Features of Liturgical Language

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Abstract: The article proposes a description of liturgical or religious language, a specific type of religious language style. Given its intractability innovation character, the liturgical language is characterized by a preserved archaic vocabulary in the worship books, with a special charm and a unique depth. The vocabulary of these books, is the keeper of the salvation message, it contains words with great power that will not stop changing lives until the end of the time. The liturgical word is a man's word to God, and most often embodies a prayer. It is a way of communication between the heaven and the Earth. Because the words come from the man, an imperfect creation, the main characteristic of these words is the imperfection. Full of symbolic connotation, the words are different from the secular and profane everyday language, in which it can be felt its influence. The religious language can be found in prayers and religious books. The prayer is the most expressive instrument of Christianity.

Keywords: the liturgical language, the liturgy, the liturgical prayer, the Orthodox ministry, the church's terminology.

The Liturgical or religious language is a type of language generated by religious ritual practices, along with other languages such as the biblical language, the oratorical religious language, the technical religious language, the dramatic religious language, theological language and the religious teaching language. Other types of languages can be mentioned: religious magazines’ language, missionary language, religious sites’ language.

The liturgical language is similar to the refractory character of the biblical innovations. The orthodox ministry's axis is the liturgy, the Eucharistic celebration of Christ's presence in communion's bread and wine. Religion is not just a liturgical act of the previous community's cultural legacy, but nowadays it becomes a way for the Christian community to establish itself. The liturgy is an expressive function of the Christian community, the way how their values, feelings and aspirations are expressed. The revelatory power of religious symbols makes God present. The behavior is a lifestyle and a symbolical inhabitation of the world, revealing the value of the things and of the entities. The liturgical and revelation’s speeches are performative discourses and not declarative. The prayer is a communion with God. It was often said about religious language that is obsolete, and while participating in the church's services, people are exposed to a greater effort of understanding due to retention of some archaic words. The explanation is found in the history of the Romanian language, in the seventeenth century when Romanian was declared a liturgical language. Evangheliarul (1561), Apostolul (1563), Cazania (1564, 1581), Molitfelnicul (15649, Liturghierul (1570), Psaltirea (1570) are the Coresi’s printings from XVI century, in Brasov. Liturghierul (1679), Acatistul Născătoarei de Dumnezeu (1683), Molitfelnicul (1681), Octoihul (1683), Paremiile și Psaltirea (1680) are translations of the Bishop Dosoftei. In parallel, there happened the translation of the church's psalm music books.

The initial form of the Romanian literary language arose in the churches’ area. The poet Alexei Mateevici captures this truth in his poem Limba noastra: „Limba noastră-i limbă sfântă, /limba vechilor cazanii“. The language of any nation is like a living organism that develops during some stages, it is born, it grows, it reaches a level of maturity, and, according to historical circumstances, it may become a dead language (egg Latin and ancient Greek). Therefore, we cannot expect the religious language to be invaded by all sorts of neologisms.

The religious language and especially the Romanian language, as have been preserved in the books of worship, not only have a special
charm, but also a unique depth. Encountered in religious books, the texts have not only informative character. It also makes us aware of certain events in the history of salvation, and people are called to repentance and the inheritance of the Kingdom. These books, in one form or another, enclose the message of salvation, words expressed by Jesus Christ, which will not vanish until the end of the ages.

The liturgical word is a man's speech addressed to God, which most often is embodied in a prayer. Because the words come from the man, an imperfect creation, the main characteristic of these words is the imperfection. Full of symbolic connotation, the words are different from the secular and profane everyday language, in which it can be felt its influence. No nation can live without a relationship with God, so all areas of its work is imbued with religion.

These days, it can be remarked a "stiffness" of the liturgical word in churches, words losing their meaning or leaving the impression that they were given just to fill a dead liturgical space. So the clerics appeal to clichés and phrases meant to save appearances: "Am venit aici în numele înalt PreaSfințitului, care cu timp și fără timp vegează asupra bunului mers …., sunt aici să vă aduc binecuvântările înalt PreaSfințitului ….". That is why we mention an ossification of the liturgical language, remarked by the bishops or theologians. What makes the liturgical language so beautiful is its vividness. In the modern language we can observe an assuagement of the harsh words, such as the word often met drac, that was replaced by diavol. Much more gentle, the word diavol does not seem to soundly bother like the word drac. Another vocable in Romanian liturgical language is the word curva, replaced by femeie desfranată.

It is well known the force that the blessings and curses had in the Old Testament and also in almost every nation of the antiquity. In blessings and curses we can actually see what kind of power words have. In his ecumenical letter, St. James is concerned with the expression of the blessing and the curse: "Așa și limba; mic măduar este, dar cu mari se fâlnește! Iată, puțin foc și cît codru aprinde! Foc este limba, lume a fărădelegii [...]; sparcă tot trupul și aruncă în foc drumul vieții [...]. Ea este un rău fără astămpăr; este plină de venin, aducătoare de moarte. Cu ea binecuvântăm pe Dumnezeu și Tatâl și cu ea blestemăm pe oameni [...]. Din aceeași gură ies binecuvântarea și blestemul!" (Iacov 3, 5-10)

The religious language is expressed in prayers and the religious books. The prayer is the instrument most expressive of Christian religiosity. In all times and everywhere, people had preserved an uninterrupted communion with the Creator in a permanent dialogue. The prayer illustrates the spiritual life of the Old Testament saints, especially the prophets, who strongly defended the quality of prayer and worship.

The prayer performed by orthodox ministry is accompanied by external acts of worshiping God: the Holy Cross, the obedience, the prostrations, the raising hands. The personal prayer is a prerequisite for public prayer of the entire community of believers as "the prayer of many" (2 Corinthians 1:11). The liturgical prayer, Christians have inherited from the Saviour's urge: "Dacă doi dintre voi se vor învâi pe pământ în privința unui lucru pe care îl vor cere, se va da lor de către Tatâl Meu". (Matei 18:19)

The liturgical prayer is the perfect expression of the prayer, well-grounded by the priest's prayer at the Holy Shrine, who is the mediator, the source of divine light and grace for the believers. The prayer heals the wounds of the sin, overcomes the cravings, removes the temptations, multiplies the grace, strengthens the faith, hardens the hope, and lights up the love. Therefore, the essence and the multitude of the orthodox doctrines, is the light of the heart and the mind of those who share with dignity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

We further propose a description of the Our Father prayer; believed to be the first divine Christian prayer, called "princely" after its author, Lord Jesus. It is preserved in the Gospels text in two forms, as pointed out by two authors, apostle Matthew (6, 9-13) with the full text and Evangelist Luke (9, 1-4) with the short text. The evangelist Matthew includes the Lord's Prayer in the mountainside sermon, where His teaching was focused on the prayer and on Christian perfection. Thereby, He reproves the hypocritical prayers of the Pharisees, revealing the requirements of the real prayer. The prayer is the result of direct divine revelation that is detached from the nationalist spirit of the Old Testament prayer, with Universalist goal. The Savior shows his disciples and all Christians, how to say a simple prayer composed of very few words, but which leads to virtue.

The earliest written attestations of the "Our Father" prayer in Romanian date from the sixteenth century and are included in catechist texts as: Coresi's Catechism from 1559. The opening words "Our Father in heaven", gives the prayer a practical meaning, such as the relationship between subjects, the attitude of the believer towards the Lord and our fellowmen. We're saying to God "Our Father" and we obtain the adoption through His Son, who redeemed us, bringing with it the redemption from the
bondage of the devil and death, the sanctification, the adoption and the inheritance of glory. The word "our" from the prayer emphasizes the universal brotherhood of the Christians and the ecclesiological aspect of the prayer. The locution "Care ești în ceruri" suggests the glory of God "Cel ce locuiește in ceruri", from where He reigns and hears the human's voice. The first request, that follows the is invocation, "sfințească-se numele Tău", is one of the most important demand that is addressed to the faithful heavenly Father, meaning that His name is meant to be sanctified in us, by us. A second request, "Viați prin Dumnezeu Ta" indicates the believer's conviction that in Jesus Christ the Old Testament's expectations were accomplished, and the kingdom of God is the future situation with scatological nature. The last spiritual request, "facă-se voia Ta precum în cer și pe pământ" requires the intervention of God to save the world, which will take place only at His will and at the end of the time. The "plinea noastră cea de toate zilele" request could be both spiritual and literal. According to the spiritual meaning, Christ is the bread of life, is the Christian's food, the Savior being the living bread that came down from heaven. This bread is required by the Christian as daily food to maintain his spiritual life. The Christian must live under the knowledge of eternal life, which can only be reached by redemption. In this way, it is advisable to implore God's kindness by asking him: "Și ne iartă nouă gresalele noastre, precum și noi iertăm gresiților noștri".

"Și nu ne duce pe noi în ispită" is the end of the prayer which urges to pray for the removal of temptation. This part of prayer points out that the enemy can do nothing against everyone who believes, if God does not give permission. The "Și nu ne duce pe noi în ispită", reminds the weakness and helplessness of the man. The last request of the prayer embraces a summary of all the requests made, and the sentence "și ne izbâvește de cel rău", asks for God's help against the evil. But the request owns a scatological side, the request for God to release humans from the final and definitive devil attacks, which will increase by the end of mankind. The end of the prayer: "Că a Ta este împărăția și puterea și slava în veci. Amin!" is a doxology, and the believer confesses his belief, recognizing God as the sole master. "Amin" said by the Lord is a Hebrew word that means "așa să fie" and was mentioned only by the evangelist Matthew.

To conclude, the prayer's vocabulary has also a magical side, given by the power of the words over reality. This power does not indwell in the words themselves, but in God's Word, the incarnate Logos; in the Orthodox spirituality the word is seen as a "tăină mare" with "rădăcini metafizice". The solemnity, evidenced by using a sacred language or a conservative version, is very strong in the liturgical text.

The orthodox liturgical ministry is using multiple symbols which reveal God's power. Christ is the revelation of God, the Incarnation of the Word through the Virgin. The image of Virgin Mary, as it is always represented in Orthodox iconography, is inseparable from the presence of the divine Child. The relationship between Christ and the Holy Mother is so strong that the revelatory symbols of the Son of God associate themselves with related symbols, which reflect the presence of Mary with her divine son or transfer itself into her symbolic field.

With regard to the **clerical terminology**, Rodica Zafiu notes that it is incomplete and even incorrect presented in many of our modern dictionaries. In Romanian there is a kind of synonymy, with historical causes and stylistic connotations between essentially equivalent terms, but marked by the appurtenance to the Orthodox religious language, Catholical expedient: *duh* and *spirit*, *spovedanie* and *confesiune* etc.

The orthodox terms are often Greek's origin, entered in Romanian through Slavic branch, and the catholic ones come from Latin, from a late stage in the evolution of Romanian. Some words like (preot, episcop, biserică, slujbă etc) are the same for both speeches. The word *missa* is a key word for the Christian religious life, that is used with many oscillations. In the modern texts *missa* is being used in *mesă*, *misă* or even *missă* forms. The *liturghie* is illustrated "aceași slujbă este denumită de catolici Missa". The word *mesă* is found in DEX as "liturghie" for the catholics and lutherans; and also the word *missa* illustrates the "compoziție muzicală polifonă pentru cor și soliți, scrisă pe textul liturghiei, care se cintă în timpul serviciului religios catolic"; and *liturghie* means "principală slujbă bisericească creștină".

A feature of the clerical speech is the lexical nature that is the preference for certain derivative models and of composition. The prefix *în-(îm-)* is a characteristic of the romanian religious speech. In the contemporary religious speech occurs verbs with great frequency like *îndumnezi*, a *încrește*na, *a înduhovnici* and theirs derives. The verb *A îndumnezi* is found in old texts and it means: "a deveni asemănător cu Dumnezeu". The nominal case of the

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îndumnezeire is “participarea credinciosului la viața lui Dumnezeu prin energiile divine necreate; conținutul ontologic al comuniunii dintre om și Dumnezeu”. The verb A încreștina is encountered especially in folkloric texts, compared with the a creștina, without the prefix form. It can be observed a clear preference for the verb a încreștina and for its derivations: “taină a reîncreștinării”, “mediul încreștinat de Sf. Andrei”, “populații deja încreștinate”. The verb a înduhovnici does not appear in the DEX, still it can be used in different forms, for instance: “din adîncul sufletului înduhovnicit”, “pământul e o materie înduhovnicită”.

To conclude, the liturgical language is characterized by the archaic vocabulary, the solemnity of the discourse, very different from everyday's speech and the influence of words over the reality. The Our Father prayer presents the Christian pattern of the liturgical language, which includes many of the orthodox symbols. The clerical terminology originates in Greek or Slavonic language and with evolution of Romanian there can be found plenty of neologisms, which indicates the fact that the liturgical language is strongly influenced by the literary language.

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