

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE FIRST DECADES OF CAROL I'S REIGN (1866-1885)

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Rezumat: Perioada de început a domniei lui Carol I (1866-1885) a reprezentat, din punct de vedere al vieții bisericești, un lung șir de demersuri pentru normalizarea relațiilor interne între membrii înaltului cler, între aceștia și Patriarhia de Constantinopol, precum și între puterea politică și ierarhie. Un moment cheie al acestei perioade l-a constituit elaborarea Legii Organice a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române din 1872, care a însemnat de fapt baza legală a obținerii autocefaliei bisericești, recunoscută formal de patriarhul ecumenic în anul 1885. Articolul de față surprinde efortul substanțial depus de clerul ortodox pentru adoptarea legislației sus amintite, evoluția relațiilor cu Patriarhia de Constantinopol, precum și disputele pe aceeași temă cu autoritățile civile. Toate aceste acțiuni au fost încununate prin primirea, la 25 aprilie 1885, a Tomosului de recunoaștere a autocefaliei Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. Era rezultatul a două secole anterioare de luptă și afirmare susținută a dreptului la „autoguvernare” bisericească, în plan jurisdicțional și administrativ.

Summary: The early reign of Carol I (1866-1885) was, in terms of church life, a long series of steps to normalize relations between the internal high clergy members, between these and the Patriarchate of Constantinople and between the political power and the hierarchy. A key moment of this period was the development the Organic Law of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in 1872, which actually meant the legal basis of the church autocephaly, formally recognized by the ecumenical patriarch in 1885. This article captures the substantial effort made by the Orthodox clergy to adopt the above mentioned legislation, the evolution of the relations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the disputes on the same subject with civil authorities. All these actions have been crowned by the receiving, on April 25th 1885, of the autocephaly recognition Tomos of Romanian Orthodox Church. It was the result of two previous centuries of struggle and sustained assertion of the right to the church autonomy, in judicial and administrative plan.

Résumé: Le début du règne de Carol I (1866-1885) a été en termes de la vie de l'église, une longue série de mesures visant à normaliser les relations internes entre les membres du haut clergé, entre eux et le Patriarcat de Constantinople et entre le pouvoir politique et la hiérarchie. Un moment clé de cette période a été l'élaboration de la Loi Organique de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine de 1872, ce qui signifiait la base juridique pour obtenir l'autocéphalie de l'église, officiellement reconnue par le patriarche œcuménique en 1885. Cet article capte les efforts considérables du clergé orthodoxe visant à adopter la législation mentionnée ci-dessus, l'évolution des relations avec le Patriarcat de Constantinople, et les différends sur le même sujet avec les autorités civiles. Toutes ces actions ont été couronnées en recevant le 25 avril 1885, le Tomos pour la reconnaissance de l'autocéphalie de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine. C'était le résultat de deux siècles antérieurs de lutte et d'affirmation soutenue du „Codrul Cosminului”, XVII, 2011, No. 1, p. 95-115

droit à l'autogouvernement ecclésiastique, dans le domaine de la juridiction et de l'administration.

Keywords: Carol I, Organic Law, ecumenical patriarch, Romanian clergy, ecclesiastic independence, Church.

In the starting period of Carol I's governance, from his enthronement to the acknowledgement of the state independence, the Orthodox Church in Romania was still in the process of reforming, which started within the short period in which Cuza developed his administrative activity. In this field, the achievements of that period were significant. In the seven years of governance, Cuza, by means of the measures concerning the religious life, managed to get rid of one of the major obstacles which hindered the modernization of Romania, namely "the Greek influence", and so he got the "final shake of the inner and outer yoke, which the Greek church had been defending for so many centuries upon the head of the Romanian countries, their final rescue from any Greek influence upon the Romanian life"¹.

If the period from 1859 to 1872 may be called „a time of reforms”, that from 1872 to 1885 represents the „time of consolidation, of prospering and even flourishing for the Church”². In the year of grace 1866, Nifon (1850-1875) was the leader of the Metropolitan Church of Ungro-Wallachia, Calinic Miculescu was the Metropolitan of Moldavia, Dionisie Romano was the Bishop of Buzău, Iosif Gheorghian of Huși, Melchisedec Ștefănescu of Dunărea de Jos, Calinic Cernicanul of Râmnic, Ghenadie Țeposu of Argeș and Atanasie Stoenescu Troadas was the Bishop of Roman.

On the 18th of January 1873, Iosif Naniescu, at that time manager of the Seminar in Bucharest, was promoted as Bishop of Argeș. At the same date, Atanasie Stoenescu Troados was appointed Bishop of Râmnic and in 1868 he retired from the Episcopacy in Roman, where he was appointed by Cuza's decree³, and in Roman even the lieutenant bishop, Isaia Vicol⁴, was confirmed by the bishop. After Iosif, Ghenadie Petrescu was appointed bishop of Argeș. He led until May 1893, when he

¹ A.D.Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza-Vodă* [The reign of Cuza Vodă], vol. II, Iași, Dacia Publishing, 1903, p. 24; Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Românilor în timpul celor patru regi (1866-1947)* [The History of the Romanian People during the Four Kings, 1866-1947], vol. I, Carol I, The second edition, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing, 2004, pp. 13-79.

² Nicolae Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române Contemporane. I: Istoria Bisericii Române (1850-1895)*, [Studies of Contemporary Romanian Church History. I: The History of Romanian Church (1850-1895)], Bucharest, „Bukarester Tagblatt” Publishing, 1905, p. 164.

³ Direcția Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale [The Department of the National Central Historical Archives], Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice [Fund Ministry of Cults and Public Instructions], file no. 114/1864, f. 329 v. (further on they will quote D.A.N.I.C.).

⁴ Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Iași [County Department of the National Archives in Iași], (further on they will quote D.J.A.N.), Fond Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei [Fund of the Metropolitan See of Moldavia and Suceava], file no. 64/1864, f. 58-61.

became Primacy Metropolitan. The Electoral College for the election of these bishops was convoked by the princely decree from December 1872. That day there was also a Te-Deum at the Metropolitan Church in Bucharest, where the high state dignitaries took part⁵.

Bishop Dionisie Romano died at the end of January 1873 and a new bishop was elected in Buzau. The Electoral College was convoked again at the 21st of January 1873. As a result of deliberations, Inocențiu Chițulescu was elected and he led until November 1893⁶.

The metropolitan Nifon died on the 5th of May 1875, and he was buried at the Monastery Cernica. Since then and until 1886, Calinic Miculescu was the Primacy Metropolitan. In his place, in Moldavia came Iosif Naniescu. He was elected on the 10th of June and invested on the 15th of June 1875⁷.

In 1868, V.A.Urechia made a "yearbook of cults". According to the data presented there, the two Metropolitan Churches counted 6704 orthodox churches, 8445 priests and 338 deacons. The "foreign cults" were also mentioned, being listed 113 churches and catholic chapels, 6 protestant churches, 5 Reformed churches, 12 Armenian churches, 3 Mosaic temples⁸.

Likewise, for the preparation of the clergy, there were 8 theological seminaries: in Iași, Bucharest, Râmnic, Buzău, Argeș, Huși, Roman and Ismail. The seminaries were of two ranks: those of 1st rank prepared candidates for the positions of priests in the countryside, with 4 classes, and those of 2nd rank had 7 classes and offered a consistent preparation to those who wanted superior positions within the Church. The number of the participants in these schools was as high as 818 students⁹.

After the forced abdication of Cuza on the 11th /23rd of February 1866, the Romanian hierarchs defended the rights of the Orthodox Church with the same dignity and abnegation, in spite of the accuses of the Synods in Constantinople, who complained that "the self-proclamation of the Romanian Church as independent [...] is against the canons and old traditions of the Church"¹⁰. The conflict between the two

⁵D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 1114/1864, f. 275-290.

⁶D.J.A.N. Iași, Fond Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei, file no. 64/1864, f. 55.

⁷C.C.Giurescu, *Cuvântările Regelui Carol I* [*The speeches of King Charles I*], Bucharest, 1939, doc. 238, pp. 199-200.

⁸Constantin Cuciuc, Dumitru Stavarache, *Un atlas al religiilor din România* [*An atlas of the religions in Romania*] in *Armata și Biserica* [*The Army and the Church*], Colecția "Revista de istorie militară" [Collection "Journal of Military History"], Bucharest, 1996, p. 109.

⁹Mihai Polihroniade and Alexandru-Christian Tell, *Domnia lui Carol I, vol. I, (1866-1877)*, [*The reign of Carol I, vol. I, (1866-1877)*], Bucharest, Vremea Publishing, 1937, p. 117.

¹⁰*Documente. Corespondență între Patriarhia din Constantinopol și Mitropolitul Ungro-Vlahiei D.D.Nifon, între Domnitorul Alexandru Ioan Cuza și între toate Bisericile Ortodoxe cu privire la legile aprobate de către Guvernul Român pentru Sinodul din anul 1864*, [*Documents. Correspondence between the Patriarchy of Constantinople and the Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, D.D.Nifon, between the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza and all Orthodox Churches regarding the laws approved by the Romanian Government for the Synod in year 1864*], Translated from Greek by the Archimandrite Fotie Balamaci, Bucharest, Wilhelm Brozer Publishing, 1913, pp. 67-70.

parties was triggered by the promulgation of the "Decree" for establishing a single Synod in Moldova and Muntenia, on the 6th of December 1864. This law "is aimed at the achievement of the church unification in Romania". The Decree included five chapters. From the outset it was shown the "independence" of the Church in Romania: "Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains independent of any foreign ecclesiastical authority, in terms of organization and discipline"(Article 1). The church was represented "by a General Synod [...] and continues to be managed by the metropolitans and diocesan bishops, with the aid of the dioceses councils" (Article 2)¹¹. The patriarch of Constantinople did not share those views.

The governance of prince Carol of Hohenzollern meant a moment of tempering of relations between the Orthodox Church in Romania and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Peace within the Church was more important than any other political disputes.

In October 1866, the new ruler visited the Constantinople, where he "was received with ceremony both at the Patriarchate and in the Church". With this occasion the discussions regarding the secularization of monastery estates were continued, and a draft of organic law was conceived for the Romanian Church. Nevertheless, it was "severely censored in the country, from all parts"¹². The dissensions regarding the second matter shall end at the promulgation of the new law regarding the church organization, in 1872.

It seems that during the discussion with the ecumenical patriarch, Carol I made a commitment regarding the solving, in favor of the Greeks, of the dispute caused by the law of impropriation of the monasteries' property. On the 6th /18th of April 1867, the patriarch Grigorie came with a letter addressed to the prince, in which he reminded him of the promise, proving to be opened to an amicable solving of the disputes which appeared between Romania and the Holy Places in the East¹³.

The steps towards the normalization of the situation of Orthodox Church in Principalities continued in the next period. On the 30th of October 1867, the primate of the Church of Constantinople wrote to the Metropolitan Nifon, accusing him of passivity towards the "anti-canonical" measures taken by Cuza's regime, urging him at the same time to eager action to make the improper situation in Romania right. The answer of the Wallachian hierarch was prompt, referring to the new project of organic law for the Romanian Church, which was already delivered at the Legislative Chamber for debate and approval¹⁴.

The next year, the ecumenical patriarch from Constantinople wrote again to the prince Carol I, reminding him of the promises made towards the secularization

¹¹ *Monitorul Oficial al României* [*Official Monitor of Romania*], (further on they will quote *MOF*), no. 273 of the 6th of December 1864, pp. 1297-1298.

¹² N.Dobrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹³ See the letter of the ecumenical patriarch Grigorie, in D.A.N.I.C., Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale [Fund Royal House-Officials], file no. 37/1867, f. 1-2v.

¹⁴ See the letter of the patriarch Grigorie to the metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia at 30th of August 1867, and his answer from November, the same year, in *Ibidem*, file no. 59/1867, f. 1-7.

law. The total availability of the Greeks was reiterated, to solve the patrimonial conflict, expecting also from the Romanian party to act concretely in order to fulfill the promises made by the prince at Constantinople, a year before¹⁵. The matter had been long before closed, as far as the Romanians were concerned.

On the 5th of February 1868, a new dispatch was sent to the Metropolitan Nifon, by which he was chidden because he did not inform the hierarchs in Constantinople about de serious events in Pitești, when two “canonic” bishops were humiliated in an unforgivable way in the public market. They reminded about the recommendation to dissociate from the non-canonic clergy, whom the “tyrant Cuza” promoted against all ecclesiastic laws¹⁶. It should be noted that the last ecclesiastical law of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, "Law for the appointment of metropolitans and diocesan bishops", had caused great disturbances in the Romanian Orthodox Church. Thus, under the new law, the hierarchs were to be imposed by the political power, this representing a serious interference in the religious life. The movement against the above-mentioned law was called the "struggle for canonicity", having as protagonists the bishops Neophyte and Filaret Scriban and the hierarchs Joseph Bobulescu and Ioanichie Evantias¹⁷.

The time that followed was marked by an accentuation of the dialogue between the two parties, on both the compensations of the Holy Places and the Romanian ecclesiastic organization. In January, the prince Carol wrote to the ecumenical patriarch about the measures taken in Bucharest for the amicable solving of the dispute, assuring about his best intentions. The negotiations were about to be made by Dimitrie A. Sturzda, the Romanian agent in Constantinople. In the report from the 21st of December 1868/2nd of January 1869, D.A. Sturdza asked, on behalf of the prince, for an answer at the requests of the patriarch, made since the summer of 1868. It has to be mentioned that, at the time, the relations between the two parties were relaxed also due to the grace shown by Carol I by granting the amount of 1.000 ducats in favor of Greek confessional schools¹⁸.

But the prince could not hold his promise, because the opposition of the Romanians towards the reopening of the issue of raised monasteries' assets proved to be very strong. Given this hostile attitude of the Romanian party, the Greek monks

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, file no. 29/1868, f. 1-4v.

¹⁶ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file 1114/1864, f. 195-202v.

¹⁷ See Laurențiu Stamatini, *Stat și Biserică în timpul domniei lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, [State and Church during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza], Iași, Junimea Publishing, 2011, pp. 39-87; Sever-Mircea Catalan, *Politica bisericească a domnitorului Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866)*, [The Ecclesiastical Policy of the Ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866)] - Part I, in "Studii și materiale de istorie modernă" [Studies and materials of modern history], Tome XV, Bucharest, 2002, pp. 101-109.

¹⁸ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 22/1869, f. 1-2; file no. 19/1869, f. 1-2. See the report of D.A. Sturdza of 16th of January 1869, in *Ibidem*, file no. 21/1869, f. 1-2.

protested again at the Ottoman Porte against the measures that the government in Bucharest took in the same issue¹⁹. The requests of the Greek were not fulfilled.

In 1872, the conflict between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church became more acute. The Head of the Church in Constantine the Great's city started again the correspondence with Bucharest, asking the Romanian hierarchs to express an opinion about the misunderstandings. In the note of the Romanian representative from Constantinople, on the 2nd /14th of October 1872, they recommend a "reserved" attitude towards this matter, by trying to avoid asking "different titles for the Romanian clergy and permissions to sanctifications for some of his dignitaries"²⁰.

Also on diplomatic way, by negotiations held between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and prince Carol I, there was established in 1870 that the Holy and Great Chrism to be brought only from Constantinople, which means that the autocephaly of the Church in Romania was not rightfully recognized. This fact continued until the 25th of March 1882, when the Romanian hierarchs had the great service of sanctification in the country²¹.

In order to better understand the way of the dialogue between the two institutions: *the Romanian State and the Romanian Orthodox Church*, it is really necessary to make a more careful investigation of the events that took place at the election of Carol I. So, on the 30th of March/11th of April 1866, the Vice regency made up by Lascăr Catargiu, general Nicolae Golescu and colonel Nicolae Haralambie, issued a proclamation in which they announced the new candidature of Carol of Hohenzollern at the Romanian throne. It had to be subjected to a referendum²². The Romanian Orthodox Church, by some of its representatives, showed its adhesion to the action of the temporary political power to bring a foreign prince, meaning the Prussian prince, and after the election of Carol I they made Te-Deum in the whole country and they sent congratulation telegrams²³. The consulting of the citizens regarding the proposal of vice regency was made, as you know, between the 2nd /14th and the 8th /20th of April 1866, the result being overwhelmingly favorable for the pursued goal²⁴.

One thing clouded the success of that step: the separatist movement in Iasi from the 3rd /15th of April 1866, in which the Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu was also involved. We must say that the international situation was pretty complicated, the

¹⁹ Report of the 28th of April 1871, addressed by the Romanian diplomatic agent in Constantinople, I. Strat, to Carol I (*Ibidem*, file no. 16/1871, f. 1-2v.).

²⁰ *Ibidem*., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice , file no. 1114/1864, f. 263 r.-v.

²¹ N.Dobrescu, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

²² *Treizeci de ani de domnie ai Regelui Carol I. Cuvântări și Acte. vol.I, 1866-1880, [Thirty-year reign of King Charles I. Speeches and Documents. vol.I, 1866-1880]*, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing, 1897, pp. XVII-XVIII.

²³ *MOF*, no. 105 of the 14th /26th of May 1866, p. 465; no. 107 of the 18th /30th of May 1866, pp. 473-475.

²⁴ *Treizeci de ani de domnie ai Regelui Carol I...*, p. XIX.

Great Powers, especially those who were nearer, were interested to break the Unification²⁵.

On the background of the discontent of the citizens of Iasi that was generated, among others, by the relocation of the capital to Bucharest, with all the economic, social and political implications derived, the "Rosovanu Russophile family" who benefited from the discreet "collaboration" of the emissaries of the Christian Empire in the East sparked off an anti-unionist action meant to promote Nicolae Rosetti-Rosnovanu as ruler of Moldavia and its separation from Wallachia. On the 3rd / 15th of April 1866, on St. Thomas Sunday²⁶, an impressive crowd gathered in front of the Metropolitan Church in Iasi after the news had been spread that, after the Holy Mass, "large quantities of food will be handed-out"²⁷. In the yard of the Metropolitan Church Calinic gave a fulminating anti-unionist speech and then, leading the crowd, he headed for the administrative palace to prevent the development of the plebiscite. Finally the insurrection was suppressed during the same day, in Iasi, with some real street battles. Deacon Ion Creangă too was involved in this episode. He and some other clergyman, Deacon Gh. Ienăchescu, helped the Metropolitan Bishop get away from the fury of the forces of law and order. The Moldavian Hierarch was "transported" to the St. Spiridon Monastery, and the "apartments of the Metropolitan Church" were "closed and sealed" for purposes of "scrupulous search"²⁸. Following such abuses, the Metropolitan Bishop was suspended and sent for trial. Between April 6 and June 2 1866, the diocesan administration in Iasi was led by the suffragan Bishops of Roman, Husi and Lower Danube²⁹.

The acts of recklessness committed in Iasi at the beginning of that April as well as the cases trumped up by ill-willed people from both inside the country and abroad might have sparked off a major conflict with Russia. Nevertheless, the Romanian diplomacy diligently did its duty, thus defusing the conflict that tended to reach alarming levels. Installed on the throne of Romania, Carol I pardoned the

²⁵Dumitru Vitcu, *Leagănul Unirii sub zodia separatismului. Despre evenimentele tragice din 3/15 aprilie 1866 de la Iași* [The cradle of the Union under the sign of separatism. About the tragic events of 3 / 15 April 1866 in Iași], in volume *Toți în unu. Unirea Principatelor la 150 de ani*, [All in one. The Union of the Principalities in 150 years], coordinators: Dumitru Ivănescu and Dumitru Vitcu, Iași, Junimea Publishing, 2009, pp. 193-223.

²⁶In the Orthodox calendar, the first Sunday after Easter.

²⁷Alex Mihai Stoenescu, *Istoria loviturilor de stat din România 1821-1999*, vol.I, *Revoluție și francmasonerie* [The History of coups in Romania 1821-1999, vol.I, Revolution and Freemasonry], Bucharest, Rao Publishing, 2002, p. 297.

²⁸MOJ, no. 73 of April 5/17, 1866, p. 325. See also George Călinescu, *Ion Creangă*, Bucharest, Publishing House for Literature, 1966, p. 90.

²⁹MOJ, no.78 of April 10/22, 1866, p. 345; Mircea Păcurariu, *Listele cronologice ale ierarhilor Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The Chronological Lists of the Hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church], in "Biserica Ortodoxă Română" [Romanian Orthodox Church], (further on they will quote BOR), XCIII, (1975), no. 3-4, p. 334.

Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia³⁰, but the unpleasant episode did not pass without repercussions.

During the same year, 1866, various senators still submitted the proposal to have the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia and the bishops found to have been elected in a non-canonical manner by virtue of the Law of 1865 excluded from the Senate's sessions. The situation had become extremely tense. Heavy accusations were brought against the high clergy promoted by Cuza's Laws but the target was clear: the attempt was to punish the protagonists of the anti-unionist movement in Iasi. In politics there was no forgiveness. This attempt of driving the Moldavian Hierarchs away from the country's political stage, against the constitutional provisions, was confronted with the strong opposition of the Romanian people "on this side of the Milcov". Several letters of protest were sent to Bucharest from all over the Province of Moldavia by means of which clergyman or simple citizens showed their indignation with regard to such "revanchist" intentions of the high representatives of the nation³¹. Faced with the wave of protests, the politicians backed up. The baffles however carried on in the period to come.

On May 28 1867, the Minister of the Cults and Public Instruction issued a "Memo to their Eminencies the Metropolitan Fathers and Eparchy Bishops", by which he was bringing extremely serious accusations against the clergy, especially to that "across the Milcov river", regarding the state of spiritual decline of the servants of the Church. The motto of the intervention of the high state dignitary was: "Stultorum pudor, malus ulcera cetat" meaning "The decency of those ill-qualified conceals unhealed wounds". It was an "unorthodox blow given to the clergy for what had happened a year before"³².

Especially after the decision had been made to publish the memo in the "Official Gazette", the Metropolitan Bishop Primat Nifon, Moldavia's Metropolitan Bishop Calinic Miculescu, as well as Bishop Ghenadie of Arges decided to retort. First, the Hierarch of Bucharest wrote to the minister on the 3rd of June, ensuring him of the clergy's honest intentions towards the "national goal to which we should all sincerely aspire", than by means of Address no. 1174, on June 15, he requested the publication in the same official sheet of two memos to all the souls of the Eparchy, where several orders for the improvement of the moral life of priests and parishioners were given. Meanwhile, on the 6th of June, the Hierarch of Arges wrote to the same Minister giving way to his discontent about the manner in which the situation of the Church had been presented a short while before³³.

On the 1st of July, by means of a consistent address, the answer of the Hierarch in Iasi arrived. Right from the beginning the Hierarch expresses his sorrow both for the affirmations made by the holder of the portfolio in the Cults Department

³⁰ *MOF*, no. 81 of April 14/26, 1866, p. 357; no.103 of May 12/24, 1866, p. 455.

³¹ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 5/1866, f.1-28v and Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 1114/1864, f. 166-167.

³² *Ibidem*, file no. 944/1863, f. 128-130v., 135-137.

³³ *Ibidem*, f. 132r.-v., 138, 141,170-176v.

and for the unprincipled manner in which the latter had acted, making public certain matters that might have been settled by high level debates. The Metropolitan Bishop's elegant discourse dismantled piece by piece the multiple accusations brought to the servants of the Church, also presenting the numerous memoirs given recently for the regulation of various issues of the clergy, concluding, in the end, with: "the current harm will begin to heal and all together we will say: "new sky and new earth"³⁴.

The conflict between the two institutions was not consumed very easily, continuing with a press campaign which was obviously coordinated by someone important. Somebody was interested in discrediting the Orthodox clergy before the public opinion³⁵.

Against the background of these high level arguments, the material situation of the priests, especially following the secularization, gradually began to decrease, the Church not having the financial means for the different social projects which had to be carried out within the plan of the missionary activity. The state placed the duty of religion support to the local authorities, and since they were lacking funds, they could not honor the obligations they had assumed. Several conflicts between clerks and believers resulted from here, the pressure sometimes reaching alarming levels here and there.

On the 23rd of May 1868, a group of 132 priests from the capital filed a written statement to the Mitropolity of Ungro-Wallachia, showing the miserable condition in which most ecclesiastical attendants were living. The Metropolitan, at his turn, sent a notice to the Minister of Religion to take some measures for the improvement of that "suffering destiny" claimed by the petitioners' group. The resolution of the Ministry was probatory for the interest of governors as regards the destiny of the people of Church: "for the moment nothing can be done, but the acknowledgement of this by a law project shall be taken into consideration at the next session of the Chamber". Many sessions of the Law-Making Body have passed until this desire finally came true, only in 1893, when a "Law of the lay clergy" was promulgated³⁶.

One of the most important achievements of the period we refer to was the draft and approval of the Fundamental Law in agreement with which the main institutions of the country were organized and functioned. Thus, on the 1st of May 1866, the Elective Assembly of the country used to declare "for the last time in front of God and in front of all the people that the thorough will of the United Principalities is to remain forever what they are, only one inseparable Romania, under the hereditary rule of a foreign prince [...] Carol Ludwig of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen [...] under the name of Carol I"³⁷, and the first „title" from the Constitution of the country (1866)

³⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 146-153v., 162-168v.

³⁵ See address from December 1st 1867, sent to the Metropolitan of Hungro-Wallachia for the Minister of Cults, in *Ibidem*, f. 181.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 184-186; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church]*, vol. III, Bucharest, Publishing of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 132-135.

³⁷ *MOF*, no.99 from Mat 7th/19th 1866, p. 438.

stipulated that: “The Romanian United Principalities integrate only one indivisible state called Romania”³⁸.

On the 1st/13th of July 1866, the new Constitution was promulgated. Its drafting process lasted a few months, beginning with the 16th/28th of February and up to its signing by the ruler on the 30th/July 12th of June 1866³⁹. The political independence and union of the Romanian United Principalities, so eloquently illustrated in the constitutional provisions, also supposed an ecclesiastic union, especially manifested through an autocephaly or ecclesiastical independence⁴⁰. The Constitution could not neglect the Church institution, a formative and constitutive factor of the Romanian nation. It took over some of the “wishes of Ad-hoc Assemblies” about autocephaly, leaving the “matter of appointment or election of bishops to the future”⁴¹.

Article 21 confirmed the fundamental principles for the organization of ecclesiastical life within the Principalities. “The Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains free of all foreign ruling, though keeping its union with the Eastern Ecumenical Church regarding dogmas. The spiritual, canonical and disciplinary issues of the Romanian Orthodox Church shall only be regulated by one central synodal authority according to a special law. The metropolitans and the bishops of the Romanian Orthodox Church are elected following a manner determined by a special law”⁴². The steps for such a law had already been taken at that date. On the 25th of February 1866, an ample project of an “Organic Law for the Romanian Orthodox Church” in 28 articles had been submitted to the Cabinet Council. In this project the ecclesial institution was presented as “free and autocephalous”, and the Holy Synod as the upper authority “maintaining the union” of the Church all along the Romanian State⁴³. Following the analyze of this project the high Forum sent it the very same day to the State Council in order to be “studied”. The Ministry of Cults and Public Instructions was delegated “to accomplish the legal matters”. A few days later, after the project had been studied and a few modifications were made, the State Council submitted it for approval to the deputies of the vice regency and then for deliberation to the Legislative Authority, on 5th of March 1866. The first article stipulated: the “Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church” is “the one and only canonical, spiritual, disciplinary and judicial upper authority of the Orthodox Church all along

³⁸ *Istoria Romanilor*, Tom I. Vol. VII, *Constituirea României Moderne (1821-1878)* [*The History of Romanian People*, Tom I, vol. I, *Formation of Modern Romania (1821-1878)*], Coordinator: Dan Berindei, Bucharest, Encyclopedic Publishing, 2003, p. 561.

³⁹ *MOF*, no.142 from July 1st/13th 1866, pp. 637-638.

⁴⁰ Nicolae V. Dura, *120 de ani de la recunoașterea autocefaliei (1885-2005) și 80 de ani de la întemeierea Patriarhiei Române (1925-2005)* [*120 years since the acknowledgement of the autocephaly (1885-2005) and 80 years since the establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate (1925-2005)*], in BOR, year CXXIII, no. 1-3, January-February 2005, p. 447.

⁴¹ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii Românești și a vieții religioase a românilor* [*The History of the Romanian Church and of the Romanians' religious life*], vol.II, Vălenii de Munte, „Neamul Românesc” Publishing, 1909, p. 313.

⁴² *MOF*, no.142 from July 1st/13th 1866, p. 637.

⁴³ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 82-91.

the Romanian State”, and article 2: “the Orthodox Church of Romania is and remains autocephalous, free and independent of all foreign Church in terms of organization and discipline”. There were several opinions, expressed even in the press of those times, by which the political power was being informed about drafting this “Church Constitution”, first of all suggesting a collaboration with the ecclesiastical administration in order to avoid a conflict between civil and ecclesiastical laws in the future. Consulting the clergy was a *sine qua non* condition for the establishment of social peace, so necessary for the good functioning of the country. The Government was not against such proposals, manifesting its availability in relation with all constructive idea regarding this matter⁴⁴.

Subsequent to certain amendments, the bill of the Organic Law for the Romanian Orthodox Church was submitted to the ruler for approval and then, on the 23rd of January 1867, to the Senate for debate⁴⁵. The government bill had six chapters and its second article comprised the same provisions regarding autocephaly: “The Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains autocephalous, free and independent of any foreign Church in terms of organization and discipline⁴⁶”. The bill was debated for two years, generating severe discussions in the lawgiving Chamber of the country⁴⁷. It was withdrawn from the debates of the Senate and, on the 28th of May 1868, a new bill was submitted for research⁴⁸. This bill's withdrawal was made upon recommendations coming from Constantinople. The Synod of Constantinople had taken into discussion the bill received from Bucharest, the debates resulting in certain amendments. These were taken into account by the Romanian side and another Government bill resulted⁴⁹. In January 1869, it was withdrawn once again, the Council of Ministers suggesting a new bill of “Organic Law for the Romanian Orthodox Church” that comprised four chapters and 29 articles. The idea of the independence of the Romanian Church from any other foreign Church was yet reiterated⁵⁰. The bill was subjected to certain amendments as the result of the suggestions made by the Ecumenical Patriarch by means of the letter addressed to the prince Carol I, on the 21st of February 1869⁵¹. In order for the Law concerning the organization of the Romanian Church to acquire consistence, the opinion of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church was also asked. The diplomatic procedures were carried out through the Romanian agent D.A. Sturdza and the Russian

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 92-94, 95-99, 108; See the address of Bishop Ghenadie of Arges in the attention of the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction from April 4th 1866, in *Ibidem*, f. 100 r.-v., 103.

⁴⁵ *MOF*, no.27 from the 4/16 February 1867, p. 183.

⁴⁶ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 120-124.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 17/1867, f. 1-7.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 1114/1864, f. 178-182, 206-211, 221-223v.

⁴⁹ The recommendations of the Synod of Constantinople and the new bills in *Ibidem*, Fond Casa regală-Oficiale, file no. 29/1868, f.5-16.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 202-205v.

⁵¹ The Patriarch's report in *Ibidem*, Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 38/1869, f. 1-4v.

Ambassador in Constantinople, general Ignatiev⁵². Simultaneously, the negotiations with the Patriarchate of Constantinople were carried out⁵³.

The new bill was forwarded with the Senate for debate, the latter proceeding to approve it in the meeting of June 2, 1869 with 29 ayes and 7 nays. After this initial legal phase, the bill was sent to the Deputies' Assembly for approval⁵⁴.

Prince Carol I, "the substitute of the tyrannical Prince Cuza", in an effort to sweeten the dispute existing between the two Churches, the Romanian Church and the Church of Constantinople, sent the project off for approval to the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregorius the 6th (1866-1871) on the 16th of December 1869⁵⁵. The Patriarch in his turn wrote back to the Prince on the 25th of January 1870, contesting yet again the independence of the Romanian Church and expressing his hope that the election of the Metropolitan Bishop of Ungro-Wallachia be reinforced by the acknowledgment issued by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, his name be mentioned during mass by the country's Metropolitan Bishop, and the Holy Chrism be demanded solely from Constantinople. This attitude was severely contended for by the Romanians⁵⁶.

Meanwhile, the bill underwent further amendments and on the 26th of May 1871 passed again, by the Council of Ministers under the title of: "Bill for the election of the Metropolitans and Diocesan Bishops and for the constitution of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church" (*Proiect de lege pentru alegerea mitropoliților și episcopilor eparhioți cum și a constituirii Sfântului Sinod al Sfintei Biserici Autocefale Ortodoxe Române*). Yet, the odyssey of this bill of such great importance for the peace and quiet of the Romanian Orthodox Church did not end here; after further thorough correction, on the 9th of November 1871, it was tabled for discussion by the Legislative bodies. It was once again ratified by the Senate, on the 9th of November 1871, with 26 votes in favor, 2 against and 4 abstentions⁵⁷. Things stalled in the Chamber of Deputies, where other legislative details were invoked, which lead to an inevitable delay in the debates over the merits of the bill.

Exasperated by so much parliamentary byway, and desirous of a change in this "abnormal state of affairs", on the 21st of March 1872, through memo No. 406, the Primate Metropolitan Nifon brought to the knowledge of the minister of Cults the complaints of the senior prelates of the Orthodox Church about this never-ending tabling of the bill. Among other things, the hierarch of Muntenia said: "Then, we

⁵² See the Reports of D.A.Sturdza from the 24th of April/6th of May 1869, and 5/17 May 1869 in *Ibidem*, file no. 48/1869, f.1 r.-v., and file no. 50/1869, f. 1-2.

⁵³ See reports of D. Sturdza from the 10/22 May 1868, 14/26 May 1869 in *Ibidem*, file no. 51/1869, f.1-3v.; file no. 53/1869, f. 1-2.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 207-210; 222-224; 230-231v.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 2/1870, f. 3-4v.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, file no. 18/1870, f.1-7v.; „Românul”, Bucharest , XIV, no. of 2-3 March 1870, pp. 189-190.

⁵⁷ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 235-237 v., 254-259, 271. New bill in *Ibidem*, f. 260-262.

cannot wait long, as the Saint canons are very harsh [...], the clergy, without their legitimate heads, can either forget their true mission or lapse into anarchy and disorder”⁵⁸. The matter required urgent solving.

These multiple delays had various causes. First, it must be said that some politicians did not want the canonical order to be established in the Church, either due to the prejudices formed during Cuza government or because of anti-clericalism attitudes more or less personal. There were also disagreements over the final form of the law, recorded from both the Romanian hierarchs and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, dissensions between the political parties that claimed different points of view about the development of the religious phenomenon in the Principalities etc.

It seems that, after this forthright stand, things took a favorable turn to the clergy, because the final form of the “Organic law for the election of the Metropolitans and Eparchial Bishops and the creation of the Holy Synod of the Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Romanian Church and of the upper ecclesiastical consistory” was passed by the Chamber of Deputies on the 4th of December 1872 (84 votes in favor and 12 votes against), by the Senate on the 11th of December 1872 (40 votes in favor, one against and one abstention) and was promulgated by Carol I on the 14th of December 1872. This law provided the grounds for the “canonical principle of autocephaly”, the “Holy Synod of the Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Romanian Church” being thereby created, as well as for the “principle of ruling unity”, ensured through the designation of a head, in the person of the Primate Metropolitan of Romania⁵⁹.

In the first chapter of the law it was stated that the task of electing the hierarchs was entrusted to an electoral college composed of the two metropolitans, the eparchial bishops, the permanent archpriests and all acting orthodox deputies and senators. The chairmanship of this college was held by the primate metropolitan, named in article 24: “Archbishop and Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, Exarch of the Lands and Primate of Romania”. In his absence, the chairmanship was held by the metropolitan of Moldavia, named in the same article 24: “Archbishop and Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava and Exarch of the Lands”, or the most senior ordained bishop. Articles 2, 5, 10 and 17 defined the status of Primate Metropolitan of Romania for the Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia. Metropolitans were chosen among the six eparchial bishops, and the bishops among the eight permanent archpriests. These had to be of Romanian origin⁶⁰. They were elected with majority of votes and confirmed by the monarch. Article 28 recognized the lawful existence of the hierarchs named by the Law of Cuza, adopted on the 11th of May 1865: “the metropolitans and bishops acting today by virtue of prior laws are hereby recognized and maintained in their

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 281-282.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 284-308; Nicolae V. Dură, *op.cit.*, p. 446.

⁶⁰ Art.2: “The Primate Metropolitan of Romania, the Metropolitan of Moldavia, as well as the eparchial bishops, can only be elected among Romanian archpriests, sons of Romanian priests, born in the Principality of Romania, not naturalized”, aged at least 40, and 20 years after the promulgation of the law, the hierarch shall have to hold a Bachelor's degree or Ph.D. in theology.

dignities with all the rights and prerogatives granted by this Law to the metropolitans and bishops to be elected pursuant to its provisions”⁶¹. This was the end of the unrest caused by the “struggle for canonicity”.

This law also laid the foundations of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Articles 8 and 9 read as follows: “The central authority of the Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church is the Holy Synod”, which has the main obligation of preserving the “dogmatic and canonical unity with the Church of Constantinople and all Orthodox Churches, as well as the administrative, disciplinary and national unity of the Orthodox Church throughout the Romanian State”. The Holy Synod was composed of the primate metropolitan, the metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, the bishops of Râmnic, Argeș and Buzău as suffragans of the Metropolitan See of Hungarian Wallachia, the bishops of Roman, Huși and Galați, as suffragans of the Metropolitan See of Moldavia and eight permanent archpriests, named by the Government and confirmed by the monarch, out of three candidates proposed by the Holy Synod. They usually lived in Bucharest or Iasi, and held various positions: professors at the faculty of theology or the theological seminary, Superiors of monasteries, etc⁶².

As in the case of the Electoral College, the chairmanship of the synod was held by the primate metropolitan, in his absence by the metropolitan of Moldavia or the most senior ordained bishop. The minister of Cults, who had to be an Orthodox, could participate in the meetings of the Synod in a consultative capacity. The Synod met in Bucharest twice a year, in spring and in autumn, having spiritual, disciplinary and juridical attributions⁶³.

The attributions of the Primate of Romania were not clearly specified in the laws of Cuza, passed in 1865; this was to be done in the meetings of the General Synod held in the session of 1865-1866. The alterations occurring in its functioning did not yield the result desired by the “Lord of the Union”⁶⁴. Nevertheless, this matter too was to be sorted out on the occasion of an event related to Al. I. Cuza, namely the burial of his human remains at Ruginoasa, on the 29th of May/10th of June 1873⁶⁵.

The provisions of this regulation led to a conflict between the metropolitan of Moldavia, Calinic Miculescu, and the Synod, which, in its session held on the 8th of November 1873, broke off “its spiritual communication” with the Moldavian hierarch and suspended him from the “ecclesiastical administration”. The bishop Iosif

⁶¹ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 308; D.J.A.N. Iași, Fond Melchisedec Ștefănescu [Melchisedec Ștefănescu Fund], file no. 11/1873-1874, f. 26 r.-v.

⁶² D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 295.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, f.295 r.-v.

⁶⁴ There was a regulation bill in this sense, which was not approved eventually. See D.J.A.N. Iași, Fond Melchisedec Ștefănescu, file no. 2/1965, f. 1-4v.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, file no. 11/1873-1874, f. 25 r.- v., 28 r.- v.; 91-93v.; Archives of the Saint Synod, file no. 59, f. 129.

Botoșeanul was named in charge with the eparchy during the suspension of the Metropolitan⁶⁶.

The artisan of this “attack” against the Metropolitan See of Iași was considered to be once again Melchisedec Ștefănescu. There even appeared a brochure, entitled *Fărădelegea canonică (The Canonical Outrage)*, in which serious accusations were made against the bishop of Ismail, who was called names like “deserter”, “perjurer” and even “heretic”⁶⁷.

His suspension was revoked during the session held on the 19th of November 1873. The regulation in the agreed form was adopted in the session of the 26th of November 1873⁶⁸, the attributions of the primate metropolitan of Romania being henceforth fully specified.

During the same year, 1873, another conflict arose between Calinic, the Metropolitan of Iași and Evghenie Hacman, the head of the newly created Metropolitan See of Bucovina, to which the Austrian government has entrusted as suffragan the Bishopric of Dalmatia. This act was seen as “an undermining of the prestige of the Metropolitan See of Iași”. Calinic has then sought the advice of his suffragans, Iosif of Huși and Melchisedec of the Lower Danube. The matter was clarified by Melchisedec, who confessed in a letter addressed to the hierarch of Iași, on the 23rd of February 1873, that the creation of the above-mentioned Metropolitan See by the Austrian government was “a reason and right of the said government, which did not have to account for anything to anyone, like any other independent state”⁶⁹.

Through the lordly decree No. 826, the “Holy Synod of the Holy Autocephalous Church” has been convened for the 1st of May 1873⁷⁰. On the occasion of the first session, a commission was created and put in charge with the drafting of a regulation of the Holy Synod. The commission was composed of Melchisedec Ștefănescu, Ghenadie Țeposu and Iosif of Argeș. During the session on the 9th of May 1873, the same bishop Melchisedec was appointed member of the commission for the selection of the “effigy” to be inscribed on the seal of the Holy Synod⁷¹.

⁶⁶ D.J.A.N. Neamț, Fond Episcopia Roman [Fund of Roman Bishopric], file no. 3/1873, f. 34-36v., 39; D.J.A.N. Vaslui, Fond Episcopia de Huși [Fund of Huși Bishopric], file no. 19/1873-1876, f. 2-7.

⁶⁷ Constantin C. Diculescu, *Din corespondențele Episcopului Melchisedec [From the correspondence of the Bishop Melchisedec]*, Bucharest, Publishing of the Religious Books, 1909, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁸ D.J.A.N. Vaslui, Fond Episcopia de Huși, file no. 19/1873-1876, f. 8; D.J.A.N. Iași, Fond Melchisedec Ștefănescu, file no. 11/1873-1874, f. 25 r.- v., 28 r.-v.; 91-93v.; Decree no. 2163 of the 11th of December 1873, published in the *MOF*, no. 272 of the 15th of December 1873, p. 2355.

⁶⁹ Constantin C. Diculescu, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-49.

⁷⁰ D.J.A.N., Neamț, Fond Episcopia Roman, file no. 3/1873, f. 1-12; D.J.A.N. Vaslui, Fond Episcopia de Huși, file no. 11/1871-1873, f. 23.

⁷¹ D.J.A.N. Iași, Fond Melchisedec Ștefănescu, file no. 11/1873-1874, f. 1-8; Arhivele Sfântului Sinod [Archives of the Saint Synod], file no. 59/1873, f. 46, 77-81.

Further regulations followed in the course of the same year and later on, to which Melchisedec made a decisive contribution: the rules and regulations of the Synod, the regulation for the arrangement of lieutenant archpriests by eparchies, the regulation for churchly discipline, the regulation for monastic discipline, the regulation for burials and remembrance, the regulation for proceedings in matter of ecclesiastical judgment, the regulation concerning the position of seminarians, the regulation concerning the instruction and education of the clergy, the regulation for the creation of a churchly journal, the regulation for the holy matrimony (1874), the regulation for the establishment of holy days and national holidays, the regulation concerning the quality and making of candles, the regulation for the election of permanent or lieutenant archpriests, the regulation for the maintenance of the clergy of urban and rural churches, the regulation of “offertory boxes” (1876), the regulation concerning icons, architecture and painting of churches, regulations for Seminaries, the Faculty of Theology, the relations with the Constantinople Patriarchy, the relations of the orthodox Romanian clergy with the heterodox and the non-believers living in the kingdom of Romania, the regulation for the bearers of the alms registers, etc.⁷².

After the passing of the Law in 1872, Nifon, the Primate Metropolitan, wrote a letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Antim the Sixth, to which he enclosed a copy of the provisions contained in the respective law, asking him to express his opinion about what had been decided. The patriarch did not reply, but it seems that he accepted the reality in Romania, as whenever asked to give his blessing to a bishop chosen by the Romanian Church, “he would always give it and never oppose”⁷³.

In this period, another achievement worth mentioning was the creation of the Nifon Seminary in Bucharest. This establishment was founded in 1872, by the Metropolitan Nifon of Ungro-Wallachia, at his expense, being administered during his lifetime by the hierarch of Muntenia. Said establishment was located on Calîtei Street⁷⁴, having an upkeep fund of 948.000 lei, deposited with a bank in Odessa. The Metropolitan has left for its upkeep his domain from Letca Nouă in the county of Vlașca, the houses located in Suburbia Doamnei, as well as a library. In order to ensure the proper running of the seminary, a vestry made up of three laypeople chaired by the metropolitan was created. The institution set up by the hierarch Nifon was recognized by the Romanian state, its graduates being conferred upon the same rights as the seminarians of state establishments. The seminary created by the Metropolitan Nifon functioned until 1948. Moreover, this long-lived hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church has created a special fund, consisting of the income of several estates, destined to the financing of scholarships for students of

⁷²D.J.A.N. Iași, Fond Melchisedec Ștefănescu, file no. 11/1873-1874, f. 12-25, 27, 30-85; *Ibidem*, file no. 20/1883, f. 1-51.

⁷³N.Dobrescu, *op.cit.*, p. 174.

⁷⁴Presently known as Calea Rahovei.

nondenominational faculties, but also to the material support of the poor, widows of priests, poor churches, etc⁷⁵.

During this first period of the rule of Carol I, the Bishop Melchisedec, made his first travels, either for political or for religious or cultural reasons.

His first mission was in 1868, when he travelled to Russia, at the court of the Tsar Alexander the Second. It must be said that during those times the situation of Romania at international level was extremely complicated. The Great Powers were suspecting Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece of collaboration for the "disintegration of the Ottoman Empire". Austria-Hungary, France and England launched a wrathful campaign against the Romanian State, because of the support given by the Romanians in 1867-1868 to the bands of Bulgarians who had crossed the border to the South of the Danube with the purpose of stirring up the Bulgarians and forming a "Bulgarian revolutionary government in the Balkans". Chancellor Bismarck, in order to prevent a coalition of the European forces against Romania, advised Carol I to attempt a rapprochement to Russia, even though this would mean an alteration of the relations with France. To this effect, in February-March 1868, a Romanian delegation consisting of the bishop Melchisedec and Ioan Cantacuzino, former minister was, appointed⁷⁶.

On the 22nd of January 1868, the Ruler Carol I conveyed to Prince Gorceakov, the minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Empire, the Romanians' desire of "good neighborliness and friendship with their great neighbor", and announced the sending to Petersburg of a delegation made up of the two diplomats⁷⁷. The essential purpose was that of handing over to the sovereign from the East a letter from the Prince Carol I and of pleading the case of Romania with relation to certain sensitive issues affecting the bilateral relations between the two countries: consular jurisdiction, the debt of Russia towards our country, the convention on the rights of the Russian subjects "found in the Principalities and vice versa", the situation of the monasteries secularized in 1864, the Russians being fervent advocates of the case of the Greek priors, and the situation of the "Bulgarian armed bands" on the territory of Romania⁷⁸.

The appointment of Melchisedec for this diplomatic mission was very inspired, considering the good relations between Russia and the Bishop from Lower Danube⁷⁹. As we will see, the political measures of Melchisedec were really

⁷⁵ Will dated 15th of May 1875, for the foundation of this seminary, in *Ibidem*, pp. 489-494; M. Păcurariu, *op.cit.*, p.128.

⁷⁶ Nicolae Ciachir, *Cu privire la misiunea diplomatică a episcopului Melchisedec în Rusia în anul 1868*, [About the diplomatic mission of the bishop Melchisedec to Russia in 1868], in BOR, year LXXXIII, no. 11-12, November-December 1965, p. 1079.

⁷⁷ D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f. 295; Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 32/1868, f. 1-2v.

⁷⁸ Letter of Prince Carol the First to the Tsar Alexander the Second, dated January 21, 1868, in *Ibidem*, file no. 31/1868, f. 1-2. Response letter of the Tsar of 5th/17th March 1878, *Ibidem*, f. 3 r.-v.

⁷⁹ In a letter from February 27th 1868, Chancellor Bismarck addressed Carol I using these words: "I do not doubt that the Petersburg mission will have a more positive effect if the

successful. He was thus received by the Tsar, by the Metropolitan of Petersburg and by the Russian high officials. The Sovereign from Petersburg even kissed his hand, a gesture which demonstrates the appreciation the Christian Church and the Romanian hierarch enjoyed before the representatives of the big power in the East. The approached matters included different issues. First we must say that at the level of the Russian perception, Carol I, recently crowned on the throne of Romania, was not considered a friend of the Orthodoxy, taking into consideration his belonging to the Catholic Religion. With his famous flair, Melchisedec solved the controversy by ensuring the big defenders of the all glorious religion that the new ruler had had the best intentions related to the Romanian Orthodox Church: "The Lord is concerned to re-establish the Church regarding everything that Cuza destroyed; that he wishes to go back to the friendly relations with Russia, which is the support of the Orthodoxy"⁸⁰. Then some other issues of interest for the social and religious life in the Principalities were analyzed: the Jewish matter, the conflict with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the non-canonical election of the Romanian Metropolitans and Bishops⁸¹. During the dialogue with the high Russian officials, the emancipated spirit of the Bishop from Ismail stood out. He knew how to combine the rigor of protocol, the delicacy of language and the major interest of the Romanian state in a nice manner. Another proof of his diplomacy was his ability to get over the sensitive moment of the matrimonial suggestion arrived from the Petersburg Metropolitan regarding a possible marriage of Prince Carol with a Russian Princess⁸².

The visit to Petersburg allowed Bishop Melchisedec to study the religious books used in the Church of Russia written in Slavonic. Since he knew Slavonic very well, he bought all these books to achieve his project which consisted in publishing during the next years several didactic materials to help the Romanian priests perform the services at the holly altars⁸³.

The dialogue between the Romanian Emissaries and the representatives of the big power in the East led to the improvement of bilateral relations between the two states. Prince of Reuss, at that time the Ambassador to Prussia at Petersburg, stated in a letter addressed to Carol I: "There are no final results; though good germs have been

bishop from Izmail succeeds in making himself agreeable by his colleagues and coreligionists from Petersburg and makes this success public." (Constantin C. Diculescu, *Episcopul Melchisedec. Studiu asupra vieții și activității lui cu un portret și excerpte din corespondență* [Bishop Melchisedec. Study on the life and work with a portrait and excerpts from the correspondence], Bucharest, Publishing of the Religious Books, 1908, p. 51).

⁸⁰ Central University Library "M. Eminescu", Iași, Ms.-476 VI-85, f. 8.

⁸¹ See the coded telegrams and the reports of Ioan Cantacuzino shown to prince Carol I, in D.A.N.I.C., Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii Publice, file no. 944/1863, f.295 , Fond Casa Regală-Oficiale, file no. 40/1868, f. 1-15.

⁸² See the report of bishop Melchisedec to Carol I, in *Ibidem*, file no. 42/1868, f.1-7v.; Biblioteca Centrală Universitară Iași [Central University Library "M. Eminescu" Iași], Ms. 476 VI-85, f. 1-13v.

⁸³ Constantin Diculescu, *op.cit.*, p. 176.

seeded and now they need to be cultivated; anyway, the views of the Russian Government related to the Romanian one improved”.

By identifying an energetic and intelligent person in Melchisedec, Prince Carol I wanted to bring him closer by suggesting the position of throne counselor and even that of Minister of Religion. Being aware of the adversities generated by the first appointment at that Ministry, during Cuza's reign, the Bishop preferred to remain far from “our political fights” and be concerned “only with the interests of the Church”⁸⁴.

The second external voyage was made by Melchisedec in the interest of the Church. The decision of the Bishop of Lower Danube to go together with the Bishop Ghenadie Teposu at the meeting of the “ancient Catholics” was taken during the meeting of the Holy Synod from June 27th 1875. Both Bishops participated as observers to the works of this meeting carried out in Bonn, and presented a report when returned⁸⁵. The works of the conference took place between August 2nd-16th 1875 in a room of the University of Bonn. A closeness process between the Orthodox Church and the ancient Catholics was initiated during this meeting⁸⁶. Afterwards, Bishop Melchisedec travelled abroad several times, either for official or private matters, the last voyage being the one in 1885, in Russia, which caused him “several disappointments and annoyances”⁸⁷. Thus, in 1881 he made a study trip in Cernaui, and in 1884 he went to Bulgaria⁸⁸.

The war for state independence for which Romania had to make important human and material efforts, marked the end of a first phase in “the history of national rebirth”⁸⁹. Conquering the independence also meant a new beginning as regards our internal and external politics⁹⁰. The influence of this great achievement of the Romanian people reflected in all the fields of the social political life⁹¹. This is how,

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

⁸⁵ Arhivele Sfântului Sinod, file no.65/1875, f. 53r.-v.

⁸⁶ See details in Constantin Diculescu, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

⁸⁷ Alexandru M. Ioniță, *Episcopul Melchisedec Ștefănescu al Romanului. Viața și activitatea (1822-1892)* [*Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu of Roman. Life and work (1822-1892)*], Constanța, Europolis Publishing, 1999, pp. 83-86.

⁸⁸ In 1884 Bishop Melchisedec made a visit to Bulgaria „to honour the memory of the Romanian soldiers, under-officers and officers who fought at Plevna, Grivița and Smârdan or else, at their eternal resting place”. See Eftimie Bărlădeanu, *Episcopul Melchisedec Ștefănescu și Independența de Stat a României* [*Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu and the State Independence of Romania*], in “Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei” [Metropolitan See of Moldova and Suceava], (further on they will quote MMS), year LIII (1977), no. 5-6, May-June, p. 314.

⁸⁹ Nestor Vornicescu, *Desăvârșirea unității noastre naționale-fundament al unității Bisericii străbune* [*Completion of our National Unity: Groundwork for our Ancestor Church Unity*], Craiova, 1988, p. 423.

⁹⁰ Titu Maiorescu, *Istoria contimporană a României (1866-1900)* [*Contemporary History of Romania (1866-1900)*], Bucharest, 1925, p. 175.

⁹¹ Paraschiva Cincea, *Viața politică din România în primul deceniu al Independenței de stat* [*The Romanian Political Life in the First Century of State Independence*], Bucharest, 1974, p. 9.

following the conquest of state independence, steps were taken in order to officially recognize the independence of the Church: “only after Romania had won its freedom in 1877, only after its Sovereign had promulgated himself king in 1881, the necessary steps for gaining the autocephaly were taken”, used to say, in 1909, the great scholar Nicolae Iorga⁹².

1878 brought along a new conflict with the Ecumenical Patriarchate following its requests to compensate the “Tabernacles” after the secularization in 1863. On that occasion, some other accusations were brought to the Romanian Church⁹³. The next year, the Primacy Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu was writing to the Ecumenical Patriarchate from Constantinople: “The principle according to which the relative issues related to Church organization change at the same time with the political changes is admitted in the most obvious manner by the ecumenical synods, and the ecclesiastic History offers us several proofs about its observance”⁹⁴. In other words, it was time for the Orthodox Church in Romania to gain its freedom *de jure*, just like the country did following the recently ended war in the Balkans. By unsparingly aiming at achieving this goal, the clergymen and the politicians of that time eventually managed to obtain the official recognition from the Patriarchate from Constantinople.

On March 9th 1882, the Chamber of Deputies requested the amendment of the law from 1872, by supporting the opportuneness to promote the Primacy Metropolitan as Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church: “this wish is entirely legitimate and in agreement with the great development and political meaning of our State”. The “ambitious act” of sanctifying the Great Unction by the Romanian hierarchs took place a few days later, on March 25th. “The vexation of the Patriarch had reached the maximum”, noted the historian Nicolae Dobrescu in 1905. Then, there was an acid correspondence between the two Churches, diplomatic interventions directed by the politicians of those times, by which the tension of high level relations between Romania and Constantinople was released⁹⁵.

The ecclesiastic laws drafted within the process of institution and formation of the Romanian modern state during the time of A.I.Cuza, as well as those from the period of establishment of its institutions during the times of Carol I, confirmed once and for all the inalienable right of the ancestral Church to autocephaly⁹⁶, as an integrant part of the free and independent Romanian nation. This reality, the

⁹² N. Iorga, *op.cit.*, p. 314.

⁹³ N. Dobrescu, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-175.

⁹⁴ Nestor Vornicescu, *op.cit.*, p. 423.

⁹⁵ N. Dobrescu, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-177.

⁹⁶ The Greek word “autocephaly” is made up of two words: “αυτος”(self) and “κεφαλη”(own head) and it means “independence, autonomy of a church from another, from the point of view of the administrative-territorial aspect between churches”, “self-governing or self-administration of a national orthodox Church” (Marcel Ciucur, *Autonomie și autocefalie în Biserica Ortodoxă Română [Autonomy and Autocephaly in the Romanian Orthodox Church]*, in MMS, year L, March-April 1974, p. 219).

autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church, was formally recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1885, by the "Tomos" from April 25th⁹⁷.

Romanians' legitimate desire to see their national Church a Patriarchate shall be accomplished only in 1925, when, on February 23rd, the king Ferdinand I issued „The law for raising the Archiepiscopal and Metropolitan Chair of Ungro-Wallachia as Primacy of Romania at the rank of Patriarchal Seat". In July 30th 1925, the ecumenical patriarch Vasile III gave the Tomos for the acknowledgement of the Romanian Patriarchate foundation, the supported effort of the Romanian Orthodox Church to achieve its inalienable right to self-determination being thus achieved⁹⁸. "*Finis coronat opus*".

Trying to come to a conclusion, one can say that, for the Romanian Orthodox Church, the first decades of Carol I's reign represented an extremely agitated period, a long series of measures intended to normalize the internal relations between the members of the hierarchy and between them and the political power, the moment when the foundation of the organization and functioning of the religious institutions above and beyond the Milcov were laid. Cuza's laws on church realm had produced major controversies and the discontent of the Orthodox hierarchs and priests against the interference of the politicians into the clergy life had reached alarming levels. A detente was much needed. The Prussian Prince repaired the mistakes made by the previous government and returned the ecclesiastical institution the deserved importance in the Romanian society. Carol I's reign opened a new road and released the positive energies of the nation in a considerable effort to build Modern Romania.

⁹⁷ *Tomosul autocefaliei Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The Tomos of the Romanian Orthodox Church Autocephaly], in BOR, IX, 1885, no.5, p. 334-350.

⁹⁸ *MOF*, no.44 from February 25th 1925; Tit Simedrea, *Patriarhia Românească. Acte și documente* [The Romanian Patriarchate. Deeds and Documents], Bucharest, 1927, pp.119-126.