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Religious Freedom – The Obligation to Respect the Rights Its Image in the Canonical Orthodox Tradition

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Abstract

For the contemporary society religious freedom represents an actual challenge. Questions such as: What it is? What are the limits of religious freedom? How shall it properly be understood and what does it represent? are nothing more but the recognition of this phenomenon. The Orthodox Church is mainly built based on this freedom of humankind, and it represents the main pillar of the two centuries Orthodox Church existence. And this is also why it is entitled to answer to this issue regarding whether religious freedom is a human right that must be respected or not.

Keywords

religious freedom, obligation, rights, law, Orthodox tradition, Canons.

I. Introduction

The Christian Church, in this case referring only to the Orthodox Church is and has been built on this right of every human being, received from the moment of creation. The main speech on which the Church is built is undoubtedly the Scripture.

For any Orthodox Christian, the Holy Scripture represents the main foundation of his faith and implicitly, his whole existence. If we closely analyze the Scriptures speech, it gives two important coordinates to begin with.

The first one is the fact that man is created by the Creator from two elements: body and soul. The soul gives life to the body, in other words, it makes the difference between empty “matter” and “living creature”, and the second is that the Creator built man “in His image”.

In this study, the term “religion” or “religious phenomenon” cannot be utilized in a linguistic light, without interfering with the current semantic field. This is due to the fact that in the beginning “God saw that it was good” and the concept of “religion” with all its linguistic consequences cannot be properly used until after the Sin. Because of this, the concept of “religious freedom”, I believe is the most appropriate to describe this period when the garden of Eden was complete.

Assuming that nobody would be able to disagree with its existence, I bring as an argument the way in which the theme of “the tree of good and bad”. From the Scriptures speech, we can see that the human -Adam and Eve- were not given their freedom, but rather that the Creator himself respects this right, because it can be noticed that the human does not have to respect this command, but this freedom is rather “given” and “respected”.

Another argument taken directly from the scripture is the fact that Lucifer himself is aware of this aspect. The devil knows that he cannot “force” the man to do what he does not want to, that is exactly what makes him use this freedom against the Creator and against the purpose that it was given for.

From the arguments above, we can notice the two main connotations of the religious freedom forming, which imply the acknowledgement and the responsibility of the human being. The first one mentioned entails the exterior factor which comes to complement the second one, the interior. Namely, freedom (in this case religious freedom) is not only something that shall be respected from the exterior, but rather it directly involves him. The human being is the beneficiary of this freedom, but he is also the first one to be aware of the need to respect this right.

In the human society, similarly to the Holy Scripture, there is a debated term with a high moral importance, more exactly “self-respect”. Respect in the Holy Scripture defines the attitude of people towards “righteous

people” even before the law of the Old Testament which would define it properly, if we were to mention just the case of Abraham and his righteousness, without even referring to Methuselah, Moses, Job, Elijah and others like them.

II. Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined (Matt 12, 25)

Disrespecting this right makes the one who did it suffer the consequences and also lose this right. The superficial image that Adam and Eve would die after the sin is nothing but a try to distract the human mind from our freedom, because the first breaking of the law takes to another one and then many other trespassing situations. Adam and Eve do not want to make use of the right that they have to “not eat” from the tree of good and bad, such as the devil would advise Cain to give up this right of his together with the obligation to respect it. Cain is aware that his purpose is to bring life in the world, according to the blessing of the Creator after the Sin, but he chooses to take life, by killing his brother.

For those interested in these aspects, I would like to launch two challenges. The first one is linked both to the juridical and theological aspects equally: -How can we explain the fact that the dialogue initiated by God with Adam and Eve, and the latter with Cain are so short and end so abruptly? And the second challenge refers to the following question: - Why in the moment that the obligation to respect this right is broken God has to handle it differently? As an added explanation, the following shall be mentioned: in the first case, Adam’s case, God asks “Adam, where are you?” and in the case of Cain “What have you done?”, both followed by a conversation between God and each one of these two. It shall also be mentioned here that every reader of the Holy Scripture shall be surprised by the lack of respect towards this right by deciding that it is not as important as to become an obligation, and also the way this had very bad immediate consequences visible enough to alert the human conscience.

From the previously mentioned examples we can see a very selfish way of thinking become common, because Cain learned nothing from his father’s experience. The curse that unveiled over his father does not directly involve him, so he considers appropriate to pay the price yourself if you disrespect this right. But for Cain, the big surprise is in the case of

him believing that he is the exception from the rule. What a huge difference is there in his attitude towards his own behavior in the beginning and at the end of his dialogue with God. In the beginning he is the prototype of arrogance, indifference and disrespect (“Am I the legal representative of my brother?”) for it then to change to feeling obligated to respect the religious freedom (“my punishment is bigger than what I could take” - Gen 4, 13).

Still referring to these episodes, without even mentioning any others from the many that are in the Holy Scripture, we can notice a negative direction not only in disrespecting this right, but rather in the gravity of the consequences. Such as, in the case of Adam and Eve, they are not cursed, but rather the matter has to suffer consequences, and for the case of Cain, the limitation of religious freedom to a direction where it does not belong attracts a personal curse.

What did the human kind learn from this, you would ask yourself, to everyone’s surprise (or not) absolutely nothing. The hate only became more intense. Our choices made us worse with every generation and the next event that marks the history of human kind only shows that the religious freedom is limited. Namely, there is a point to which we are allowed to use or make use of this right, but when it gets too far, God himself intervenes.

How far could the religious freedom of our choices be taken is hard to estimate. What we can notice, on the other hand, in the Genesis is that after only six chapters the overuse of our freedom makes God regret even creating the man and the whole creation to be used by him (Gen 6, 6-7).

An immediate consequence of not respecting the religious freedom is represented by the limitation of human lifetime to 120 years. It was not enough that we experienced death because we chose to be “just body”, we kept searching for more punishments “their days shall be no more than 120 years” (Gen 6,3). And this punishment that was challenged by king David who challenged the veracity of this fact in the case of Urijah and it became a rarity because “the days of our years are seventy years; and if I shall be strong for eighty and anything more than that is only pain and exhaustion” (Psalms 89, 10-11).

The chance given to the human kind through Noah and his family is eventually wasted. Noah’s sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth will take further the religious freedom as a right to be respected with or without obligations, because after the sacrifice and the Edenic blessing, after the promise that

the human kind will not be eradicated in the flood, the choices of Noah's sons will define the way each of them takes on this religious freedom. One of them receives the curse (Ham), while the other two embrace the fatherly teaching (Genesis 9, 25-26).

The lack of respect towards the "guaranteed" religious freedom through the agreement between God and Noah has to suffer the consequences of humankind behavior. The tower of Babel imposes the destruction of unity through creation of plurality, namely the concrete way of understanding the religious freedom. The religious unity given by the Creator becomes my freedom, your individual freedom, not an obligation, but rather a right to be used when it is in our favor.

All the previously mentioned might create, for some readers, a discomfort or create the idea that everything is lost in the case of man. Man's historical path is historically defined as (in the case of Israel) "becoming worse and worse" and in such a way that every initiative is going to fail.

III. Religious freedom- reinforcement of the obligation to respect a right

The new-testamentary teaching gives us a natural perspective of the way in which religious freedom is offered to the man together with the obligation to respect it. There will indeed be a question regarding the length of time until the Edenic promise that whatever is born from the woman will smash the head of the snake (Gen 3,15) will ever come true?

Considering how natural this question is, the answer shall be as natural, and it can be found in the parable of the prodigal son. And due to the fact that oratorical art allows the speaker to answer with another question, I shall answer as follows: - Let's ask ourselves, for how long did the prodigal son stay in the foreign country? In other words, the time frame did not depend on God, but rather on the choices of man.

In the new-testamentary context, the life of Our Savior Jesus Christ represents a pattern to be followed and seen as such. Religious freedom as an obligation to respect the right in regards to the person of the "Teacher" of the New Israel is directly challenged in the luring in the desert (Lk 4, 1-13). The way in which the Savior uses this right, together with the consequences shall define the choices that we make in life.

From all the examples mentioned in the Savior's public activity there are two principal directions where the teaching activity meets the miracles, namely: personal cases and community speech, namely the teaching offered to the whole community.

There are plenty of personal examples, more clear than the previously mentioned, there can also be mentioned the case of Nathaniel in the moment of his calling to be an apostle, in the case of Simon, the future apostle in the fishing event, the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus the Tax Collector, Jair and his wife, the woman with the bleeding, the sinning woman, the blind man, the possessed from Gadara and all those from the area and the list shall end with Herod and Pontius Pilate.

In regards to the communitarian cases, the awareness is public, the Holy Scripture often mentioning the fact that he was talking in synagogues, in Galilea (Matt 4,23; Lk 4,44), in the mountains, on the shore of the sea, in Capernaum (Matt 13,54; Mk 1,21) in all the towns and villages (Matt 9,35), in individual houses or in the temple of Jerusalem, all the public activity of the Savior is mainly focused on respecting the religious freedom which is given to every individual from God and nobody can take it away, at most he can lose it from personal choice. The sacrifice of the Savior on the cross proves that nobody can take that right away from anyone.

Another natural question that comes from this is that the Old Testament shows proof that the man's fate is predictable and damned, everything is lost and the humankind only degrades. Somehow, this study would also confirm this, but it is not actually true.

Both the New and the Old Testament are full of examples to prove this wrong. In a world of pessimistic and limited choices, there are certain examples to prove that the choice is the responsibility of each of us, the freedom has not been taken away, our faith is heir of the kingdom of those who decided to adopt the lifestyle of swineherds. The reasonable question of the prodigal son: -What am I doing here? What does an emperor do close to the swineherds? When I belong completely somewhere else, close to God and my father, who I have done wrong. If the teaching of the prodigal son did not have the power to convince in favor, there is also another case of Zacchaeus. God only told him: Today I shall be in your house. His decision is very interesting not to become a heir of the Kingdom of Above about which he refuses to talk and now wishes to be part of.

In order to gracefully end these affirmations, I will use the most simple and meaningful picture, this being the thief on the cross, in his last moments of life. He feels the obligation to respect this right. A whole lifetime in which choices and his way of thinking inclined rather towards a personal freedom badly interpreted, tendentious and with the allowance of arguments of society which are favorable to not respecting the obligation to respect this right, on the cross only confesses regret and wishes sincerely to respect this right that has never been taken away from him. His way of thinking based on correctness was not influenced in a whole lifetime of lawbreaking and in his last moments he chooses religious freedom (Lk 23,40-42).

For the accuracy of this study, I believe that some facts shall be stated in advance, firstly the fact that the life of humans is separated in three distinct stages of manifesting the religious freedom: a) one of them is the favorable one, constructive, a lifestyle in which you would work together with God; b) the other one is unfavorable manifesting as negation, refusal, denial against it and a lifetime in which you choose to fight against your rights and God and c) the neutral one, of not being sure, the undecided and postponing, trying to understand an area you are not willing to try yet, a door you have not decided to open yet, even though it belongs to you.

IV. Religious freedom - the Orthodox Canonical perspective regarding the obligation to respect this right

The calling of Our Savior Jesus Christ: “And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14,27) addressed to all people represents the base of respecting the human freedom in the context of the Orthodox Church. Such as, the choice of the Christian teaching is a personal choice in regards to the lifestyle of each man. In appearance, the term would be restrictive, entailing the “giving up”, as a “abandonment”, “isolation”, but the calling of Our Savior implies exactly giving up selfishness and egocentrism.

The first contact of human kind to the new teaching promoted by the Savior rose interest, because on the shore of Jordan river, both John the Baptizer and Jesus Christ made people around curious, those close to Jordan river and Judea (Matt 3,5). The preaching on the mountain is followed by

the miracles done by the Savior bring the news of the Kingdom being close. In the cases mentioned by the evangelists regarding the northern area (Galilea) or the middle one (Samaria) and other areas sporadically mention moments when Our Savior was welcomed by other people than those of Israel, which, finding out about this new teaching and acknowledging the presence of Our Savior in their areas chose the new teaching based on the religious freedom.

For the religious freedom to be a choice of the Christian teaching¹ remains a choice for each man that would be proven in the case of the Canaanite woman (Matt 15, 21-28). Situated in the first mission of the Apostles as a probation and sending them to share the teaching, mentioned after the Resurrection, the meeting sets human freedom over the borders of Israel. It is really interesting that the Apostles themselves, those who were sent “only to the sheep of Israel” with interdiction to enter the houses of pagans, are those who recognize indirectly the universality of the religious freedom right of all people, because the insistence of the Canaanite woman determines the apostles to intervene to the Teacher, asking: “God, let them go, because they are screaming for us”.

After the descent of the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost and the setup of the Church, the issue of religious freedom rights regarding choosing the new teaching will become stringent and there will be a need for an intervention to a superior to fix this issue. As long as the Teacher was in the middle of people, it would be His decision, the same as afterwards, the decision belongs to the Apostolic Synod. More clearly, the history of the Church mentions not only the development of this institution (according to the grain of mustard seed) and also the need to apply this in the everyday life. From a concept level or moral teaching, giving up the self comes together with a whole other level of existence. The way this lifestyle shall look like, how I refer to it and how willing I am to adopt it are questions that each individual shall answer to.

Owning the religious freedom is not easy, that is why we will see, in the case of those who were following the Teacher, that many of them reached the limit of human understanding. We will see Judas selling Jesus, Apostle Peter giving him up three times, Apostle Thomas ready to

¹ Canon 87, Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, † Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, însoțite de comentarii, Canoanele Sfinților Părinți*, vol. II, Partea II, Tipografia Diecezană, Arad, 1936, p. 126.

die for the Teacher (John 11,16) refusing to believe that the resurrection before actually seeing it, what is it left to say of those Apostles who were following him (John 6, 66).

Sharing the teaching of the Evangels amongst people gives a new perspective to the way of seeing the religious freedom and it starts being understood after the descent of the Holy Spirit. For those outside the Church, the issue of freedom is understood in one way, archdeacon Stephen is killed, the Apostles are beaten and threatened in Sanhedrin, caught and imprisoned, Apostle Jacob is killed, Christians are persecuted and the terror imposed by Saul of Tars determines spreading of the Christians in the whole Roman Empire and not only.

The writing done by Holy Apostle Luke, The Acts describes the atmosphere for the entering of Christianity in the history of the world and it proposing a new teaching regarding the way of handling the religious freedom. The unity of epistles kept from the Holy Apostles in the context of the Holy Scripture do not only provide information regarding that time, but also directly picture an image of the way in which owning the religious freedom as a necessary right to be respected changed the way of life of every human and of the human society.

Because of the limited time allowed for this article, there will only be some aspects regarding the obligation to respect this right of religious freedom talked about. In the case of Orthodox canonical tradition, the base of this study, is mainly the collection of fundamental Canons from the Local and Ecumenical Synods, together with some canons of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church. The whole treasury kept and respected in Orthodoxy is based on the teaching of Jesus Christ, more in depth described by the Holy Apostles and detailed by the Holy Fathers and today by the collegial bodies of ruling the autonomous Church.

The principles of religious freedom and the obligation to respect this right used to have and still has two elements. The first one is the man, individual, and the second one is the community, but not as the local Parish, regional or national, but rather as the Church (Ecclesia) as a Holy Body of Jesus Christ in which man wants to be included for all eternity, both those who worked towards their own salvation together with him and those who will follow him into eternity. In other words, your religious freedom expressed freely has direct consequences both on you and those around you. The choice can be expressed as respecting a right that you

received from the Savior or as a breaking of this rule, namely respecting or belittling the one who gave you this right.

In order to understand this affirmation, it is enough to mention the stages set by the Savior in the Gospel by Matthew: “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” (Matt 18, 15-17).

If this is the case of the question addressed to the Holy Apostle Peter, the situation was hypothetic and in the case of the Christian community of Corinth, it is concretely applied by Apostle Paul. The incestuous man from the Greek community is made aware of the consequence of his behavior: directly losing the quality of Christian (follower of Jesus Christ) and losing the possibility of personally being saved (directly), and indirectly, departing from the Church of Christ (community of Corinth). What needs to be mentioned here is that in the Orthodox Church religious freedom entails also the community that you are part of, because in the case mentioned the community is entitled to take action in regards to the Teaching left by Our Savior, because the Apostle does not only talk to the individual himself, but to the whole Church of Corinth and the whole church worldwide regarding such cases: one of these will “be brought out in front of you” (I Cor 5,2; 5,7).

If we were to only refer to these two cases in the plenty of everyday life gives us the spiritual fight and I will make use of this opportunity to only develop one of these aspects, namely that of the right to use the freedom of religious choices and the use of it.

Firstly, the canonical tradition mentions the fact that the choice to become a Christian is a strictly personal choice and the baptism is a personal choice to express your religious freedom as a right. But again the apostolic tradition brings attention to the baptism of the catechumen, he is not only personally implicated, but the whole community that he represents is. Namely, expressing the freedom of his choice is not determined by having an individual inclination, permanent; if he wants for it to happen, but rather his choice is brought to the attention of the Church and its legal

representatives will decide, according to the Teaching of the Church², if it is possible and under what conditions.

In the current times, the previous affirmation can develop an interesting note. How would the community or the Church be part of my personal choice? In a time when the expression of personal wish violently, this affirmation is almost out of place, although it does. For example, we will take some examples regarding the Holy Mystery of Baptism which would clear some parts of the religious freedom. Firstly, there should be mentioned that the first step belongs to the man, the person or the pagan, he is the one to express the wish to become Christian. His gesture represents an expression of religious freedom, namely a right that has to be respected by those around. Now, we shall talk about the second aspect, the Church's part in his choice.

Starting with this Orthodox Canonical tradition is helpful. Such as, the canons speak about “research”³ that the Church shall follow. The questions will not start appearing: What shall the Church look for? What shall be the purpose of such a research? Is the Church right to start such a process? If not, why does it do this; if yes, how shall that be done in order for it not to interfere with the usual life of the catechumen?

An important aspect is appropriation and testimony of the Christian teaching by the catechumen. In the old times, the appropriation was personal and the religious growth was closely followed by a Bishop⁴, today being in the biggest percentage the Baptism done at a young age, the catechumen is together with the godparents, the following being a guarantee that the child will be brought up in the Orthodox Christian belief.

Another aspect that the Church shall research the way in which the Baptism is made, it being a continuation of the personal religious freedom expressed and respected by the Church. Such as the Baptism has to be done with three immersions⁵ and not only one, by saying the trinity expression⁶

² Canon 5, synod VI local, Sardica (369), Arhid. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe*, note și comentarii, S.C. lumina Tipo S.R.L., Sibiu, 2005; p. 257; - canon 9, 10, 14 and 21.

³ Canon 7, synod I local, Ancira, Arhid. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canoanele ...*, p. 206.

⁴ Canon 14 synod I ecumenic, Niceea (325), † Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele ...*, p. 64-66.

⁵ Canon 50 apostles, † Andrei ȘAGUNA, *Enchiridion, Carte manuale de canone*, Tipografia Arhidiecezana, Sibiu, 1871, p. 28.

⁶ Canon 49 apostles, *Pidalionul, Cârma Bisericii*, Editura “Credința Strămoșească”, Iași, 2013; p. 98.

in the sacred space of the Church and not in Chapels or at home⁷. The baptism cannot be done a second time⁸ even though there is proof of this practice too⁹, and the baptism of erethic¹⁰ cannot be considered as a baptism and it shall not be recognized¹¹.

The canonical jurisprudence is linked to the religious freedom expression on this subject of the Holy Mystery of Baptism gives us interesting information in order to find out about this freedom. For example, in the history of Church there are two events which today, from the way they were solved in that moment (and the use of Synodal decisions), became a normal thing. It is the practice of baptism in the name of the dead who were not baptized. Namely, those who were baptized becoming Christians, would confess that they want to be baptized also in the name of the dead. This practice became a whole phenomenon and demanded the “de facto” development to the level of de jure, only this being the way to explain the fact that the VIII local Synod of Cartagena, in Canon 18¹² needed to destroy this practice, demanding not only that it stopped, but also bringing arguments as to why this is a abnormality of the Savior’s teaching and, if you will, of the freedom that the Teaching gives.

Another aspect drawn from the Canonic thesaurus, regarding the expression of religious freedom, is represented by another practice, that the pregnant mother wishes to be baptized also for the unborn child, wishing that the religious freedom and her baptism to have repercussions also on the unborn child. The fathers of the II Ecumenical Synod held in Neocesareea in the year 314 decide on this subject, even though the mother, in the virtue of this right of religious freedom, demand that this practice shall be recognized, explaining that the “pregnant woman shall be baptized whenever she demands; but the one to be born will not be part of the baptism because it has an individual willpower for salvation”¹³.

⁷ Canon 59, synod V-VI ecumenic (trulan), Constantinopol (553-692), pr. Constantin DRON, *Canoanele, Sinoadele Ecumenice, text și interpretare*, vol. II, Tipografia Cărilor Bisericești, București, 1935, p. 323.

⁸ Canon 47 apostles, Constantin DRON, *Canoanele, Canoanele Apostolice, text și interpretare*, vol. I, Tipografia Cărilor Bisericești, București, 1932, p. 160-162.

⁹ Canon 8, synod II ecumenic Constantinopol (381), arhid. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canoanele ...*, p. 78.

¹⁰ Canon 67 (68) apostles, † Andrei ȘAGUNA, *Enchiridion, ...*, p. 35.

¹¹ Canon 46 apostles, † Ioan MIHĂLCESCU, *Scrierile Sfinților Părinți dimpreună cu Așezămintele și Canoanele Apostolice*, Editura Facultății de Teologie din Cernăuți, 1928, p. 275.

¹² Canon 18 synod VIII local, Cartagena (419), † Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele...*, vol. II, p. 171.

¹³ Canon 6, synod II local, Neocezarea, † Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele ...*, vol. II, p. 31.

Regarding the baptism of children, the religious freedom in their case, according to the canonical information, receives more valences.

Again, the canonical thesaurus offers further information regarding the religious freedom and receiving this Holy Mystery in extreme cases. In a time-frame of persecutions, in which the barbarians are a usual part of life, there was the situation of the heretics who baptized children in their heresy and then coming to Christianity¹⁴ or those left orphan, without any family, without being given access to clear information to having been baptized¹⁵. Regarding this aspect, another Canon, this time of a Local Synod in northern Africa, Cartage, signals another situation. After wars, the predators used to take away children and later would send someone to negotiate with the Church in the area, giving them the option to buy the children back. After paying the demanded price, the children would be given to the Church, but they would have no information on having been baptized or not. The fathers present at the synod for Canon 74, will decide over the way in which things shall be done¹⁶ such as whenever such situations would happen again, the children shall be able to freely express the religious freedom within the norms of the Church in complete awareness¹⁷.

In order to rise curiosity for those reading the article, I want to talk about one last aspect regarding the religious freedom and it being respected within the Orthodox Church from a canonical perspective, mainly the special cases. The Holy Mystery of Baptism being the first Mystery that the human person is offered, he is becoming a member of the Church and guaranteeing all the rights that come with this characteristic. There were extreme situations regarding this Holy Mystery and especially the religious freedom of the one demanding it and will enjoy it. I am referring to the cases in which, being sick, people are not capable of fulfilling all the stages of Baptism, considering that there will be no getting better, and they will not enjoy this blessing. Canon 12 of the II Local Synod held in 314

¹⁴ Canon 57 synod VIII local, Cartagina (419), M. II/I, p. 220.

¹⁵ Canon 84, synod V-VI ecumenic (trulan), Constantinopol (553-692), pr. Răzvan PERȘA, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, Canoanele Apostolice și Canoanele Sinoadelor Ecumenice*, vol. I, Editura Basilica, București, 2018, p. 463.

¹⁶ Canon 72, synod VIII local, Cartagina (419), pr. Răzvan PERȘA, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, Canoanele Sinoadelor Locale*, vol. II, Editura Basilica, București, 2018, p. 182-183.

¹⁷ Canon 110, synod VIII local, Cartagina (419), pr. Răzvan PERȘA, *Canoanele...*, vol. II, pp. 210-211.

talks about this indirectly, considering the solution of this situation as a practice already in use, because in 419, the subject is talked about more in depth in Canon 45 of the Local Synod of Cartage¹⁸. At the same time, Holy Kirill of Alexandria in Canon 5 talks about an interesting process that the Church will adopt further, namely the catechumen who were denied rights by the Church, but getting close to death, the Church will have to decide their faith¹⁹.

Regarding this subject, a branch of it departs and which would become interesting to the times where sensational is the most interesting religious freedom as a right and an obligation. I am here referring to the cases mentioned by the Bishop of Alexandria, Timothy (385-412), namely: how does the religious freedom manifest in the case of those possessed²⁰ and those insane²¹. For the beauty of revealing the process, the canonic thesaurus provides a description in Canon 2 and 4.

Conclusions

1. Without talking about all the areas of this vast subject, I will remain on these aspects that felt relevant in the times that we are living now. The Orthodox Church keeps in the thesaurus norms explained under rulings, individual or collegial, of those called to decide over everyday life.
2. Those who consider that the Church does nothing but limit the religious freedom of an individual or a citizen, is going in the wrong way for two reasons, either lack of information or the superficial way in which the judgment was made, regarding the source.
3. The freedom given by the teaching of Our Savior Jesus Christ is the only one that plenary fulfils the rights of man and include, amongst others, religious expression as a right with obligation to be respected.

¹⁸ Canon 45, synod VIII local, Cartagina (419), pr. Răzvan PERȘA, *Canoanele ...*, vol. II, p. 157.

¹⁹ Canon 5, † Chiril al Alexandriei, Dimitrie G. BOROIANU, *Dreptul bisericesc. Canoanele Sinoadelor ecumenice și locale și ale Sfinților Părinți*, Tipografia Editoare Dacia, Iași, 1899, p. 61.

²⁰ Canon 2, Timotei Alexandrinul, † Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele ...*, vol. II, Partea II, p. 151.

²¹ Canon 4, Timotei Alexandrinul, † Nicodim MILAȘ, *Canoanele ...*, vol. II, Partea II, p. 152.

4. The obligation to respect it is equally as important for the individual and for the society (citizen/state).
5. The right to religious freedom shall not be a right to fight for in order to impose it to others, but it is a right that you can value only by using it.

With your approval, I will present, in the end, the subject in the shape of a metaphor. Namely, somebody who wants to fight for everybody's right to have a family. They become part of governmental and non-governmental organizations, takes part in public demonstrations etc., but he is not willing to get to know another person, being selfish, he is happy with himself. He does not want to fall in love in the usual way, does not want to love in the usual way, he does not want to be completely in love and live so many nice moments with the husband/ wife of the traditional family, children and grandchildren, who show them every second what means to have a family based on love. The conclusion is that it is not enough to talk and fight for a right, but you shall also know what it is and to live it as an "obligation" to be happy.