of view, may be regarded as magic.

The analysis focuses on the relationship between depictions of the priest as an enchanter and healer. Furthermore, it comprises some observations on the priest’s role as a mediator of divine justice, closely related to his role of enchanter.

The choice of this particular period, namely the nineteenth century, has a dual motivation. On the one hand, this is a time of abundant ethnographic description of popular beliefs and practices, due to the emergent interest in folklore among intellectuals. On the other hand, the Romanian Church’s own historiography also describes this period, focusing on the modernizing and civilizing role of clerics in the service of the nation and of the Habsburg/Austrian-Hungarian administration. It also minimizes their role in supporting a pre-modern vision of the world and the peasant’s magic system.⁸ But the main reason for my choice, is that during the nineteenth century, both Romanian churches were deeply concerned with the regulation of the clergy’s education and activity, with the purification of religious life, and with the fight against “superstitions” and magical practices and beliefs.

REFORM OF TRANSYLVANIAN RELIGIOUS LIFE

The first mentions of witchcraft practices involving Romanian clerics date from the seventeenth century. Then, in the context of Protestant Reform winning many followers in Transylvania, especially among Saxons and Hungarians, the Transylvanian Romanian Orthodox Church was the target of a process of reform and dogma cleansing.⁹ The Metropolitan Sava Brancovici compiles, in a circular issued in 1675,

⁷ Pócs 2013: 167.

⁸ Cosma 2015: 49–52.

⁹ Dumitran, D. 2007.

a series of “empty beliefs and *bobonoșaguri* [superstitions]” spread among the clergy he shepherded, in order to eradicate them.¹⁰ During the eighteenth century, after the establishment of the Uniate Church, the cleansing of religious life and the fight against superstition continues. Within this context, the work of the clergy is strictly regulated in accordance with the post-Trento reformist principles.¹¹

We can observe a good example of “reforming” attitudes in the works of the Uniate Bishop Peter Paul Aron, who, according to the early twentieth-century Romanian historian, Augustin Bunea, “fought against vain beliefs, as he banished the sinful pagan customs of the time, rooted deep within the life of the Romanian people” [pe cum combătea credința deșertă, tot așa sbiciuia episcopul Aron și obiceiurile păcătose și păgânesci ale timpului seu înrădecinate în viața poporului român].¹² One church circular issued in the second half of the eighteenth century by this bishop, and presented in Bunea’s history, describes popular practices labelled as magical and pagan, some involving priests or church sacramentals. He commands the priests to ensure that the faithful:

... guard themselves against and keep away from all kinds of transgressions: magicians, sorcerers; enchantments: pouring wax; of *baere* or *advare* of enchantments: *sâmvășii*; from living fire, fire leaping, shooting into the water on the second day of Easter, hideous Christmas carols on Christmas night, when many achieve deadly sins in spite of the Holy Mass; from some God knows what dining; from feasts with drinks and dances, and from taking the holy cross out in the same way, between frontiers; from quarrels at *vovedenie*, at night, when they gather at the wake, where they must not quarrel and must not strike with shovels on their back, but to pray for the soul of the deceased and for his sins against God: from the black plough during the Black Plague.¹³

Such circulars were widespread from the late eighteenth throughout the nineteenth centuries. Orthodox bishops and metropolitans such as Vasile Moga, Andrei Șaguna, and Ioan Mețianu, and Greek-Catholic bishops such as Ioan Bob, Ioan Lemeni,

¹⁰ Lupas 1918: 72.

¹¹ Miron 2004: 182–185.

¹² Bunea 1902: 387.

¹³ Bunea 1902: 388. [... să se păzescă de tot felii de nelegiuiri: vrăjitorii, descântătorie; fermecătorie; versări de ceară; de baere, sau advare de farmece: sâmvășii: focuri vii, săriri preste foc, trageri în apă a dao zi de Pasci, colinde urite din noaptea Crăciunului, pentru carele mulți și de sfinta Liturgie cu pecate de moarte atunci rămân: de nisce mese a nu sciu ce Doamne: de nedeile cele cu beuturi și cu jocuri, precum și de eșirea cu crucea într’ același chip, la între hotare: de gâlcevi la vovedenie, adecă noaptea la oameni morți, când se adună, să nu gâlcevescă, cu lopeți pe spate să nu lovescă: ci pentru sufletul a celui reposat, și pentru ale sale pecate lui Dumnezeu să se roage: de plugul cel negru în vreme de ciumă.]

Alexandru Șterca-Șuluțiu, and Ioan Vancea,¹⁴ had the same concern for disciplining the clergy and purifying religious life by “removing from the church the foreign customs and the annual feasts”.¹⁵ Along with a number of scientific papers published by the first generation of Romanian scholars,¹⁶ such church circulars reveal popular beliefs and religious practices considered superstitious and/or pagan, many involving clergy or intertwining with religious rituals. However, this reforming approach cannot be reduced to a continuous fight against beliefs and magical practices, in the spirit of either the Protestant Reformation or of the “anti-superstitious” Enlightenment, which played a fundamental role in modernization. A rich historiographical tradition¹⁷ argues this point, but it is in fact a prisoner of the Weber paradigm regarding the “disenchantment of the world”;¹⁸ it might be considered influenced, and at the same time part of, cumulative distortions produced by the application to a pre-modern, non-Western society of successive Western interpretative lenses.¹⁹ Along with history, ethnology and ethnography were also shaped by and part of such distortions.²⁰

As Ovidiu Ghitta, a historian from Cluj (Romania), underlines in a recent introduction to an eighteenth-century Greek Catholic catechism, there were “permissible forms of magic, [...] popular forms of invocation of sacred aid, which post-Tridentine Catholicism has not only perpetuated, but also encouraged” (2008, LXXIII). This observation is true also in the case of the Orthodox Church, as can be seen from the content analysis of *Molitfelnic*, a fundamental liturgical book for priestly activity, which I constantly reference throughout this paper. Magic and witchcraft practices fought against by the two churches were those performed by rural worshippers; not so

¹⁴ Here are a few representative titles regarding hierarchs’ biographies that emphasise their aim to regulate and purify the activity of the clergy and religious life: Stanca 1938; Popea 1879; Lupaș 1911; Soroștineanu 2005b; Dumitran, D. 2007; Ghișa 2008; Bonda 2008; Cârja 2007.

¹⁵ Soroștineanu 2005b: 62.

¹⁶ Șincai 1804–1808; Maior 1813; Popp 1818; Vasici 1831; Bojincă 1833, etc.

¹⁷ Along with the titles mentioned in note 3 above, some other representative historical works are: Iorga 2007 [1902]; idem 1909; Lupaș 1918, etc.

¹⁸ Scribner 1993: 494.

¹⁹ In his book *Russia on the Eve of Modernity. Popular religion and traditional culture under the last tzars*, the historian Leonid Heretz presents these cumulative distortions and their role in misleading understanding of popular religion and traditional culture in the Russian case. The first three distortions are relevant for the Romanian case. He writes on this issue: “The first and most important... identified by Keith Thomas in the Western context... was the Protestant definition of true Christianity as pure faith based on Scripture, by which measure all rituals or beliefs lacking in explicit Biblical sanction are heathendom and devilry. A second distortion was produced by the Enlightenment and its general attitude of contempt for organized religion: even in its official versions, traditional Christianity represents gross superstition, and whatever influence a corrupt and obscurantist clergy is capable of exerting on a benighted flock only serves to keep that flock mired in the swamps of primeval ignorance. The third refraction occurred with Romanticism (which, it should be stressed, gave birth to the scholarly study of the Russian people) and its obsession with real or imagined antiquity; for the Romantic, folk beliefs and practices provide unique and priceless clues in the great search for authenticity, which is now lost but had once existed, in the childhood (assumed to be pre-Christian, and therefore pagan) of the race.” (Heretz 2008: 16.)

²⁰ Some representative works on charms, maledictions, and disenchantments: Marian 1893; Ciaușanu 1914; Gorovei 1931.

much those performed by the altar servants. The critical rhetoric of the ecclesiastical hierarchy regarding the beliefs and practices of the “dark” and “superstitious” masses must be understood in a light of churches asserting a monopoly over mediation with supernatural forces.²¹

But, as we will see throughout this paper, in daily practice, the contrast between priests and wizards or witches is not so categorical. This is because the popular understanding of church benedictions, sacraments and sacramentals, on one hand, and charms, disenchantments, bewitchments, and spells, on the other hand, was flexible and blurry, and dependent on context to a high degree. Besides, beyond the churches normative discourse, influenced by the post-Enlightenment understanding of magic and superstition, the liturgical literature and church teachings continued to approach charms, spells, and maledictions as real threatens to human life, and many priests continued to copy, use and edit manuscripts of counter-spells until late in the nineteenth century.²² This study comprises an analysis of rituals and prayers performed in order to fight against the effects of charms, spells, bewitchments, and demonic attacks, as written in the *Molitifelnic*. It also includes some observations regarding the connection between healing charms, disenchantments, and church benedictions and prayers. I make further observations based on the analysis of folk beliefs and practices.

THE *MOLITFELNIC*: BENEDICTIONS, EXORCISMS, HEALING AND APOTROPAIC RITUALS

Christianity is a religion of healing, and one of the major functions of a priest, from the early centuries of Christianity, is that of the healer.²³ There are a series of rituals, prayers, and ordinances performed by priests, well established in liturgical literature, designed to bring healing to the soul and body. The fundamental book in the Romanian church tradition, as in other Eastern churches, incorporates rituals, benedictions and prayers that the priest has to perform in different occasions. This book is entitled the *Molitifelnic* or *Efhologhion*.²⁴ The importance of this liturgical book in sacerdotal activity can be judged by the fact that no other religious book has had more editions than this one.²⁵

Analysing the editions published from the sixteenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth century, preserved at the Library of the Romanian Academy, shows that

²¹ Worobec 2001: 70.

²² Gaster 1883: 417; Drăganu 1922–1923: 238; Timotin 2011: 9.

²³ Lindemann 2000: 236; Porterfield 2005: 44; Dauntou-Fear 2009: 15; Stancu 2012: 65.

²⁴ It also goes by the name of *Efhologhion sau Molitevnic*. In this paper, I refer to the 1896 edition of *Molitifelnic*, which was very popular within the Romanian clergy. It was published after the 1834 edition: *Efhologhion* or *Molitifelnic*, 2nd edition, București, Tipografia “Cărților Bisericesci”, 1896.

²⁵ Bejan 1936: 687.

these editions do not always contain the same texts. Usually, they contain the texts of church services and rituals important in the life of every Christian – the ordinances of birth, baptism, marriage, confession, entry to a monastery, unction, and death – and texts of the services regarding certain community feasts, such as the mass when founding a new church, and the ‘Great Blessing of the Waters’ during the celebration of Epiphany or Christ’s Baptism. Alongside these, there are a series of “prayers useful for different things” such as the prayer for postpartum women, for midwives, for a woman who lost a child, blessings for a journey or a new house, for purifying wells, salt bowls, oil bowls etc.. In addition, we find in editions of the *Molifelnic* quasi-healing and apotropaic prayers, for those who cannot sleep, against charms, or for a haunted house. Alongside, the printed texts, there are manuscript versions of the *Molifelnic*. These are usually somewhat different, because they were out of the ecclesiastical control and were compiled according to the needs of the copyist or user; sometimes they contain prayers not included in later editions.²⁶

The nineteenth century was a period of strong ecclesiastical control on liturgical literature and religious practice, but the influence of, and/or pressure from, popular piety demanded that counter-spells from the old manuscripts, officially disapproved by Church, continued to be included in liturgical books published by the Church.. One such example is “The prayer for the twinging of the limbs [*năjit*]”, part of an *Little Aghiasmatar or Short Molitvenic to Help Priests with Parishioners’ Diverse Emergencies* [Aghiasmataru mic sau scurtare din molitvenic pentru înleznire preoților la feliuri de întâmplări grabnice la inoriașii săi], issued at Sibiu in 1851. An abridged version of this prayer is contained in the last official edition of the *Molifelnic*²⁷ and also in the edition I use here.

The edition used for this study, as we read in its introductory description, comprises the regulation of sacraments (rom. *Sfintele Taine*) and church prayers, called *molitve*, *molifte* or *molitfe*,²⁸ and church services that the priest reads and performs occasionally. These rituals, ordinances and prayers are called *ierurgii* or *evlohoghii*,²⁹ and are much like the “sacramentals” in the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.³⁰ Furthermore, the book contains rituals and prayers for various issues and situations: invocations against enchantments and spells, prayers for exorcisms modelled on those of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil the Great, prayers to expel demons and unclean spirits, invocations in case of diverse diseases for people or animals, and rituals for different crises, like drought or heavy rain.

²⁶ Timotin 2011: 10.

²⁷ Timotin 2011: 25.

²⁸ “Church prayers”, according to philologist Șăineanu 1929 [1896.]: 407.

²⁹ *Ierurgii*= sacred offices/rituals; *evlohoghii*= prayers or services/rituals with prayer, according to theologian Braniște 2005: 355.

³⁰ Teodorescu 1923: 66; Braniște 2005: 355.

The Orthodox theologian Ene Braniște, author of major works on tradition and liturgical practices, describes these religious services as:

... services, ordinances and prayers for blessing and sanctification of man in different times and circumstances of his life, and for the blessing and sanctification of the surrounding nature and different things or objects of human use. They are usually more about the sacraments and the Mass, performed either before them, as a preparation (such as religious services before baptism in connection with human birth) or after them, as a crowning or perfecting their purpose (for example unraveling of weddings on the eighth day after the wedding, commemoration after the Mass, etc.). [Their goal] is to purify the believer and the surrounding environment, the living things and the objects that the believer needs for his living or for his material and spiritual life.³¹

According to Braniște, then, purification and sanctification are required due to original sin, which, according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, “introduced disorder, suffering, pain and misery... to human life, [and] ruined the initial beauty and harmony of nature. [Through religious services], the cleansing and sanctifying power and action of the Church flows not only on to a human, but also on to the entire world of creatures, carrying it away from the power of the curse and hallowing it”.³² These rituals and prayers (*ierurgii*) that accompany the sacraments are designed to regulate the rhythms of reproductive life by invoking divine blessing for human, animal and agrarian fertility.³³

It is reasonable to infer that, from a socio-anthropological point of view, by performing the rituals prescribed by the church, the priest helps maintain the existing socio-cultural system or restores an unbalanced order. When a ritual is enacted, it may produce effects in several interrelated areas.³⁴ The Church rituals performed by priests may say something about the state of being or status of an individual, as it is the case of Baptism or exorcising rituals. They also show a concern for the state of the cosmos. That is because the priestly ritual system includes, in its worldview, ideas about the cosmos and the created order that goes beyond the societal order, including a concern for the natural world as well. This cosmic order encompasses human relationships with the sacred, the natural world and with other people. Through priestly rituals, human beings may participate in the maintenance of the divinely created order.³⁵ As the famous

³¹ Braniște 2005: 355.

³² Braniște 2005: 355–356.

³³ Scribner 1987: 3.

³⁴ Gorman Jr. 1990: 28.

³⁵ Gorman Jr. 1990: 37–38.

theologian John Meyendorff argued, in the perspective of Byzantine theology, during the celebration of Epiphany or Christ's Baptism, the ritual called the "Great Blessing of the Waters" means, in fact, exorcising the cosmos, whose basic element, water, was considered a refuge for dragons and demons. Frequent mention of the demonic forces of the universe in patristic and liturgical texts must be understood in this theological context, because the texts in question do not derive solely from biblical sources, though they often reflect mythological beliefs. The "Demonic" in nature comes from the fact that creation has fallen from its original meaning and orientation.³⁶ In the prayer the priests perform during the ritual of the "Great Blessing of the Waters", they ask God to "make it [the water] a source of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a remission of sins, a protection against disease, the destruction of demons, inaccessible to the adverse powers and filled with angelic strength".³⁷

In addition to this theological understanding of the "Great Blessing of the Waters", according to popular beliefs recorded by folklorists in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, when the priest places the cross in the water during this ritual, all the demons are banished; the water purified in this way becomes a source of miraculous power used to protect the entire household (animals, objects etc.) and, subsequently used in other magical rituals.³⁸ This popular belief overlaps with the church's teachings about the meaning of ritual effects, underlining its power. As Bob Scribner argued, regarding the use of benedictions, exorcisms and sacramentals in pre-industrial Germany:

... the nature of the problem was cosmological. The functioning of the material world was seen in terms of divine agency, either providing blessings to ensure the flourishing of material creation, understood as human, animal or agricultural reproduction; or in the expulsion of those demonic and diabolical forces which interfered with it. The role of religious ritual in this process was none the less ambivalent. It could be seen to provide spiritual efficacious what was indicated corporeally. It also provided natural order by invoking divine blessings on the world and by its apotropaic power of banishing the demonic spirits who provoked disorder.³⁹

The analysis of the rituals in the *Molitfelnic* reveals the priest as a mediator of the sacred. In a universe where the border between magic and religion is drawn in relation

³⁶ Meyendorff 2011: 199.

³⁷ *Molitfelnic* 1896: 140.

³⁸ Toşa – Munteanu 2003: 59; Marian 2011a: 258–259; Gorovei – Ciuşanu 2012: 19, 230.

³⁹ Scribner 1987: 40.

to whom is performing the ritual, what the clerics practice is, at first sight, religion, but what others practice is magic.⁴⁰ The opposition between official religion and magic is clearly stated in counter-spell rituals, such as the ordinances “for a house or place disturbed by charms and disenchantments” and “for sick animals”, or in prayers or rituals for different diseases, such as the prayers “for headache and evil-eye” and “for the twinging of the limbs” (which people call *năjit*).⁴¹ Besides the liturgical literature, the opposition between the clergy and other magical agents, decipherable in many religious rituals and folk beliefs, is postulated for the first time within the church regulations.⁴² At first, the priest seems to stand in opposition with the witches and other performers of magic acts, and some folk beliefs assign him with the power of tracing and punishing them.⁴³ However, this opposition is not so categorical if we consider how these actions were understood by believers. Disenchanters, enchanters and wizards are not very clearly defined categories, “they often get confused with each other”;⁴⁴ their magical actions, must be seen in context, they are not evil or benign in themselves.

The same opposition became much intensive, at least at the level of churches hierarchy, from the seventeenth century on; as we can discern in the charms’ manuscripts, already mentioned in this paper. But beyond the churches negative rhetoric and interdictions, as a rich scholarly literature attests,⁴⁵ there was constant interaction between “official religion” and popular magic until late in the nineteenth century. Analyzing a large number of charms’ manuscripts dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Romanian-Jewish scholar Mozes Gaster argued that the prayers from the Church official canon had a strong influence on charms, disenchantments and incantations.⁴⁶ In 1938, following the path of research of Bogdan Petriceicu-Hasdeu and Mozes Gaster, Nicolae Cartoian drew attention to the medical folklore manuscripts. He concluded that the texts contained in those manuscripts were deeply Christianized in order to be tolerated by the Church.⁴⁷ This process of Christianizing charms and disenchantments

⁴⁰ Lindemann 2000: 235–236.

⁴¹ For this study, I quote only a few prayers and rituals, to illustrate the image of the priest as enchanter, but *Molitfelnicul* includes a wide range of prayers and ordinances for various common problems for people and the church: prayers for toothaches, prayers and rituals to purify wine polluted by contact with an animal, prayers for school exams, etc.

⁴² The book *Seven sacraments of the church* (1645), in accordance with Rule of Basil the Great, says of witches: “The wizard and whoever pours wax, or casts lead, also he who ties the knot at weddings so that the grooms cannot consummate their marriage or other wizardry and witchcrafts, should not receive Christ’s body for 20 years. Beware what wizards are: wizards are those who call out and use devils for sorcery, in order to know unknown things or for other evils they might wish, after their evil will and ill desire, those who wish injury and mischief to particular righteous men” – quoted in Gorovei 1990: 110.

⁴³ Bîlțiu – Bîlțiu 2001: 35–36.

⁴⁴ Fochi 1976: 3–7.

⁴⁵ The most representative titles regarding the interactions between apocryphal literature, popular magic, charms’ manuscripts and liturgical literature: Hasdeu 1879–1880; Gaster 1883; 1891; Cartoian 1938.

⁴⁶ Gaster 1891: XLIII.

⁴⁷ Cartoian 1938: 234.

was undertaken mainly by priests and monks, for a long time almost the only literate minority of Romanian society. We can see this from the following three examples. In 1884, the bishop Melchisedec published in an article entitled “A charm-prayer” five disenchantments which he had discovered in a codex edited in 1838 by a monk at the Bisericani monastery.⁴⁸ In the third issue of the review *Dacoromania* (1922–1923), Nicolae Drăganu published a previously unknown version of the conjuration against the demon which brings hail, written in the middle of the eighteenth century. He discovered this conjuration in a manuscript held by the priest Ilarie Boțiu.⁴⁹ A “Book for Undoing Charms”, published in 1867 in Sibiu, says in its afterword that:

These holy prayers for undoing charms were found it at Kif monastery, at the end of a book written by the Saint Damaschin, and until now it was not printed.⁵⁰

More recently, Emanuela Timotin wrote a study based on the analysis of 122 disenchantment manuscripts used to cure various disease and to remove the evil influence and effects. Those manuscripts were edited between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and are preserved at the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest, and in three libraries from Cluj-Napoca (Romanian Academy Library, Cluj, “Sextil Pușcariu” Institute for Linguistic and Literary History, Lucian Blaga Central University Library). In her study, Emanuela Timotin emphasises interactions between church prayers, charms and disenchantments, and the role of priests and monks in editing and using them.⁵¹

According to Christian tradition, sin is the origin of all diseases and miseries that afflict people.⁵² These ills are also considered as divine punishment, or the effect of demonic attack, enchantment or disenchantment. This view overlaps with how diseases and misfortunes are explained in popular culture.⁵³ As Christine D. Worobec concluded, regarding Russian and Ukrainian peasants in Imperial Russia, a closer look at peasant beliefs about possession and bewitchment reveals that they followed Orthodox teachings regarding demons, the constant struggle between good and evil, the power of the holy cross, the magical properties of holy water, and the authority of saints, as well as faith healing, exorcisms and prayers.⁵⁴ We can see an example of priestly intervention in the “Ordinances for the House or Place Disturbed by Enchantments and Disenchantments”. The ritual performed by the priest is preceded by confession

⁴⁸ Timotin 2011: 5.

⁴⁹ Drăganu 1922–1923: 238.

⁵⁰ Gorovei 1990: 221.

⁵¹ Timotin 2011: 8–9.

⁵² Porterfield 2005: 22; Daunton-Fear 2009: 15; Stancu 2012: 9.

⁵³ Coșbuc 1909: 12; Fochi 1976: 4–5; Stahl 1983: 207; Olteanu 1997: 6; Worobec 2001: 64; Pócs 2004a: 175.

⁵⁴ Worobec 2001: 70.

from the house's occupants, fasting, and praying for divine mercy. Reading a series of prayers from liturgical books is considered as having the power of a counter-spell. Such readings are accompanied by the sprinkling of holy water, fumigation, all of which are meant to cast out the bad spirits and the effects of the enchantment. The text of a curse to remove evil and attract the divine wrath over these demons reads as follows:

Curse ye all guile beings, starters of malice, cursed and hated devils no matter whom, from where you are and how you are; you who poison and enchant places and people's homes, the servants of God (N); you doers of evil's work, along with whomever gave themselves up to you, that guile man ...⁵⁵

The confession of members of the household, required by this ritual, is a form of "spiritual therapy", a sacrament, and a form of "diagnostic",⁵⁶ a necessary step in the process of healing or removing the effects of witchcraft or demonic attack. The prayers read by the priest invoke an entire divine hierarchy, and reference similar cases described in Biblical or Christian literature, wherein God or his representatives have defeated demons or their agents. The naming and description of the condition or affliction for which the ritual is performed are followed by a request for divine intervention to remove suffering, and their alleged causes, as we can observe in the two excerpts below:

Remove, alienate, do away with all devilish works, the way of Satan and all enmity, evil eyes, insatiable and jealous, of the eye of wrongdoers from your servant (N).⁵⁷

Seek with mercy towards this house and towards thy servants (N), and from the sorrows of evil trickery of men, the poisoner and sorcerers, of enchanters or enchantresses and cunning devils, save them.⁵⁸

The first excerpt is part of the "Prayer for Headache and Evil-eye". The Evil Eye belief is widespread in Central and Eastern Europe, as Éva Pócs has shown in *Evil*

⁵⁵ *Molitfelnic* 1896: 370–372. "Blestemu-vă pre voi atotviclenilor, începătorii răutăților, blestemaților și urâților draci, care, cine, de unde sunteți, și câți sunteți; voi care otrăviți și fermecați locurile și casele oamenilor, a servilor lui Dumnezeu (N); voi lucrătorii răutăților, împreună cu cea ce s-a dat pre sine vouă, vicleanul om..."

⁵⁶ On this stage of diagnosis in popular medicine, including the one practiced by priests, see Cosma 2014; and Stahl 1983.

⁵⁷ *Molitfelnic* 1896: 270. "Depărtează, înstrăinează, gonește toată lucrarea diavolească, toată calea satanei, și toată vrăjmășia, privirea cea rea, nesățioasă și plină de gelozie, a ochilor celor făcători de rele de la robul tău, (N)"

⁵⁸ *Molitfelnic* 1896: 370. "caută cu milostivire spre casa aceasta și spre servii Tăi (N), și de supărările cele rele ale viclenilor oameni, ale otrăvitorilor și descântătorilor, ale fermecătorilor, sau fermecătoarelor și viclenilor diavoli, mântuiește-i."

*Eye in Hungary: Belief, Ritual, Incantation.*⁵⁹ The second fragment is part of a prayer in the “Ordinances for the House or the Place Disturbed by Enchantments and Disenchantments”. Both draw attention to the importance of spells, enchantments and incantations as the source of various diseases and afflictions. The constant performance of such prayers and rituals during the nineteenth century, and their presence in contemporary editions of the *Molitfelnic*, demonstrates that, despite the growing influence of secularization, modern cosmology and the understanding of causality, belief in witchcraft, charms and spells remained widespread in religion and religious life within the church as well as within popular culture.

Along with insights mediated through liturgical literature, other type of documents from Church archives shows us fragments of magical religious practices in a manuscript annotated by a Greek-Catholic priest from Blaj in the last decades of the nineteenth century. His notes are about prayers and services requested by churchgoers on different occasions. For example, on the 23rd August 1891 he wrote that Sofia Ganea has a foot and a hand which hurt, and requested the “Prayer of Saint Basil the Great” to be read for her.⁶⁰ Another entry on the 5th October 1893 says that Maria Spineanu, a 70 year-old woman, troubled by swelling and hard disease, requested a prayer for the undoing of spells.⁶¹ An explicit connection between demonic possession and bewitchment is made in an entry on the 13th April 1896, when the priest read twice the “Prayer of Saint Basil the Great” for Gligore Oniga from Sâncalu (60 years old), who claimed that his daughter bewitched him.⁶²

The manuscript contains hundreds of notes like this, enabling us to observe the healing power ascribed to the priest, church rituals and prayers, and the concomitant belief that diseases are caused by bewitchment, spells and demonic possession. This understanding of diseases and misfortunes motivated peasants to beseech priests and monks, as well as healers and sorcerers, to employ countermagical rituals against demons, unclean spirits or malevolent witchcraft performed by evil individuals or enemies. As Christine D. Worobec wrote, about Russian and Ukrainian peasants from the nineteenth century, the thaumaturgical arsenal of the Orthodox ritual – prayers, incense, communion, consecrated bread, holy water, and oil – could be used to fuel both exorcism and the identification of individuals responsible for malefic action. She concludes that monks and priests regarded as intertwined cases of possession and bewitchment, thus legitimating and nourishing peasant understandings and beliefs.⁶³

If the *Molitfelnic* provides insight into the Church’s priestly work at various times and crises, folklore data gathered during the second half of the nineteenth century indicates

⁵⁹ Pócs 2004b: 205.

⁶⁰ Ms. VIII/102, 79.

⁶¹ Ms.VIII/102, 92.

⁶² Ms.VIII/102, 107.

⁶³ Worobec 2001: 64–65.

the presence of practices and magic beliefs related to religious rituals. Some of these rituals are related to the presence or activity of the priest. Seasonal cycle rituals and rites of passage are preceded and accompanied by numerous magical practices performed by other ritual specialists, such as old seers or midwives. They employed Eucharistic and other elements consecrated by the priest (at Epiphany, Easter or the Day of the Cross) in magical rituals to speed up a potential marriage⁶⁴ or increase catches in fishing or hunting; they bathed children in holy water with flowers and money, to ensure their beauty and wellbeing,⁶⁵ or conducted rituals for preparing the dead or protecting the inhabitants of a home.⁶⁶ These data emphasize both the integration of formal ritual practices within broader folk magic and the interfaces between official religious and folk beliefs and practices. Along with the examples reviewed so far (and others to be presented later), the existence of charms manuscripts and folk beliefs also show that the clergy played a major role in shaping popular religion and culture, and that a large number of priests and monks, until late in the nineteenth century, contributed a view of the world similar to, or very like, that of the peasants.

LITURGY, PSALMS AND PRIEST'S CURSES

Aside from rituals fighting spells and enchantments, the priest could also perform a liturgy or a *sfeștanie* (the blessing of “holy water”), to attract luck and divine blessing, and control the effects of enchantments. This was also a method for solving various problems affecting an individual or a household. A popular belief mentioned by Elena Niculiță-Voronca in Bucovina, at the end of nineteenth century, ran as follows:

... in the first Sunday with a new moon, one should pay for a liturgy in church [...] and any wish that one has, or any request, for health, luck, a good life, or anything for that matter, will come true.⁶⁷

The diary of the Greek-Catholic priest from Blaj, mentioned above, contains numerous notes about believers requesting and paying for liturgies. On the 4th February 1892, Ilena, daughter of Costea Maftciu from Oeni, requested a liturgy and “Prayers for the One Who Suffers Longer”, because she was suffering from dizziness.⁶⁸ On the 18th February 1897, Anica Posia paid for a liturgy for Saint Anthony of Padua to

⁶⁴ Marian 2011b: 87.

⁶⁵ Pavelescu 1945: 42–43, 53.

⁶⁶ Burada 2006: 30; Rădulescu 2008: 145.

⁶⁷ Niculiță-Voronca 2008: 240.

⁶⁸ Ms.VIII/102, 82.

be performed on Friday 19th February for damage caused to her.⁶⁹ A liturgy for Saint Anthony was also requested on the 22nd of August 1897, by Németh András, employee of the railway company, to discover who stole his watch and jacket.⁷⁰ These examples reflect the popularity of Saint Anthony of Padua, the power ascribed to Romanian priests over and above ethnic, confessional and social borders, and also the magical effects ascribed to liturgy. Liturgies are performed, along with prayers from *Molitfelnic*, Psalms, candles, and fasting, for healing disease and solving problems like the discovery of thieves or the recovery of stolen objects. If we consider the priest and the rituals he performs from the believers' point of view, we notice the similitudes with charmers and disenchanters, and the magical effects assigned to clerical rituals and invocations.

The liturgy can also be perverted to a malefic act, employed to cause someone's death. In this respect, we find that "for health, as for everything that is good, one can pay a service during full moon and only for enemies in new moon".⁷¹ In other parts of the country, "they pay a service for everyone in the first Saturday: either for enemies or for doing good".⁷² Ion Muşlea cites a circular issued by the Orthodox Bishop Vasile Moga on December 22, 1824, concerning the power of the Liturgy for evil purposes. This circular mentions the involvement of a priest in practices that caused the death of a person. The bishop commanded that all priests should keep away from such practices and "not deceive people's beliefs with spells, as did the priest Iosif from Cârţişoara, who performed a mass upon the shirt of Gheorghe Ciortolan".⁷³ In the Apuseni Mountains, a practice based on the ordeals principle was used to punish thieves, at the beginning of twentieth century. This practice involved fasting, prayers to St Anthony of Padua and Mary, carrying seven wafers to the church, and paying the priest to read the Psalms. But the thieves also had the option of counteracting by returning to the victim, without him knowing, a part of the stolen goods. By doing this, the chastisement invoked on thieves returns on the victim.⁷⁴ This belief shows that, within peasant understanding of supernatural forces in various rituals and practices, the moral dimension is very ambiguous; the forces triggered could be impossible to control. These examples also show how a priest might use the powers assigned to him more like a charmer, and church rituals might be pressed explicitly into magical acts.

Underlining the ritual pressure against an offender, Kádár József, a Hungarian folklorist describes a custom from the Cluj area, during the second half of the nineteenth century:

⁶⁹ Ms. VIII/102, 113.

⁷⁰ Ms. VIII/102, 115.

⁷¹ Niculiţă-Voronca 2008: 240.

⁷² Niculiţă-Voronca 2008: 240.

⁷³ Muşlea 1972: 403.

⁷⁴ Pavelescu 1945: 58.

In Moldovenești, it is customary to threaten some people like this: Leave it to me to bring about your doom. One speaks these words to villains. If one wishes to cause someone else's death, one can take the following course of action. Fast for nine Tuesdays, not eat and not drink anything, during which one pays for a church service every week, where the priest reads Psalms 19 and 90, which list the curses of David. This custom is called *furesare*. The man targeted for that particular ill wish grows sick and dies soon after. Only a sorcerer who can figure out that the disease comes from some enchantment can only cure this disease.⁷⁵

These practices emphasize the ambiguity of the sacred, and demonstrate the power ascribed to the priest, to bless or to curse, to heal or bring down diseases and misfortune. The priest actively participates in the popular witchcraft system; he can steer away, or bring about, ill fate.⁷⁶ Paying the priest to read the Psalter was used also as a mean of punishing rivals or enemies, as we see in the case of Sava Oniga from Geoagiu de Sus, who, on the 3rd November of 1896, requested a Psalter on Antoniu and Nicolae, because they brought her to trial.⁷⁷

Another version of this practice, called the “Black Psalter”, and involving fasting and reading the Psalter, is depicted in a material collected by Elena Niculiță-Voronca:

You pay for one or even more, maximum twelve Psalters to be read for you. But especially you have to pay for a “black psalter” on Wednesday or Friday night, with candles downwards, to drop in the water, and in nine days you'll throw him/her down as with a scythe.⁷⁸

According to Alexandru Ofrim, the “Black Psalter” ritual, as it is still practiced, means the reverse reading of the Psalter, accompanied by candles turned upside down and ritual nudity, performed by a witch.⁷⁹ One explanation as to why rituals performed by priests should be considered as more powerful than those performed by witches,

⁷⁵ Kádár 2005: 61. “În Moldovenești se obișnuiește a se amenința unii oameni în felul următor:

– Las că-ți vin eu de hac. Aceste cuvinte se spun răufăcătorilor. Dacă cinvea vrea să piară un astfel de om, se face în felul următor. Se ține post timp de nouă zile de marți, nu se mănâncă și nu se bea nimica, se plătește în fiecare săptămână câte-o slujbă preotului, care rostește-n biserică psalmii XIX și XC, în care se regăsesc afuriseniile lui David. Acest obicei se numește *furesare*. Omul pentru care se ține post și slujbă, nu peste multă vreme se îmbolnăvește și moare. De această boală îl poate vindeca numai un vrăjitor, care își dă seama că boala vine de pe urma unor făcături.”

⁷⁶ Pócs 2004a: 174.

⁷⁷ Ms. VIII/102, 111.

⁷⁸ Niculiță-Voronca 2008: 212–213. ‘Plătești de-ți citește o psaltire sau mai multe, pân’ la 12. Dar mai ales să-ți citească “psaltirea neagră”, miercuri sau vineri, noaptea, cu lumânarea înturnată în jos, să picure în apă și pân’ la nouă zile îl culci cum l-ai culca cu coasa.’

⁷⁹ Ofrim 2001: 266.

charmners and wizards in rural society lies in their ability to read and use sacred books, which are themselves ascribed supernatural powers in traditional culture.⁸⁰

By stating this, we arrive at the last issue in my brief presentation, that of the dreaded priestly curses. If the rituals mentioned so far had to do mainly with the healing power Christian tradition assigned to the priest – fasting, reading psalms, performing liturgies – the priest’s power to curse derives from his traditional attributes in the field of justice.⁸¹

In his book on the history of curses, Dan Horia Mazilu stressed the importance of church books on curses, used in solving judiciary issues. Different bishops issued curse books to address otherwise insoluble situations, to prove or to discover the truth. Preserved by initiated priests, they were passed on from generation to generation, employed only in extreme situations, such as to revenge a murder against an unknown murderer, or to punish a serious offender against the solidarity of a community. Those who owned them enjoyed great prestige within the community. According to church law, only hierarchs were allowed to curse, but, in practice, many priests used these curse books, or curses from liturgical books.⁸²

The power of clerical curses, the link between priesthood and justice, were reaffirmed in the second half of the nineteenth century, as we can see from the preface of the book *Anathema and Curse*, published in 1907 in Cluj, after a Russian translation from 1868:

Anathema and curse in order to punish evildoers, and to the praise and blessing of doers of good. [...] according to the gift of the eternal Holy Spirit, that fell on the saint apostles, we have the same power to bound and unbind our believers, which are following God’s commands, we send them happiness, our blessing and forgiveness of sins, and on evildoers and transgressors, that defy God’s commandments, and are craving to damage their fellows [...] if they have stolen or committed injustice on somebody, God knows their name if we don’t, and we are anathematizing and cursing them, we are giving them to the eternal darkness, along with all like them [...]⁸³

⁸⁰ Ofrim 2001: 44–46; Cosma 2013: 356–359.

⁸¹ Mihoc 2012: 10.

⁸² Mazilu 2001: 268–273; Nicoară 2000: 194.

⁸³ “Afurisenie și blăstăm spre pedepsirea făcătorilor de rele și spre lauda și binecuvântarea făcătorilor de bine: [...]și noi nevrednicii după darul duhului sfânt cel pururea curgător, care s’a dat sfinților apostoli, având aceeaș putere a lega și a deslega pe drept credincioșii noștri, cari plinesc poruncile d-zeiești, pe aceia îi fericim și le trimitem binecuvântarea noastră și iertarea păcatelor, iară pe cei răi voitori și călcători de lege, cari defaimă poruncile lui D-zeu și poftesc paguba deaproapelui lor [...] de i-au furat sau l’au nedreptățit sau l-au amărât pe N. N., pe unii ca aceia de au nume N. N. , iar de nu au, D-zeu știe numele lor, îi afurisim și-i blăstămăm și-i procleșim, dându-i anatemei și întunerecului de veci cu cei de un cuget cu ei [...]”

These curses follow patterns known from prayers used for exorcising, and from curses in certain psalms invoking divine wrath upon enemies, as we see from examples published by George Ciuhandu in the early twentieth century:

Please God, punish my enemy and kill him. Punish him with the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ. Punish him with the prayers of Saint Mary, your Holy Mother, punish him with the Saints, punish him with the Holy Gospel, punish him with the Sacred Mass, punish him with the prayers of the Holy angels, punish him with the prayers of the Great John the Baptist etc.⁸⁴

But, apart from curses established and issued by the Church, there were both allowed and forbidden rituals involving these texts. Just as we saw before, ritual texts can be perverted into maledictions, prayers can be used as curses, in order to bring upon the death of an enemy. The power to curse attributed to the priest both by church tradition and popular belief, was not limited to judiciary issues. Priests often relied on this power for completely different reasons. “Night services and enchantments”, along with maledictions, were much-discussed topics among the priests at conferences at the end of the nineteenth century. Here we find mention of situations where a priest “cursed the whole community”.⁸⁵ The historian Nicolae Iorga, describes a narrative from the eighteenth century, of a priest allegedly paralyzing a man through a curse.⁸⁶ The power of priestly curses is emphasised in another brief piece of evidence. In his short story, *Precupa*, the novelist and priest Ion Agârbiceanu describes the popular belief that a priestly curse can cause mortal illness or madness. *Precupa*, a boy servant for the priest, was one day sent to the mill, but sold the flour and drank the money. The priest cursed him. Since then *Precupa* was possessed by the Devil. His wife was convinced the priest had something to do with it, so she insisted that her husband went to another priest for confession, and to ask for a ritual reading, traditionally called *molitvă*.⁸⁷ In this situation, notice that another priest had to perform a ritual in order to remove the effect caused by the first priest’s ritual. This is similar to cases when a disenchanter or a priest revokes the action of a charmer or sorcerer, a common pattern in folk narratives.

In the area of Western Christianity, the healing, exorcising and cursing priest became practically extinct by the twentieth century.⁸⁸ But in Romanian Orthodox Church these kind of stances and attributes assigned to priestly activity were still in use in

⁸⁴ Ciuhandu 1930: 371.

⁸⁵ Soroștineanu 2005a: 28.

⁸⁶ Iorga 2007: 215.

⁸⁷ Agârbiceanu 1962: 270–271.

⁸⁸ Pócs 2013: 186.

the same period, and not only as traces and remnants at the level of popular religion. Contemporary researchers⁸⁹ continue to emphasize this major aspect of the Orthodox tradition in spite of the complex transformations produced by modernization at every level of Romanian society.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, by exploring this small slice of the large and rich realm of popular religion, I think we can safely state that, in nineteenth-century Romanian rural society, in Transylvania, the priest was mainly a mediator of the sacred and a fully integrated actor within the rural magical system, and less of a patriot or an *aufklärer* as he is usually described in Romanian historiography. We cannot reduce his complex activity strictly to the churches' normative narratives or to clerical prescriptions. There was no clear demarcation between religion and magic in rural society. In addition, the opposition between the priest (representative of the institutionalized sacred), and witches and enchanter (representatives of popular practices, demonized in Christian tradition), is relative and ambiguous. In daily practice, the priest often cooperated, directly or indirectly, with other agents performing sacred rituals, or supplemented their actions. In some cases and situations, the priest performed rituals and enacted curses to bring about diseases or afflictions, thus acting as an enchanter, all according to the peasant' magical system.

Secondly, in spite of their claim to be fighting against "superstition" and magical practices and beliefs, both Romanian Churches continued to sustain a traditional view of the world, based on a constant struggle between good and evil. This worldview understood charms, bewitchments, spells and witchcraft as real threats to biological and social life of peasant society. My analysis of church rituals, prayers and services, along with counter-spell manuscripts, church documents and folk beliefs reveals that there was constant dialogue and interaction between the official teachings and practices of the church, and folk beliefs and practices. Peasant views of bewitchment, possession, disease and misfortune demonstrate how peasants appropriated Orthodox understandings of causality, of the Devil, and its workings in this world. At the level of ritual practice, priests were often perceived as more similar to charmers, in spite of hierarchical and theological concern for a clear delineation between magic and religion: between a priesthood representing the official supernatural, and charmers, witches and wizards, representing its pagan or demonic equivalent.

⁸⁹ Ofrim 2001; Gavriluță 2008; Komáromi 2010; Czégényi 2014.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

MANUSCRIPTS

Carnete de însemnări dintre 1875–1930 despre slujbele cerute de credincioși; poezii copiate; cheltuieli zilnice [Booknotes from 1875–1930 about the services requested by believers; copied poems; daily expenses]. No.102 – Fond Biblioteca Centrală Blaj, VIII Acte culturale, Manuscrise [Blaj Central Library Collection, VIII Cultural documents, Manuscripts], – Romanian National Archives Cluj County.

RELIGIOUS BOOKS

Braniște, Ene, 2005: *Liturgica Specială pentru facultățile de teologie* [Special liturgy. For theological faculties]. 4th edition. București: Lumea Credinței.

David, Iustin, 1907: *Afurisenie și blăstăm* [Malediction and curse]. Cluj: Tipografia “Carmen”.

Efhologhion or *Molitfelnic*, 2nd edition, 1896. București: Tipografia “Cărților Bisericesci”.

Stancu, Benedict, 2012: *Sfinți și mari duhovnici despre exorcizare și tămăduire* [Saints and monks about exorcism and healing]. București: Sophia.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Agârbiceanu, Ion, 1962: Precupaș [Precupaș]. In *Opere* [Works] I. București: Editura pentru literatură. 262–271.

Andrei, Mirela, 2006: În granița Imperiului. *Vicariatul Greco-Catolic al Rodnei în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea* [At the empire border. The Greek-Catholic curacy of Rodna in the second half of the nineteenth century]. Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut.

Bejan, Dimitrie, 1936: Edițiile românești ale Molitvenicului [Romanian editions of the Molitvenic]. *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LIV, no. 11–12.

Bilțiu, Pamfil – Bilțiu, Maria, 2001: *Fascinația magiei. Vrăji, farmece, desfaceri din Județul Maramureș* [Fascination with magic. Magic, charms, undoing of spells from Maramureș county]. Baia Mare: Enesis.

Bojincă, Damaschin, 1833: *Anticile Românilor* [Romanian’ aniquities]. Buda.

Bonda, Ioana-Mihaela, 2008: *Mitropolia Română Unită în timpul păstoririi lui Alexandru Șterca-Șuluțiu (1852–1867)* [The Romanian Uniate church during the leadership of Alexandru Șterca-Șuluțiu (1852–1867)]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

Bunea, Augustin, 1902: *Episcopii Petru Paul Aron și Dionisiu Novacovici sau Istoria Românilor transilvăneni de la 1751 până la 1764* [Bishops Petru Paul Aron and Dionisiu Novacovici or the history of Romanians from Transylvania between 1751 and 1764]. Blaj: Tipografia seminarului arhiepiscopesc.

Burada, Theodor, T., 2006: *Datinile poporului român la înmormântări* [Romanian funeral customs]. 2nd edition. București: Saeculum I.O.

- Cameron, Euan, 2010: *Enchanted Europe. Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cartoian, Nicolae, 1938: *Cărțile populare în literatura românească* [Popular books within Romanian literature]. 2 volumes. București: Editura pentru literatură și artă.
- Cârja, Ioan, 2007: *Biserică și societate în Transilvania în perioada păstoririi mitropolitului Ioan Vancea (1869–1892)* [Church and society in Transylvania during the leadership of Ioan Vancea (1869–1892)]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Ciașanu, Gheorghe F., 1914: *Superstițiile poporului român în asemănare cu ale altor popoare vechi și noi* [Romanian superstition. A comparative view]. București.
- Ciocian, Ioan, 2000: *Biserica și societatea românească din Transilvania: Vicariatul Silvaniei în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea* [Romanian church and society in Transylvania. The curacy of Silvania in the second half of the nineteenth century]. Arad: Vasile Goldiș University Press.
- Ciuhandu, Gheorghe, 1930: Cărți de afurisanie sau de blestem II. [Books of malediction and curse]. *Revista Teologică* nr. 20. 450-456.
- Cosma, Valer, Simion, 2013: Preotul și cartea în lumea românească din Transilvania secolului al XIX-lea [The priest and the book in the Romanian society of the nineteenth Transylvania]. In Barbu Ștefănescu – Toader Nicoară (eds): *Valorile Lumii Rurale. Perspective istorice și istoriografice*. Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 352-362
- 2014: Der Priester, die Wunderheilung und das Buch in der bäuerlichen Welt Siebenbürgens im 19. Jh. In Valer Simion Cosma – Edit Szegedi (eds.): *Buch-Wissen-Identität. Kulturwissenschaftliche Studien*. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 101-120.
- 2015: “Lupta clerului cu mentalitățile satului.” Paradigma “Popa Tanda” în istoriografia ecleziastică recentă [“The clergy’s struggle against the villages mentalities.” The “popa Tanda” paradigm within the Romanian ecclesiastical historiography]. In Valer Simion Cosma (ed.): *Religie-Cultură-Societate. Perspective interdisciplinare asupra vieții religioase*. Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană – Eikon, 39-66.
- Coșbuc, George, 1909: *Superstițiunile păgubitoare ale poporului nostru. Descântecul și leacurile băbești, duhurile necurate, vrăji și farmece, sărbători fără de rost* [Damaging superstition of our people. The disenchantment and traditional healing, unclean spirits, magic and charms, pointless celebrations]. București: Institut de arte grafice Carol Göbl.
- Czégényi, Dóra: Preotul român [Romanian Priest]. In: *Enciclopedia Maghiară din România*. (<http://referinte.transindex.ro/enciclopedie/>)
- 2014: A román pap hiedelemköre a magyar népi kultúrában [Beliefs of the Romanian priest in the Hungarian popular culture]. In Ead.: *A mágikus erejű pap. Szerepek és helyzetek*. (Emberek és kontextusok 11.) Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület.
- Daunton-Fear, Andrew, 2009: *Healing in the Early Church. The Church’s Ministry of Healing and Exorcism from the First to the Fifth Century*. Milton Keynes – Colorado Spring – Hyderabad: Paternoster.
- Drăganu, Nicolae, 1922–1923: *Pagini de literatură veche. (O colecție de cărți populare într-un manuscris din jumătatea a doua a sec. XVIII)* [Pages of ancient literature. (A collection of popular books in a manuscript from the second half of the eighteenth century)]. *Dacoromania* III: 235-248.
- Dumitran, Ana, 2004: *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată. Ipostaze ale identității confesionale a românilor din Transilvania în secolele XVI–XVII* [Orthodox religion – reformed religion. Facets of the Romanian confessional identity in Transylvania in 16–17th centuries]. Cluj-Napoca: Nereamia Napocae-Cristian Matos.

- Dumitran, Daniel, 2007: *Un timp al reformelor. Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania sub conducerea episcopului Ioan Bob (1782–1830)* [A time of reforms. The Transylvanian Greek-Catholic church under the leadership of the bishop Ioan Bob (1782–1830)]. Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut.
- Fochi, Adrian, 1976: *Datini și eresuri populare de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea* [Tradition and popular heresies at the end of 19th century]. București: Minerva.
- Gaster, Mozes, 1883: *Literatura populară română* [Romanian popular literature]. București: Jg. Haimann.
- 1891: *Chrestomathie Roumaine. Textes imprimés et manuscrits du XVI^{me} au XIX^{me} siècle* [Romanian Chrestomatie. Edited texts and manuscripts from 16th century to 19th century]. Leipzig – Bucharest: Brockhaus.
- Gavriliuță, Cristina, 2008: *Socioantropologia fenomenelor divinatorii* [Socio-anthropology of divination]. Iași: Institutul European.
- Ghișa, Ciprian, 2008: *Episcopia Greco-Catolică de Făgăraș în timpul păstoririi lui Ioan Lemeni (1832–1850)* [The Greek-Catholic episcopacy of Făgăraș during the leadership of Ioan Lemeni (1832–1850)]. Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut.
- Ghitta, Ovidiu, 2001: *Nașterea unei Biserici. Biserica Greco-Catolică din Sătmar în primul ei secol de existență (1667–1761)* [The birth of a church. Greek-Catholic church of Sătmar in its first century (1667–1761)]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- 2008: “Pânea pruncilor”. context istoric, discurs și mize [The bread of the infants. Historical context, discourse and stakes]. In Florina Ilis (ed.): *Pânea pruncilor sau Învățătură a credinții creștinești. Strinsă în mică șumă*. Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 7-95.
- Gorman Jr., Frank, H., 1990: *The Ideology of Ritual. Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 91*. Sheffield: Academic Press.
- Gorovei, Artur, 1931: *Descânțele românilor* [Romanian’s Disenchantments]. București: Academia Română.
- 1990: Descânțele românilor [Romanian disenchantments]. In Artur Gorovei – Sergiu Moraru (eds): *Folclor și folcloristică*. Chisinau: Hyperion, 59-219.
- Gorovei, Artur – Ciușanu, Gh. F. (eds.) 2012: *Credințe și superstiții românești* [Romanian beliefs and superstitions]. București: Humanitas.
- Hasdeu, Bogdan Petriceicu, 1879–1880: *Cuvente den bătrâni* [Words of elders]. 2 volumes. București.
- Heretz, Leonid, 2008: *Russia on the Eve of Modernity. Popular Religion and Traditional Culture under the Last Tzars*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [2007.]
- Hitchins, Keith, 2013: *Români. 1774–1866* [Romanians. 1774–1886]. 3rd edition. București: Humanitas. [1998.]
- Iorga, Nicolae, 1909: *Istoria bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor* [History of the Romanian church and religious life] Vălenii de Munte: Neamul Românesc. [1908.]
- 2007: *Sate și preoți din Ardeal* [Villages and priests from Transylvania]. București: Saeculum I.O. [București: Carol Göbl, 1902.]
- Kádár, József, 2005: *Folclor românesc din nordul Transilvaniei* [Romanian folklore from Northern Transylvania]. București: Saeculum I.O.
- Komáromi, Tünde, 2010: “Crossing boundaries in times of personal crisis: Seeking help from Orthodox clergy in Transylvania”. In Galia Valtchinova (ed.): *Religion and Boundaries. Studies from the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey*. Istanbul: The Isis Press, 155–166.
- Lindemann, Mary, 2000: *Medicina y Sociedad en la Europa Moderna 1500–1800* [Medicine and society in modern Europe 1500–1800]. Madrid: Siglo veintiuno de españa editores.

- Lupaș, Ioan, 1911: *Mitropolitul Andrei Șaguna* [The metropolitan Andrei Șaguna]. Sibiu: Tipografia Arhidiecezană. [1909.]
- 1918: *Istoria bisericească a românilor ardeleni* [History of Romanian church from Transylvania]. Sibiu: Tiparul tipografiei arhidiecezane.
- Maior, Petru, 1813: *Istoria bisericeii românilor* [History of the Romanian church]. Buda.
- Marian, Simion Florea, 1893: *Vrăji, farmece și desfaceri* [Spells, charms, and undoings of spells]. București: Carol Göbl.
- 2011a: *Sărbătorile la români. 1. Cârțilegile* [The Romanian holidays. *Cârțilegile*]. București: Saeculum I.O.
- 2011b: *Sărbătorile la români. 3. Cincizecimea* [The Romanian holidays. *Cincizecimea*]. București: Saeculum I.O.
- Mazilu, Dan, Horia, 2001: *O istorie a blestemului* [A history of the curse]. Iași: Polirom.
- Meyendorff, John, 2011: *Teologia Bizantină. Tendințe istorice și teme doctrinare* [Byzantine Theology. Historical trends and doctrinal themes]. București: Nemira.
- Mihoc, Blaga, 2012: *Judecata cea dreaptă* [The fair trial]. Oradea: Logos'94.
- Miron, Greta-Monica, 2004: *Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania. Cler și enoriași (1697–1782.)* [The Greek Catholic church in Transylvania. Clergy and parishioners (1697–1782)] Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Mușlea, Ion, 1972: Practici magice și denumirea lor în circularele episcopoești și protopoești [Magical practices and their designation in the church documents]. In Id.: *Cercetări etnografice și de folclor*, vol. II, București: Minerva, 401–407.
- Nicoară, Toader, 2000: Aspecte ale religiei populare în societatea românească din Transilvania în secolul al XVIII-lea [Aspects of popular religion within Romanian society from Transylvania in the 18th century]. In Gheorghe Gorun – Ovidiu Horea Pop (eds): *300 de ani de la Unirea Bisericii Românești din Transilvania cu Biserica Romei*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 183–196.
- Niculită-Voronca, Elena, 2008: *Datinele și credințele poporului român. Adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică I* [Romanian customs and beliefs. Gathered and ordered according to mythology]. București: Saeculum Vizual.
- Ofrim, Alexandru, 2001: *Cheia și Psaltirea. Imaginarul cărții în cultura tradițională românească* [The key and the Psalter. The book in the Romanian traditional culture]. Pitești: Paralela 45.
- Olteanu, Antoaneta, 1997: *Ipostaze ale maleficului în medicina magică* [Evil and the magical medicine]. București: Paideia.
- Pavelescu, Gheorghe, 1945: *Cercetări asupra magiei la românii din Munții Apuseni* [Research on Romanian magic in Apuseni Mountains]. București: Institutul Social Român.
- Pócs, Éva, 2004a: Curse, Maleficium, Divination: Witchcraft on the Borderline of Religion and Magic. In Willem de Blécourt – Owen Davies (eds): *Witchcraft Continued. Popular Magic in Modern Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 174–190.
- 2004b: Evil Eye in Hungary: Belief, Ritual, Incantation. In Jonathan Roper (ed.): *Charms and Charming in Europe*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 205–227.
- 2013: Church Benedictions and Popular Charms in Hungary. In James A. Kapaló – Éva Pócs – William Ryan (eds): *The Power of Words. Studies on Charms and Charmings in Europe*. Budapest – New York: CEU Press, 165–197.
- Popp, Vasile, 1818: *Dissertatio inauguralis historico-medica de funeribus plebejis Daco-Romanorum sive hodiernorum Valachorum et quibusdam circa ea abusibus [...]*, Viena.

- Popea, Nicolae, 1879: *Archiepiscopul și mitropolitul Andreiu baron de Șaguna* [The Archbishop and Metropolitan Andreiu Șaguna]. Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane.
- Pop-Curșeu, Ioan, 2013: *Magie și vrăjitorie în cultura română. Istorie, literatură, mentalități* [Magic and witchcraft in Romanian culture. History, literature and mentality]. Iași: Polirom-Cartea Românească.
- Porterfield, Amanda, 2005: *Healing in the History of Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rădulescu, Adina, 2008: *Rituri de protecție în obiceiurile funerare românești* [Protection rites within Romanian funeral customs]. București: Saeculum I.O.
- Scribner, Robert, W., 1987: *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*. London – Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press.
- 1993: The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World”. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (3): 475–494.
- Schulte, Rolf, 2009: *Man as Witch. Male Witches in Central Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Soroștineanu, Valeria, 2005a: *Manifestări ale sentimentului religios la români ortodocși din Transilvania 1899–1916* [Manifestations of religious sentiment within Orthodox Romanians from Transylvania 1899–1916]. Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga.
- 2005b: *Viața religioasă și sentimentul religios la românii ortodocși din Transilvania. 1899–1916* [Religious life and religious feeling within Orthodox Romanians from Transylvania. 1899–1916]. Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut. [Sibiu: Editura Universității “Lucian Blaga”, 2004.]
- Stahl, Henri, 1983: *Eseuri critice despre cultura populară românească* [Critical essays about Romanian popular culture]. București: Minerva.
- Stanca, Sebastian, 1938: *Viața și activitatea episcopului Vasile Moga (1774–1845)* [The life and activity of the bishop Vasile Moga (1774–1845)]. Cluj: Tipografia Eparhiei Ortodoxe Române.
- Șăineanu, Lazăr, 1929: *Dicționar universal al limbii române* [Romanian language dictionary]. 6th edition. Bucharest: Scrisul românesc. [1896.]
- Șincai, Gheorghe, 1804–1808: *Învățătură firească spre surparea superstiției norodului* [Teachings for the removal of the people’s superstition]. Buda.
- Teodorescu, Ilie, 1923: *Îndrumări liturgice pentru preoți și popor* [Liturgical guidance for priests and people]. București: Socec.
- Timotin, Emanuela, 2011: *Descântecelile manuscrise în contextul limbii și literaturii române vechi* [Disenchantment’ manuscripts in the context of old Romanian language and literature]. București: Editura Academiei Române.
- Toșa, Ioan – Munteanu, Simona, 2003: *Calendarul țaranului roman de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea* [The calendar of the Romanian peasant at the end of nineteenth century]. Cluj-Napoca: Mediamira.
- Vasici, Pavel, 1831: *Dietetica sau învățătură a păstra întreaga sănătate [...]* [Dietetics or teaching to keep entire health]. Buda.
- Vulea, Camelia Elena 2009: *Biserica Greco-Catolică din Vicariatul Hațegului (1850–1918)*. [The Greek-Catholic church in the curacy of Hațeg (1850–1918)]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Worobec, Christine, D., 2001: *Possessed. Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.