

**Georgică Grigoriță, *Sfintele și Dumnezeieștile canoane: între tradiție eclezială și necesitate pastorală. O analiză a izvoarelor teologiei canonice în actualul context ecleziologic*, București, 2017, 432 p.**

In 2017 at the Publishing House of the University of Bucharest the book of rev. Georgică Grigoriță appeared, being entitled: "Sfintele și Dumnezeieștile canoane: între tradiție eclezială și necesitate pastorală" ("The Holy and Divine Canons: Between Ecclesial Tradition and Pastoral Necessity"). It is an analysis of canonical sources in the current ecclesiological context. Father Grigoriță is a patriarchal counsellor at the Chancellery of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church and he teaches Church law courses at the Faculty of Theology "Justinian Patriarhul" from the University of Bucharest. During his doctoral studies he was interested in Church law issues and His Ph.D. thesis was held at the Pontifical Gregorian University from the Vatican City.

This volume has seven chapters and it is a vast work which includes a thorough analysis of the holy canons from the point of view of the context of their occurrence and applicability in the present, within the Church.

The book starts with a brief introduction about the beginning of Christianity. Then he wrote about the freedom given by the Holy Emperor Constantine the Great through the Milan Edict in 313, when we witness the appearance of the canons that will have to respond to some doctrinal and disciplinary problems that arose within the Church. Later, alongside canons, the imperial laws relating to the Church were also introduced in the canonical collections, called nomocanons.

In the first chapter there is a systematic analysis of the Orthodox ecclesiology, starting from the etymology of the word "orthodox" which is translated "right", or in literal translation represents the "correct doctrine". Here are presented essential elements of Orthodox ecclesiology, and the terms: synodality, autonomy and autocephaly are explained. The

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terms of synodality and primacy have been extensively explained with regard to the way which the Church has been led in. In this regard, the Orthodox-Catholic theological dialogue was mentioned from the meetings in Belgrade, Ravenna, Paphos, Vienna, Amman, and Chieti, where the participants tried to find common points. Unfortunately, this has not been achieved, since the dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church is currently in a tense situation. The main causes are the ecclesiological differences regarding the notion of primacy and synodality, but also the different visions within the Orthodox Church delegation through the representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and those of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

The second chapter of the paper explores the etymology of the term *canon* that has the meaning: norm, guide, model, principle, law, which differs from the concept of law (*nomos-lex*) issued by the state. Then it is shown the difference between the canons and the dogmas of the Church. If in case of pastoral necessity, the former can be supplemented and modified only by the ecumenical council and bindingly accepted by all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, the dogmatic decisions can never be changed. Over time, besides the official meaning of pastoral rule approved in the synods, the term *canon* has taken on several meanings: the epitemia given by the confessor, the list of the books of the Holy Scriptures, the poetic song of divine worship, and others. But the official meaning of the term *canon* is the pastoral rules approved by Church authority to preserve order in the Church.

The most consistent chapter of the volume is the third, which shows how the canons were conceived and the time of their issuance, the 4<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 920 the official collection of canons appeared at an endemic synod which approved "The Nomocanon in 14 Titles" or Nomocanon of Photios. It includes all the recognized canons as "corpus canonum" of the Church, starting with the 85 Apostolic Canons, the canons of the Ecumenical Synods, the canons of the local councils and those of the Holy Fathers. All these make up the unique "corpus canonum" of the Church, which cannot be changed or modified, but only explained in the context of new pastoral needs or ecclesiological challenges.

The fourth chapter recounts the so-called "whole canons", which are 133 and appeared in some eastern collections in the second millennium, containing fragments of canonical writings or epistles of hierarchs, and

regulating the necessary epitimias in certain situations. In the Orthodox Church there are several collections of canons such as "The Nomocanon in 14 Titles", approved by the decision of the endemic council of Constantinople in 920, but the best known are "Pedalion" (1800) and "Syntagma from Athens" (1852-1859). The content of these two Greek collections of canons is not identical due to the manuscripts used, but also to the editors' decision to include also some patristic writings of disciplinary character.

The fifth chapter presents the canons that have appeared in the Church since the fourth century, due to the fact that until the Milan Edict of 313 we cannot talk about canons or canonical collections because the Church was persecuted and could not summon the councils of bishops to issue dogmatic and disciplinary decisions. There are mentioned some of the most important collections of canons, from the 4th century to "The Nomocanon in 14 Titles" in 920, today acknowledged as an official collection of canons of the Church.

In conclusion, the last chapter of the book brings the issue of holy canons to the present. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role and value of the holy canons were never disputed. After 1927, under the influence of the canonical codification process initiated by the Roman Catholic Church, some Orthodox theologians stated that they would be obsolete or outdated and therefore a process of codification would be necessary. This theory was acquired by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and supported by Grigorios Papatomas, a Greek archimandrite, who published a Greek-French bilingual volume where he tried to encode the canons. Father Professor Liviu Stan was the first Orthodox canonist to offer a relevant response to this canonical codification initiative. He has shown that the holy canons are not overcome, but they contain all the fundamental principles for the organization and functioning of the Church. And their interpretation should not be made word by word, but, by identifying the fundamental principles they contain and their application in the practical life of the Church. Ascertaining the facts, the Church has the duty to make a critical edition of the holy canons text, which thus will become a unitary collection of canons for the entire Orthodoxy.

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