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DOCTORAL THESIS

***THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE
LAND OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA AND ITS
CANONICAL BASES***

HISTORICAL-CANONICAL STUDY

- SUMMARY -

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ARAD

2024

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1. Introduction

Before addressing the introductory elements related to the proposed theme, I must provide some explanations regarding the title "Organization of the Orthodox Church in the lands of the Czech Republic and Slovakia and its canonical bases - Canonical historical study".

Why a title that presents such a broad period as the period of activity of Saints Cyril and Methodius until now when around this church there are fratricidal battles, I could say between the descendants of the two apostles of the Slavs. In order to understand why the Autocephaly of the Czech and Slovak Church has a peculiarity but also a much heavier responsibility than in the case of the other sister churches, before we get to know the canons and the principle of operation and organization of the church, we must know the historical element and the events who influenced church life.

Regarding the particularity of the Autocephaly of these local churches, it consists in the fact that it received two Tomes of Autocephaly, both from the Orthodox Church of Moscow in 1953 and from the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1998. Another particularity we identify in the fact that the Christian activity - Orthodoxy in these lands was interrupted from the death of the descendants of the two apostles until 1918, when in the context of the formation of the Czech and Slovak nations, it was reborn according to the exhortation and principle of returning to the origins. That is why the terms of canon law and the study of the organization of the church is closely related to the study of history but also the knowledge of the diplomatic message used by the Czech and Slovak Hierarchies who are put in the position of shepherding a church located between East and West. That is why the elements of geopolitics combined with canon law, with the legislation in force and with history give a picture as close to reality as possible about a small church called to respond to big expectations. I say "Geopolitics" because the Orthodox Church in the Czech Republic and Slovakia shepherds, on the one hand, the Orthodox from Bohemia, closer to Western culture, and the Orthodox from Slovakia, close from the point of view of the direct borders with Ukraine and Russia.

Treating Autocephaly and its principles without taking into account the context of the international realities that the church is going through today would lead to a misunderstanding of some decisions of this church, which must manifest its autocephaly, but at the same time

must take into account as an institution he needs knowledge of the economic realities, as well as financing in the two countries where he does not benefit from much support from the faithful or from the state whose policy, especially in the Czech Republic, is non-involvement in the administrative and economic functioning of the church.

The basic principles of the notion of autocephaly, i.e. that it is able to choose its own head, suffer certain interferences especially due to the socio-political context in which the church develops. That is why I have integrated the elements of canon law and related them to today's context in which Czech and Slovak Orthodoxy lives. The beauty but also the challenges of autocephaly in the local church also lies in the harmonization of two peoples, Czechs and Slovaks who live in two different states starting from 1992 with different legislations with different diplomatic traditions and still manage to have a common voice, that of the Primate Metropolitan who expresses on behalf of the autocephalous church in the Czech and Slovak lands. When it manifests its autocephaly externally, it must take into account the internal realities that we do not find in another country. Most of the Orthodox believers in this church are of Ukrainian ethnicity, therefore we paid special attention to the realities and evolution of church life in Ukraine. The elements of church history are intertwined with those of canon law, since the reform of Iancus also started in these countries, which even from those times of the 100-year war left deep traces in the national consciousness, which see in the church an element for which a lot was poured blood. This is held up as some justification for the fact that the Czechs have among the highest rates of atheism at over 90%. We risk history repeating itself when we see a Patriarch of an autocephalous Orthodox church justifying war on his own believers. That is why in order to understand the context and the margins in which these two countries manifest their autocephaly, we must better understand, in addition to the attributes of the term autocephalous, the political, social, cultural and economic context in which one of the smallest autocephalous Orthodox churches operates.

2. Motivation and choice of theme

It is known that by definition, at least for us Romanians, the West is identified with Catholicism. Starting from an activity and a passion put at the service of the national feelings I have towards my compatriots, I tried from the moment I joined the clergy to be concerned

with the realities of the church and spiritual life of my compatriots who are in the situation of either emigrating or to manifest their national identity through public divine worship in their mother tongue. By virtue of this desire, I have many common activities and fraternal relations with native Romanians living in Orthodox countries such as Bucovina (Ukraine), Republic of Moldova, Serbia, more precisely Timok, Vojvodina and Vidin Bulgaria. However, the circumstances brought me to the situation of getting to know the life of Romanian migrants who live in the Czech Republic and Prague.

Blessed Father Patriarch Daniel says that the church goes where there are sons, and in this way starting in 2003 I went to Prague, Brno, Usti Nad. Laben where a large part of believers lived in Covăsânt, the parish I pastored . I realized that at the many events in which I participated and in collaboration with the Romanian Embassy in Prague, the Romanians had a longing to baptize their children and participate in the service in the national language, a fact for which they made many requests to me when I was present in this country. Also in this context, I understood that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova naturally agreed to services in the Romanian language even though they were Russian and Ukrainian speakers, and in these languages services were held in many churches in Prague. I thought that the spirituality of Romanian Orthodoxy can provide the framework in which Romanians can be united even if they come from Northern Bucovina (Ukraine), the Republic of Moldova or Romania. That was the first time I asked myself the question, knowing the great care that our church takes for its sons, why they don't have their own Romanian-speaking parish and they have to schedule their services and even baptisms even for unborn children for a period in which a priest could come from Romania. I then found out the answer to the question because in the Czech Republic and Slovakia there is an Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Since then, I started to choose this theme as an answer to the question "How could our Romanians, under the conditions of an autocephaly, have a Romanian priest?" ". In this sense, I was concerned with learning the levers, the labor legislation in the two countries, the way the Orthodox church works, the history and the mentality of the Czechs and Slovaks, as well as the reasons why there are so many Romanians in a country without tradition of Romanian emigration. I understood that there are two reasons, one specific for Romanian migration and one for Romanians from the Republic of Moldova. The specific reason for the Romanian migration from the country is the massive hiring done by IBM in the centers in Brno and Prague that require a pastorate, addressed to very young families with a higher level of culture. The specifics of the migration of Romanians from the Republic of Moldova is that in the Czech

Republic and Slovakia the contractors who work in construction are Ukrainians and they recruit their workers on the construction sites from among the Russian speakers from the countries of the former USSR, this explains, on the one hand, why there are many citizens of the Republic of Moldova in the Czech Republic and Slovakia because it is easier for them to pray and participate in services in the Romanian language, they are also present in large numbers at the church.

These subjective reasons led me to a knowledge of the situation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, knowledge acquired in many cultural activities held in Prague under the auspices of the Romanian Embassy in Prague. I directly met people and the evolution of some events that led me to move from a subjective motivation to an objective one, especially when in the media or from the outside a lot of information about this issue was sometimes presented in a distorted way. I also reached an objective motivation by trying to understand the world in which I live, the Romanian Orthodox faithful and the way in which they can satisfy their grievances in a legal framework.

I chose this theme also for certain things that I admired in the Czech and Slovak people, such as: the resistance of the Eastern Rite faith in a territory where the tendencies and influences have been manifested since the time of the brothers Cyril and Methodius of the Western Rite, the ability to function under several jurisdictions, the ability to be reborn once in 1918 and a second time in the post-Nazi period after it was banned, the friendship and respect they have for the Romanian people, the ability to function and to adjust economically in two countries with different laws and views on church funding. Another motivation in choosing the theme was the fact that between the years 2003 - 2024 I got to know, both on the basis of documents and through communication with people involved in diplomacy and the leadership of the church, directly, not only by taking information from books and articles, a part of the manifestations autocephaly of the Czech and Slovak Church.

But the biggest motivation for choosing this topic was the ability of the Orthodox Church in the Czech and Slovak lands to respect the tradition and canons of the Orthodox Church in a secularized, atheist world, full of political and material conflicts and priorities.

3. Purpose, limits and originality

This thesis has a threefold purpose in its structuring; historical, legal-canonical and administrative. The historical goal is to see the beginning of the evolution and the context of the appearance of the Orthodox Church in the Bohemian, Moravian and Slovak lands to understand on the one hand the great work of the brothers Cyril and Methodius who, in order to work with the Slavic peoples, created an alphabetic language used to this day ours in the church in the south-east of Europe in the countries of the south-east of Europe and on the other hand but understands the specificity of orthodoxy in this autocephalous church, the only one among the other sister orthodox churches that has received autocephaly from two churches considered "mother". By reaching this historical goal, we will understand how it came to be that in 1953, on the one hand, autocephaly was received from the Church of Moscow, and in 1998, autocephaly was received from the Church of Constantinople. We will thus see all the beauty but also the challenges to the autocephaly of the Orthodox Churches in the Czech and Slovak lands that derive from these historical acts. From the point of view of the juridical-canonical purpose, we see the harmonization of the canons with the daily life of the church that went through several events that sometimes even led to its prohibition, the way in which it was reborn as an institution sometimes in the form of an association sometimes through law. With all the challenges of a historical social order and the international context in which the autocephaly of this church manifests itself, we will see that the observance of the canons regarding this subject as well as the foundation on the apostolic tradition, the Holy tradition and the testamentary precepts have always saved and given consistency to the Church as an institution of a state on the one hand with a high rate of atheism and on the other with a majority Catholic and Protestant population in Hussite form.

At the same time, the canonical legal goal and its achievement has in mind the understanding of the moment of the first autocephaly on the part of the Church of Constantinople in 1998 and the realities of the church today that derive from this moment, based on a canon that arouses the interest and controversy of many researchers and canonists of the sister Orthodox churches, is it is about canon 28 from Chalcedon and Constantinople's understanding of the term on the words "in the barbarian territories". Achieving the juridical-canonical goal leads to a polemic following which we try to understand If autocephaly in the case of the Czech and Slovak church has some imposed limits or rather if an autocephaly once granted can be withdrawn.

The canonical-administrative purpose leads to the understanding of a beautiful way of cohabitation in one church of the administrative life carried out by this institution in the space

of two countries with a different legislative system for approaching the ecclesiological issue. At the same time, seen as an association, the church is forced to harmonize according to the laws of the state, which I could say has zero tolerance for arguments invoked based on church canons to benefit from a certain understanding. What will be seen and why the statute cannot be harmonized according to the claims of the Tomos of Autocephaly received from the Church of Constantinople. Understanding from a canonical-administrative point of view, we will see that this church, although small in number of believers and perhaps among the youngest, is a pioneering model through which it experiments before the other churches that from an economic and administrative point of view you benefit from the state of "restitutio in integrum". And in this sense being for us a model of study and understanding following their experience which form of financing the church is viable in a context where the states very quickly change their vision on the functioning of the church as an institution.

This work is intended to be a small step in the understanding and knowledge of a Discreet Autocephalous Church about which there is not much information, especially in the literature, specialized literature in the Romanian language. At the same time, this effort to write the work with the proposed theme is a small one, compared to the great work of Father Şesan, more precisely of the Şesan Valerian and Milan family, presenting church life in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. I say the comma, because in this work I insist on the events and realities of the autocephaly of this church that took place after the end of Father Şesan's work. And because it is a subject in a continuous dynamic, I am convinced that there will be other efforts by researchers within our church to create as faithful a picture of church life in the current context as possible.

The originality of this work lies in the fact that I call on many documents and information that I have experienced and traveled in the course of a 21-year relationship with people involved in the administration of the Czech and Slovak church.

4. Research methodology

In this work I tried to use a methodology that would allow a syncretism between the canonical aspect as well as the legal and historical aspect. Thus, I combined the research based on the expository method used especially in the first part of the work. In a systematic

vision that leads to the formation of an idea about an autocephalous church with a tradition and church life from ancient times but at the same time with an institutional appearance in modern times.

The expository method leads to the knowledge of the historical moments of the appearance of Christianity of Byzantine origin in these territories as well as the appearance of the church institution and its functioning in a modern period in which it experienced both its development and cancellation as an institution during the Hitler period. But this expository method was used at the same time as the analytical method in which we analyzed the meaning and applicability of the canons and canon law in the life of the church in the current context as well as the ability to adapt the canons to the laws of the state in which the church operates. I also used the comparative method especially in studying the financing of the church or its functioning in a context different from ours. If in Romania, the Church is a partner of the state, in the Czech Republic, until now, the church has been somewhat subordinated to the state by the fact that it was fully financed by the state, not having the right to set a cult contribution tax or any other tax. The combination of these methods was necessary to somewhat present the current problems and the church life of the current times as well as the transition of its functioning as an institution from the stage of being financed by the state to the stage until 2032 of being on its own by the fact that made "restitutio in integrum". All four chapters, which are composed of several subchapters, chronologically study the emergence and events unfolding in the Czech and Slovak autocephaly insisting through the analytical and comparative method for knowledge or bringing a beam of light to the current events in the church. In the same vein, for a touch of originality but also to highlight some particular aspects, I also introduced certain interpretive discourses in the work with emphasis on the last researched period, namely 2013-2024.

5. The limits of the work

In the research I carried out to study autocephaly in the two countries, I also relied somewhat on the information that appeared through live speech, which I corroborated with that which appeared in papers and in press articles. But let him know that often only what can be said is communicated, the analyzes that we have done, not always having the certainty of knowing the causes, conditions and the way in which the autocephaly of the church unfolds,

especially in a European context, that is why one from the limits of the present work, they are generated by the fact that not many articles and studies have been written in Romanian, as well as the fact that this knowledge of problems through the dialogue method is always under the sign of subjectivism. This is due to the fact that the studied issue is in a continuous dynamic and that some things are transmitted or realities are transmitted through a diplomatic message that you cannot be convinced that he fully understands. So I can't say that this work could contain the quintessence of the problems, but only that this work can be a step on which you can climb when you want to fully know the Orthodox Church in the Czech and Slovak lands.

The analyzes I made as well as the results we reached in this paper are applicable to the nature of the concept of autocephaly, especially to the specific Orthodox Churches in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which seem to have an autocephaly somewhat similar or at least very close to a actual autonomy. Although the term autocephalous has certain characteristics, they have been restricted in the case of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. At the same time, one of the limits of the work is also generated by the fact that in my research I use sources of documents and information only from two directions, namely the Czech part or the publications that appeared inside the Czech Orthodox Church and from the outside the few publications that appeared in the Romanian language, this double meaning knowledge it can be deficient at a given moment also due to the fact that there is not much information about the church in these lands in the specialized press of the other churches. That's why I want this research to bring an extra level of real knowledge of the situation without claiming to be a defining contribution to the objective understanding of the manifestation of autocephaly in the two countries.

6. Structure and content of the work

The front thesis is divided into four chapters, in turn divided into sub-chapters that discuss issues in a unitary and chronological way, in which I have tried to discuss church life and its evolution from a canonical and administrative historical point of view in a chronological order in a unitary way in which we included all aspects of church life from history, administration, ecclesial life, organization as well as the decisions taken in the international context of today.

Thus, the first chapter entitled "A perspective of the appearance of Orthodox Christianity in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as the evolution of the church in

these lands until today, contains several subchapters in which I return to the sources of Eastern Rite Christianity to the canonical and ecclesial arguments of the presence of Brothers Cyril and Methodius consider those Together with the Apostles in a world or territory that wanted to be independent of the influences and activity of the missions of the Western Bishops. As a paradox of things is the fact that the Christian church and thus the population of these countries was always in opposition to the Catholic influence at the beginning of the request addressed to Patriarch Fotie to send teachers to these lands to teach the right faith, throughout history Jan Hus and His disciples who preached reform as a reaction against the Papacy and in 1918 the re-establishment of Christianity by dissident priests and believers from the Catholic church who preached the return to origins also as a reaction against Catholicism. Culminating in the period 1942-1945 when the church banned by the Hitler authorities was monitored by the bishop of Berlin. It seems that throughout their history the Orthodox Church was a reaction against the Catholic influence in the area. I could say that the two countries in Western Europe constitute the limit where Orthodoxy begins.

Thus in the first chapter I discuss the appearance of Christianity in the Czech and Slovak lands and the Christian mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Moravia, Bohemia and Slovakia. At the same time, I present what happened after the break that was between the activity of the two Saints just like the apostles, i.e. the moment in 1918 when the church was reborn as a national institution according to the principle of returning to its origins as a reaction of society against the abuses of the Catholic Church. It should be remembered that the church in these lands was in two countries where there were protest movements or I could say reformation against Catholicism. In this chapter I discussed the two decisive moments in its functioning as an institution, one being its re-establishment after the moment of 1918 as well as the canonical and legislative form in which it operated then, I mention the Serbian jurisdiction and the second decisive moment is the period after the war when four years of was made illegal in the period 1942-1945 when the Hitlerite occupiers banned the church and then it was reborn after 1945 under the jurisdiction of the Church of Moscow.

In the second chapter I debate the term autocephalous as well as the premises that led to the reorganization of the church after 1945, the canonical and legal form in which the necessity of changing the jurisdiction functioned due to the political and social context in which the church functioned within the Czech and Slovak state which was part of the treaty of the countries that joined the Warsaw Pact.

I present the moment defined as the Russian exarchate in Czechoslovakia, the Tomos granted by Patriarch Alexei I and its content as well as the organization of the church from the moment of obtaining autocephaly from the Russian Church until the moment when, due to the revolutionary movements around the years 1989-1992, the Czech and Slovak people s - they disconnected from pro-Russian thinking. It is also the time when the church goes through certain challenges, the division of Czechoslovakia and the division into two independent states but which share the same values and principles. Thus, the last subchapter of the second chapter also discusses the context in which the second Tomos of autocephaly was assigned, this time from the west, more precisely, the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In this chapter focusing on the two Tomes, on the debate on the canonical issues that the difference between the Constantinopolitan Tomus and the Muscovite one entails, implications that will be found in the contemporary church life that I will develop in the third chapter.

In the third chapter I emphasize the organizational administrative problems and their solution in the light of the canonical legislation but also in the perspective of a harmonization with the legislation of the two states where the autocephalous church operates. I also identify and propose for analysis some external factors that have influenced the decisions and life of the autocephalous church from 2013 to the present, and also include a defining branch in the formation of the clergy and the church's administrative and management bodies, namely theological education and editorial appearances.

Chapter three focuses on administrative information, but especially canonical information. The main discussion of the chapter revolves around the statute of organization and operation called the Church Constitution and all that derives from this statute regarding the organization of the church. I could say that this chapter is the pinnacle of canonical debates regarding the realities of contemporary church life in the two countries Czech Republic and Slovakia, information that is no longer found in specialized works that mostly appeared in the period up to 1992, so this chapter presents most of the new elements about the church, derived from the research of new articles, discussions held with members of the clergy and Czech and Slovak societies, but also from information appearing in foreign media. From this article it emerges that the subject addressed is in a continuous dynamic and develops within the international socio-political context in which we live. It is a period of geopolitical repositioning of the peoples and implicitly of the churches within these peoples, which must have a starting point and an anchoring point, I could say, in church canons. From

a canonical point of view, a red thread is created for the church to follow in preserving the teachings of Christ in a world in permanent change.

Chapter four is a plea for friendly relations between the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania, based on the Czech respect for Romania, which in two historical moments behaved in a noble manner towards the Czech people. The first moment is the sacrifice of the Romanian heroes in the Tatra Mountains for the liberation of Czechoslovakia and the second moment is the non-involvement of Romania together with the other countries of the Warsaw Pact in the invasion of Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, on the part of Romania, the respect we have had towards the Czech and Slovak culture and towards the Czech people since the time when Michael the Brave asked for the help of Emperor Rudolf or since the time when Czechoslovakia had a common border with Romania where the Bishopric of Muncaciului was located, the Bishopric of Muncaciului neighboring Sighetul. An emphasis in this chapter is also on the current academic and cultural collaboration in which the activities and work of the young Romanian theology professors from Arad emerge in a context in which we know that the manner in which the church will be organized and shepherded in future depends very much on the formation and ideas of the clergy. Through the theological school, Romanian-Czech and Slovak relations are cultivated, and at the same time, they constitute opportunities for us to develop and overcome our own limits. And for them a real support from a sister church that has never issued claims on the Orthodox Church in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.