

# The Law on the Secularisation of monastic estates and the consequences of the application thereof

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## Abstract:

The total wealth granted The Holy Places sum up a quarter of the national territory. Secularization of the monasteries was the stage leading up to the agrarian reform. Through this arable land fund, the state was able to help most of the faithful who were in a pitiful situation. On the other hand, through this law Romanian state secularized the all monastic estates, not only the monastic estates dedicated to the Holy Land.

This paper tries to present the law of secularization and its importance for Romanian Orthodox Church and for Romanian people.

## Keywords:

secularization, monastic estates, Orthodox Church, properties, Holy Land.

The election on January 24, 1859 of Alexandru Ioan Cuza<sup>2</sup> as ruler of two of the three Romanian countries (the Romanian Country and Moldova) represents a great step towards the unity of all Romanians<sup>3</sup>. It was anticipated by Michael the Brave who, in 1600, achieved the unification of the three Romanian countries, and, at the same time, will be the precursor to the happy event from December 1, 1918, when the great Romania will be fully realized.

The event of January 24, 1859 marked our national history. On the double election of Colonel Cuza as the ruler of the two Romanian countries, the memories of Ludovic Kossuth, who presents the initiative of the young deputy Vasile Boerescu, to

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<sup>2</sup> See C.C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, Editura Științifică, București, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Details on the realization of this event see Stelian Neagoe, *Istoria unirii românilor*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1986.

put the union as a fact in front of the European Powers, are preserved. Thus, after the metropolitan of the country with the cross in one hand and the gospel in the other, read this oath: "*I swear that I cannot be charged with personal interests, foreign whispers or other reckoning, but only and only for the good of the public*", the 64 deputies will vote unanimously, in favor of achieving the union<sup>4</sup>.

"*Illustrious son of the Romanian people, a leading fighter for the formation and consolidation of the unitary national state*"<sup>5</sup>, the Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza was a great patriot, who always put "*the interests and needs of the country above his interests and needs*". To him "*everything that was national, everything that the nation saw, found the fullest understanding*"<sup>6</sup>.

Although brief (1859-1866), Cuza's reign was particularly fruitful in the history of our people. Most historians who have analyzed the union and reign of Al. I. Cuza, they considered that they opened the way for profound prefaces in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the modern Romanian national state.

And in the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church, following the events of the life of the Romanian people, there will be very important changes: the proclamation of the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1864<sup>7</sup> (recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1885); the administrative-church unification of 1865, when the metropolitan of Ungrovlahiei became "*primate*" of the Orthodox Church in the new state of Romania; the constitution of the Holy Synod in 1872, as the central governing body; reform of theological education; removing the foreign element from the management of the country's monasteries, etc.<sup>8</sup>

### **1. The reforms of Alexandru Ioan Cuza**

The situation in the Romanian Orthodox Church since the beginning of the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza was presented as follows: both the Mountain and the

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<sup>4</sup> I. Lupaș, *Istoria unirii românilor*, Fundația Culturală regală „Principele Carol”, București, 1937, p. 265.

<sup>5</sup> Miron Constantinescu, *Cuvântare la Adunarea festivă cu prilejul aniversării a 150 de ani de la nașterea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, în „România Liberă”, XXVIII (1970), nr. 7905 din 21 martie 1970, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Pr. Nicolae Șerbănescu, *150 de ani de la nașterea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, în „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, LXXXVIII (1970), nr. 3-4, p. 352.

<sup>7</sup> See † Varlaam Ploieșteanul, Episcop-vicar patriarhal, Dr. Georgică Grigoriță, *Problema autocefaliei Bisericii Ortodoxe Române în corespondența Domnitorului Alexandru Ioan Cuza cu Patriarhia Constantinopolului*, în vol. „Autocefalia - Libertate și demnitate”, Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2010, pp. 210-225.

<sup>8</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. III, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1994, p. 109.

Moldavian Churches were autonomous. In matters of dogma and discipline, however, they recognized "*the supremacy, the canonical jurisdiction of the patriarch of Constantinople*". Inside, the bishops "*depended on the respective metropolitan, as the highest local church leader*", who, in his turn, exercised canonical supremacy over his eparchies. Each diocese was administered independently, and in its dictatorship were also judged the "*marriages*", that is, divorce, of the grooms and clerics.

In some churches it was used in Greek, and many of the places of worship, as well as some monasteries and their possessions, were worshiped. By worship, the monastery or the place of worship became the property of that monastery or bishop, and all income flowed to it. The Church did not regulate the entry into the monastery of the desires and, at the same time, it did not have a central governing body, being not autocephaly.

With the ascension to the throne of the principalities, Cuza also brought changes in religious education, setting up seminars and a faculty of theology. He also introduced definitively by a decree "*the worship of the Almighty to be celebrated only in the Romanian language*", so only in the wheat spoken and understood by the people<sup>9</sup>. "*From the kingdoms of the Phanariots especially, a foreign language, the Greek one, had gradually replaced in the church worship the Romanian language ... In 1863 following the report of the minister of cults Chr. Tell, the council of ministers refers to the ruler who decided, by decree, that since then in all the monasteries and churches in Romania the divine worship is to be celebrated only in the Romanian language*"<sup>10</sup>.

Since the beginning of his reign, "*Cuza has shown himself to be a staunch supporter of the secular state. He was determined to place the Orthodox Church under the supervision of the state in all matters, except the strictly theological ones, an objective which he largely achieved*"<sup>11</sup>. Thus, in almost all sectors of the church life, Prince Al. I. Cuza has renewed. These include: printing of business books; establishing the burial place for the deceased; regulation of marriages; establishing the forms of conclusion of the marriage; establishing an appropriate conduct within the hierarchy; the discipline of clergy and monks; good administration of church assets; rounding of parishes and dioceses; receiving into monasticism; unification of the typical church; the definitive introduction of the Romanian language into the worship of the Church; formulating a new way to fill the vacations of the bishops' chairs; the establishment of an honorary leadership in the Romanian Orthodox Church, the

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<sup>9</sup> N. Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române contemporane*, vol. I (*Istoria Bisericii din România 1850-1895*), Tipografia „Bukarester Tagblatt”, București, 1905, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Hitchins, *România, 1774-1866*, Ediția a III-a, Editura Humanitas, București, 2013, p. 382.

disregard for anyone of it, etc. "In seven years of reign, Prince Cuza has achieved in the Romanian Church things that others have not done in decades"<sup>12</sup>.

Despite all the positive aspects of the reforms, through the laws of 1862 and 1866, the Prince Al. I. Cuza has completed the administrative and material subordination of the Orthodox clergy, "which will never rise from this subordination to the secular power, a condition that is equally damaging to the Church and to the national interest"<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. The law of secularization of monastery assets

Before the reign of Al. I. Cuza, the consecrated monasteries were obliged to pay a quarter of their annual income in the country's vestry. As they did not fulfill their obligations, it was found that they owed significant amounts of money. As a result, the Council of Ministers of Moldova, in April 1859, will order to "impose a seizure on the incomes of the consecrated monasteries", and the one from the Romanian Country to indebted the Egyptians from such monasteries "to deposit the income of their monasteries in the State House". For some reasons, however, the ruler has postponed the implementation of these measures<sup>14</sup>.

Even in the year of his election (1859), Al. I. Cuza and his government will order the confiscation of the assets of some Moldovan monasteries due to the poor glazing<sup>15</sup>. In the summer of the same year, a specially set up commission investigated the monasteries: Agapia, Adam, Neamt, Secu, Văratec and Vorona, inventorying all their goods. This commission consisted of the rectors of the eparchial seminars and four civilians.

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<sup>12</sup> Pr. Nicolae Șerbănescu, *150 de ani de la nașterea domnitorului Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, p. 406.

<sup>13</sup> Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini până în zilele noastre*, Ediția a IV-a, Editura Humanitas, București, 1995, p. 198.

<sup>14</sup> Pr. Nicolae Șerbănescu, *150 de ani de la nașterea domnitorului Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, p. 369.

<sup>15</sup> On the reasons that led to the secularization of the monastery assets, the historian Paul Bruslanowski says: "One of the characteristics of the Cuza regime was the continued financial crisis and the enormous deficit of the general budget of the State, as evidenced by the fact that in the first three years, only one budget submitted by the Government was voted by the legislative forum (the one of Moldova, on the year 1860, voted in June 1860!). The secularization of church assets must be viewed precisely in this context". Prof. Dr. Paul Bruslanowski, *Proprietăți mănăstirești. Secularizarea din 1860-1864*, în vol. „Monahismul ortodox românesc. Istorie, contribuții și repertoriare”, vol. II, Editura Basilica, București, 2016, p. 1156.

The findings made by the commission were unfavorable to the monastery's leadership<sup>16</sup>. As a result, some monasteries will be taken to these monasteries, as well as "*acts and things concerning the church administration of assets*"; the workshops will be canceled; they will be sold "*cattle, hives and the like*"; an administrative committee will be set up beside the abbot; they will be made "*states on the edge of strictly necessary and passed into the budget*"; they will be given the properties under the administration of the Ministry of Cults<sup>17</sup>.

Faced with this situation, Metropolitan Sofronie Miclescu protested in September 1859 by a letter addressed to the ruler. Shortly after this protest he received a visit from the minister of worship, who told him: "*His Majesty sent me to return this report to you and throw it in your cheek, and if you do not go with it, he will treat you as an ordinary monk*"<sup>18</sup>. Despite this threat, the metropolitan continued to do his duty, sending protests to the Assembly of the country, complaining about abusive government intervention.

The following year, on August 16, 1860, the ruler Al. I. Cuza will issue an order setting up the monasteries of Doljești and Zagavia, together with 31 Moldovan hermitages. The monks from here will be taken to other places of worship, and the churches are transformed into parochial churches and respectively "*hospices for invalid beggars ..., in village schools or other such establishments of public benefit*"<sup>19</sup>. Two months later, the ruler will promulgate the law "*regarding the transfer rate on the properties of public settlements*", which provided that 10% of the net income of "*non-moving properties ... of the metropolises, bishops, monasteries worshiped and not worshiped with their methods, of the monasteries, monasteries and churches under different tutelages ..., of the seminars, as well as of any other charitable organization to be on the government's account*"<sup>20</sup>.

Tending to "*complete seizure of church assets, administered by the Ministry of Cults*", whose income was gathered at the Central House, in the same year, 1860, by a journal of the Council of Ministers of October 19, voted by the Assembly and strengthened by Sir, the Central House "*joined with the Ministry of Finance House*", the monastery income entering directly into the country's vestry<sup>21</sup>. "*The abolition of the Central Houses meant nothing more than a secularization of the possessions of the*

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<sup>16</sup> See „Buletinul Oficial al Moldovei”, nr. 47, 56, 62 și 63, apud N. Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române contemporane*, vol. I, p. 99.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100; A.D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza Vodă*, vol. I, Iași, 1903, p. 166.

<sup>20</sup> Vasile Boerescu, *Codicele Române. Alecsandru Ioan seau Colecțiune de Legile Principatelor Unite Române. Supliment*, București, 1865, pp. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> N. Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române contemporane*, vol. I, p. 101; Pr. Nicolae Șerbănescu, *150 de ani de la nașterea lui Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, pp. 355-356.

*non-worshipped eparchies and monasteries, that is, of all the earthly church assets. However, the worshipped monasteries remained untouched*<sup>22</sup>.

On November 13/25, 1862, the Romanian government decided to collect in the state treasury the amounts from the lease of the estates of the consecrated monasteries<sup>23</sup>. The legislative forum approved, on December 22, 1862/3 January 1863, the transfer of the amount of 20,000,000 lei in the state budget<sup>24</sup>. This measure represented, in fact, a "*disguised secularization*"<sup>25</sup>, because the amounts once entered in the budget could be spent anyway<sup>26</sup>.

The year 1863 brings with it the promulgation of the famous Law of the secularization of the monastery assets, from 1863<sup>27</sup>. Before this law is given in the country, a number of measures are being taken, aimed at hitting "*more and more in the position of the Greek monks*"<sup>28</sup>. Thus, at the urging of the ministry of interim cults,

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Lucian Brusanowski, *Stat și Biserică în vechea Românie între 1821-1925*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujană, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> C. G. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, p. 151, nota 2; Victor Slăvescu, *Finanțele României sub Cuza-Vodă*, vol. II, Editura Fundației Culturale Magazin Istoric, București, 2003, p. 327.

<sup>24</sup> C. G. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, p. 151; N. Șerbănescu, *150 de ani de la nașterea domnitorului Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, p. 371.

<sup>25</sup> This is how Paul Lucian Brusanowski referred to it in his study. Paul Lucian Brusanowski, *Stat și Biserică în vechea Românie între 1821-1925*, p. 60.

<sup>26</sup> C. G. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> The word "secularization", in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, means: "*to pass with legal forms the church and monastery assets to the state property; to render to the secular life what belongs to the church*". See Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan”, *Dicționar Explicativ al Limbii Române (DEX)*, Ediția a II-a, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, București, 1996, „secularizare” și „seculariza”. O analiză a fenomenului secularizării realizează și: † IPS Nifon, Arhiepiscopul și Mitropolitul Târgoviștei, *Teologie, cultură și dialog inter-religios în misiunea Bisericii*, Valahia University Press, Târgoviște, 2014; Idem, *Misiune, pastorație și slujire ecumenică*, Editura Valahia University Press, Târgoviște, 2009; Ștefan Buchiu, *Ortodoxie și secularizare*, Editura Libra, București, 1999; Ieromonah Maxim Morariu, *O perspectivă ortodoxă asupra fenomenului secularizării*, în „Altarul Banatului”, nr. 4-5/2015, pp.76-87; Pr. Conf. Dr. Nicolae Răzvan Stan, *Secularizarea și consecințele sale în viața societății și a Bisericii: o abordare din perspectiva teologiei și a spiritualității ortodoxe*, în vol. „Misiunea Bisericii Ortodoxe în contextul actual”, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 2016, pp. 71-92.

Analyzing the phenomenon of secularization we consider first the historical dimension of the secularization of the monastery assets, carried out by Alexandru Ioan Cuza in the second half of the 19th century (\*\*\*, *Secularizarea averilor bisericesti (1863): motivații și consecințe*, Editura Basilica, București, 2013), and secondly the process by which the state separates itself from the Church, and is "secularized".

<sup>28</sup> A.D. Xenopol, *Domnia lui Cuza Vodă*, vol. I, p. 318.

Alexandru Odobescu, in the summer of the same year, undertook through the monasteries dedicated to identifying and cataloging the objects of price, of the odors and especially of the documents, to be protected from alienation, what which was a very useful thing. In July 1859, the monks of the monasteries were asked to present "*a list of ministers of various priests, singers, parish priests, and any other church ministers. as well as what other lust they have over that leaf*"<sup>29</sup>. Later on, this list will be extended to all the monks and monks living in the monasteries - and even to the bishops<sup>30</sup>. All these measures had the role of seeing the monasteries' expenses with the monastic staff, as well as quantifying the incomes realized.

During this time, an intense diplomatic activity was preparing this great achievement. Romanian diplomats carried out sustained activity in all European states. This reform would never have happened without the courage of the Prime Minister, Mihail Kogălniceanu.

In the course of the diplomatic activity undertaken by the Kogălniceanu government, on December 13, 1863, the Romanian Chamber voted with great fervor "*The Law for the Secularization of Monastery Assets*"<sup>31</sup>. This is what the Prime Minister's Chamber stated: "*The basis for which the State is now in the most favorable position to take from the hands of these particular foreign trustees the preservation of the monastery assets is because they have been unbelievers, two centuries; the will of the founders was not respected, two centuries; foreign monks, with incomes of Romanian wealth, gave the scandal parable, used the monasteries' wealth to support an anti-national policy, to combat Romanian nationality. It would be a national sin for so many assets to be left in the hands of foreign monks and pure rebels under the laws of the country*"<sup>32</sup>.

In the first article of the law the right holder of the monastery assets was regulated: "*All the monastery assets in Romania are and remain state assets*"<sup>33</sup>. Thus, all these assets donated by all the rulers of different places or settlements from outside the country, belonged to the state<sup>34</sup>. They remain assets removed from the civil circuit,

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<sup>29</sup> The old Archive of Ungrovlahia Mitropolitan See, *Dosar nr. 4974*, 1859, f. 59.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, *Dosar nr. 5169*, 1860, f. 97.

<sup>31</sup> See Nicolae Isar, *Biserică-Stat-Societate în România modernă (1821-1914). Sinteză și culegere de documente*, Editura Universitară, București, 2014, p. 178.

<sup>32</sup> M. Kogălniceanu, *Discursurile parlamentare din Epoca unirii (22 septembrie 1859-14 decembrie 1881)*, București, 1959, p. 167, apud V. Palade, *Probleme de organizare și administrație bisericească în opera lui Mihail Kogălniceanu*, în „Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei”, L (1974), nr. 1-2, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> See Iulian Oncescu, *Texte și documente privind istoria modernă a românilor (1774-1918)*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2011, p. 336.

<sup>34</sup> "By secularization, the Romanian state became the largest domain state in the world, having been seized 318 church areas that is 1,403,000 ha, according to the agricultural

but they change their owner - the rule of law now becoming the rightful owner. All the products and fruits of these goods, after having gone to foreign destinations for a long time, to help other monasteries, will henceforth bring only Romanians, only Romanian believers. The rural law of 1864<sup>35</sup> will take the property of the peasants from the secularized properties to the Orthodox Church. Thus, "*the organization of the modern state of Romania was largely done on the confiscated goods from the Church*"<sup>36</sup>.

Next, in article 2, the destination of these realized revenues is shown: "*The revenues of these assets are included among the ordinary revenues of the state budget*". Entering the state budget, these revenues were directed to objectives of utmost importance, which, otherwise, they would not have achieved. The revenues that come within the state budget do not have a special purpose, but they have contributed to the achievement of those socio-cultural objectives, political objectives, etc.

Before going further and seeing the following articles of the law, let us clarify what were the secularized assets and what was the position of the Romanian Orthodox Church in this regard<sup>37</sup>. Referring to the position of the representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Churches, the historian Nicolae Dobrescu said: "*The heads of the church missed the opportunity to say their word, for the government to do something for the Romanian church. Especially the word of Niphon, as president of the assembly would have had weight. Instead, however, Niphon immediately after the law was passed, gives his archpriest good-word, and a few days later (December 22, 1863) an office and a Te-Deum for the solution of secularization*"<sup>38</sup>.

In canon law, according to the provisions of the Statute of organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church (art. 169-176) and of the Regulation for the administration of the church assets, only the common goods are intended for the maintenance of the churches, their servants, cultural and charitable works and the

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*inventory prepared in 1909 by the minister of the fields, Anton Carp. The lands confiscated from the Church unfortunately came into the possession of the large estates, while the church clergy and the peasantry were victims of a deplorable material situation, with adverse consequences and prolonged over time*". [http://www.basilica.ro/stiri/preoti-din-protoieria-iii-capitala-in-conferinta\\_4772.html](http://www.basilica.ro/stiri/preoti-din-protoieria-iii-capitala-in-conferinta_4772.html).

<sup>35</sup> See Iulian Oncescu, *Texte și documente privind istoria modernă a românilor (1774-1918)*, p. 338.

<sup>36</sup> † Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *150 de ani de la adoptarea Legii secularizării averilor mănăstirești din 1863*, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> The decision to secularize the monastery assets will be defended against the ecumenical patriarch by the Metropolitan Nifon of Ungrovlahia in April 1864. Pr. Niculae Șerbănescu, *Mitropolia Ungrovlahiei*, în vol. „Istoria Mitropoliei Țării Românești. Studii publicate în anul 1959, la împlinirea a 600 de ani de existență”, Editura Trinitas, București, 2010, p. 328.

<sup>38</sup> N. Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române contemporane*, vol. I, p. 103.



fulfillment of the other purposes of the Church. They can be exchanged, engraved and alienated<sup>39</sup>, while sacred goods are inalienable<sup>40</sup>.

In 1863, there were 69 monasteries in Muntenia, of which 35 were worshiped, and in Moldova there were 122 monasteries, of which 29 were worshiped. *"The share of church properties in relation to the total agricultural and forest area of the Romanian Principalities was, in Muntenia, 16.55% for the non-worshippers and 11.14% for the worshippers, and in Moldova 12.16% for the non-worshippers and 10.17% for those worshiped, totaling about a quarter of the then territory of Romania"*<sup>41</sup>. The assets owned by these monasteries, as stated in a statute from 1855, were valued at 215 properties in Moldova, of which 101 belonged to the Holy Sepulcher, 87 to Mount Athos, 12 to Mount Sinai, 5 to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, 3 to the Patriarchate of Alexandria, 2 to the Patriarchate of Antioch and 5 monasteries in Greece. Also in Moldova, the statistics from 1848 talk about the fact that 146 estates, 62 mills, 22 ponds and fish ponds and 166 dungeons and inns were dedicated to the Holy Places, besides the numerous dukes<sup>42</sup>.

Also through the secularization law, the government also indicates the direction of the allocated funds. The authorizing officers and beneficiaries of these revenues were indicated. *"In no case and in no word will the religious communities be able to reach the smallest part of the capital, nor to use the revenues outside their special destination, that is to say, the maintenance of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the charitable establishments attached to it"* (Article V).

It is further stipulated that *"the government will take back from the Greek Egyptians the ornaments, books and sacred vessels with which the mercy of our ancestors endowed these settlements; as well as the documents that have been entrusted to the so-called Egyptian people, and this according to the inventories that*

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<sup>39</sup> Art. 170 (10) *"Transmission by any title of the use or property on immovable property belonging to the parishes, monasteries, protopopiates and other church institutions with legal personality within the diocese (sale, purchase, rent, change, etc.), as well as the burden of burdens or service assignment of these goods provided in par. (6) and (7), is approved by the Eparchial Council, and the alienation of immovable property (buildings and land) of the Eparchial Center, by the Metropolitan Synod". \*\*\**, Statutul pentru organizarea și funcționarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2008, p. 99.

<sup>40</sup> Art. 170 (2) *"The sacred goods, respectively those which by sanctification or blessing are exclusively and directly intended for worship, are inalienable, unseemly and indescribable. The ownership of the sacred property is exclusively church, and the assignment of the use can be granted for a term of up to 3 years, with the possibility of renewal"*. *Ibidem*, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> † Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *150 de ani de la adoptarea Legii secularizării averilor mănăstirești din 1863*, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. III, p. 117.

can be found in the archive of the country” (art. VI). The desire of the Romanian people to recover their precious treasures is also manifested in the Chamber. With the recovery of the letters, the documents attesting the damages and the appropriation of the Holy Places, any attempt of the Greek abbot for recovery is extinguished. Thus, all became assets of the Romanian people, available to the government.

The totality of the assets given to the Holy Places amounts to a quarter of the national territory. The secularization of the monastery assets constituted the precursor to the agrarian reform. Through this arable land fund, the state was able to help most of the believers who were in a sad situation.

The (foreign) church authorities, directly involved in this issue, did not agree, as this law limited the source of income flowing from Romania to them. It is normal for them to be protesting and to have asked for the law to be repealed or the Lord removed. Thus, the Greek monks, struck in their material interests, will address the Ottoman Empire. They will also address the Tsarist Empire, claiming that "*the Romanian government has no right of ownership nor to interfere in the administration of those monasteries; and, relying on the goodwill of their Imperial Majesty, who never failed to take them into custody, pleads to intervene at the Ottoman Empire so that no illegal and damaging decision can be made to their rights*"<sup>43</sup>.

On 1/13 January 1863 Aali Paşa, the Turkish Foreign Minister, sent the representatives of the guaranteeing powers "*a very energetic note*". It will also be addressed to ruler Al. I. Cuza, protesting "*against any act of the Romanian government that would mean a robbery of the consecrated monasteries*"<sup>44</sup>.

Along with the representative of the Ottoman Empire, the English ambassador<sup>45</sup>, who, as Nicolae Bordeanu, Costache Negri's secretary, had said, had asked the government to lift the seizure<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, the French ambassador assured the Romanian ambassador of his support in the approach taken. Moreover, the

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<sup>43</sup> C. Vasilescu, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>44</sup> A.D. Xenopol, *op. cit.*, p. 326; C.C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, p. 152.

<sup>45</sup> In support of the cause of the dedicated monasteries, the English ambassador also had a personal interest. An important lady from the Phanariotic society, Mrs. Aristarh, whose husband had been a representative of the Romanian Country at the Ottoman Empire had succeeded in "*carrying his nose*" to the English ambassador, Sir Bulwer. She had come to fix the amounts that the ambassador of England recommended as compensation for the Holy Places. See Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Moldoveanu, *Reacții bisericești naționale și internaționale privind secularizarea averilor mănăstirești. Un preambul la secularizarea averilor bisericești de la 1863 din Principatele Române*, în vol. „Secularizarea averilor bisericești (1863): motivații și consecințe”, Editura Basilica, București, 2013, p. 70, nota 141.

<sup>46</sup> Marin Popescu-Spineni, *Procesul mănăstirilor închinat. Contribuții la istoria socială românească*, București, 1936, p. 84.

representative of France will seek and succeed in convincing the other ambassadors about the Romanian cause.

On August 25, 1863, Prince Cuza will send a letter to the Ottomans, claiming that the seizure of the monasteries' possessions should be maintained and the money paid to the Holy Places<sup>47</sup>. This amount was worth 80,000,000 Turkish stones, of which 28,889,020 stones were deducted due to the Holy Places of the Romanian state<sup>48</sup>. Besides this compensatory amount, the Romanian state also offered another 10 million for the establishment of a secular school and a hospital in Constantinople. The sum of 51,110,980 marketplaces had to be submitted on data determined under the common guarantee of the Ottoman Empire, Great Powers and Romania. "A simple calculation shows that the amount that the Romanian State offered to pay for the 1.01 million hectares was 8.86 tons of gold. That means 8.78 grams of gold per hectare. A lot or a little? The answer is difficult to formulate. For comparison, in the same period (1867), the US bought from Russia the entire area of Alaska (170 million hectares) for 7.2 million gold (178.2 tons gold), about 4.24 cents (1, 05 grams of gold) for one hectare. In 1803 the US bought from France the territory of Louisiana (over 207 million hectares) paying \$ 15 million, about 7.2 cents (1.79 grams gold) for one hectare"<sup>49</sup>. Instead, the Greek monks had to hand over to the Romanian authorities the books, the holy vessels, the cultic objects and the documents inscribed in the inventory and all the incomes of the worshiped monasteries would be entered in the state budget<sup>50</sup>.

By the decision to grant this aid, although it will not be received by the Greek monks, the government has shown much diplomacy and common sense. Thus, once again, Romania helps the Holy Places, after for many centuries, the Romanian rulers have effectively supported the existence of these places with the money, odors and

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<sup>47</sup> The newspaper „Buciumul”, București, p. 563, cf. Coman Vasilescu, *Istoricul mănăstirilor închinăte și secularizarea averilor lor*, București, 1932, pp. 81-82.

<sup>48</sup> During the period 1848-1854 the monasteries worshiped accumulated the following debts: 11,672,915 valahi stone for the Romanian Country and 9,323,528 stone for Moldova, a total of 20,996,443. M.P. Spineni, *op. cit.*, p. 158, table 6. At the beginning of the reign of Al. I. Cuza, the dedicated monasteries also owed the Romanian state 1,466,520 stones (those from Moldova) and 19,490,124 stones (those from Romania). By 1863, the debt had reached 28,889,020 stone. See Pr. Dr. Ioan Moldoveanu, *Contribuții la istoria relațiilor Țărilor Române cu Muntele Athos (1650-1863). În întâmpinarea a 1040 de ani de la fondarea Muntelui Athos (963-2003)*, București, 2002, p. 94.

<sup>49</sup> Claudiu Herteliu, *Considerații economice asupra secularizării averilor mănăstirești*, în <https://acum.tv/articol/3192/>

<sup>50</sup> Coman Vasilescu, *Istoricul mănăstirilor...*, pp. 85-86; Marin Popescu-Spineni, *Procesul...*, p. 88; Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. III, p. 115; Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Moldoveanu, *Reacții bisericești...*, p. 73.

aids necessary for the good performance of the church work<sup>51</sup>. If by 1453 - the time of the fall of Constantinople - these places were flourishing through Byzantine culture and civilization, then by this time they began to decline, the Turkish element putting its mark strongly. But Romanian gentlemen have emerged who, through their dances, have greatly helped the continuation of the divine-human work in these places.

The settlement of the divergences existing under this law between the Romanian state and the Greek monks were not realized then, but later. The Greek hierarchs did not agree with the proposal of the Romanian State. In the letter of 7/19 November 1863 Nicolae Bordeanu stated that "*the refusal of the Greek patriarchs to receive our generous offer is enough to allow us to proceed to secularization*"<sup>52</sup>.

Russia and the Ottoman Empire encouraged Greek monks to refuse the offer of the Romanian state. They called for a conference of the Guarantee Powers to discuss the emerging conflict. Al. I. Cuza, notified by Nicolae Bordeanu, will submit for approval in the Assembly the Project of secularization of the consecrated monastery assets. Approved by a large majority (93 votes for and 3 votes against) and received favorably by the entire Romanian breath, the project will also benefit from the extremely favorable international context for Romania. Russia was occupied with the problem of Poland, and Emperor Napoleon supported the position of the Romanian government<sup>53</sup>.

On January 2, the Turkish prime minister, the vizier Faud Pasha, will forward ruler Al. I. Cuza a letter by which the House vote on secularization is declared null and void. On 3/15 January 1864, a collective hearing of the consuls of Russia, Austria, England and Prussia takes place in Bucharest, during which a protest similar to that of Faud Pasha is read. When Cuza asked them about the aftermath of the protest, they replied that "*there is no protest, no delay*", that is, there is no repressive measure on the part of the guaranteeing powers<sup>54</sup>.

As the European powers could no longer prevent secularization, it was decided to convene a European conference in 1864. The conference decided to set up a special

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<sup>51</sup> See Nicolae Iorga, *Bizanț după Bizanț*, Editura 100+1 Gramar, București, 2002; M. Beza, *Urme românești în Răsăritul ortodox*, ediția a II-a, Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile. Statului, Imprimeria Națională, București, 1937; Pr. Teodor Bodogae, *Ajutoarele românești de la Mănăstirile din Sfântul Munte Athos*, Sibiu, 1940.

<sup>52</sup> C.C. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, p. 158.

<sup>53</sup> Prof. Dr. Paul Brusanowski, *Proprietăți mănăstirești. Secularizarea din 1860-1864*, p. 1164.

<sup>54</sup> Chiru C. Costescu, *Colecțiune de Legi, regulamente, acte, deciziuni, circulări, instrucțiuni, formulare și programe începând de la 1866-1916, aflate în vigoare la 15 august 1916, privitoare la Biserică, Culte, Cler, Învățământ religios, Bunuri bisericești, epitropii parohiale și Administrații religioase și pioase. Annotată cu Jurisprudența Înaltei Curți de Casație și Justiție, dată până la anul 1916*, București, 1916, p. 199.

house, under the authority of the guarantor Powers, "through which the Romanian State to make the payments, as well as a special commission which, on based on the property titles presented by the Holy Places, to establish a list of the goods and the income of these monasteries, in part"<sup>55</sup>.

The Greek abbots, however, had mostly usufruct documents and not property. The patriarchs and the representatives of the Holy Places considered that the proposal for compensation is offensive, it is an insult to the Greek Church and they will not allow the expropriation of the Church<sup>56</sup>. "The oscillating attitude of the representatives of the Holy Places - initially they were reconciled with the idea of compensation - was the one that made it difficult to conclude the process of understanding between the parties"<sup>57</sup>.

Romania's representative, Costache Negri, will offer compensation of 100 million marketes, reaching up to 150 million. Representatives of England and Russia will try to get an additional up to 200 million. The last word has the Romanian representative, who will offer 150 million stones. As this amount was very large and could not be paid out of the state budget, a loan was contacted at the "Société Générale de l'Empire Ottoman", in September 1864, through a French businessman and finance minister Ludovic Steege<sup>58</sup>.

Persisting stubbornly, without presenting the ownership documents of these monasteries in front of the guarantor Powers, the Greek monks came to the situation where Cuza was forced to abdicate (1866), and Parliament to make a final and unilateral decision to permanently close the issue of worshiped monasteries, in the first years of the reign of King Carol I<sup>59</sup>.

It should be mentioned that not only the Romanian state has secularized church goods. Such attitudes start from the fifth century, the first being Theodosius II (408-448), who in 421 proceeded to secularize some goods over many. Later, Justinian I (527-565) proceeded to certain secularizations, warning the Church not to agonize over many goods. Secularizations also occurred during Heraclius, but the most telling was done by Nichifor I Focas, in 963<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Prof. Dr. Paul Brusanowski, *Proprietăți mănăstirești. Secularizarea din 1860-1864*, p. 1165.

<sup>56</sup> Spineni, *Procesul...*, p. 109; C. Vasilescu, *Istoricul mănăstirilor...*, p. 117.

<sup>57</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Moldoveanu, *Reacții bisericești naționale și internaționale privind secularizarea averilor mănăstirești. Un preambul la secularizarea averilor bisericești de la 1863 din Principatele Române*, p. 82.

<sup>58</sup> Academia Română, *Mss. 4862*, VI (Arhiva lui Cuza), f. 198, apud *ibidem*, p. 82.

<sup>59</sup> C. G. Giurescu, *Viața și opera lui Cuza Vodă*, p. 217.

<sup>60</sup> Also in European history there have been secularizations of the monastery assets: King Henry VIII in England, King Philip IV the Beautiful in France, French Revolution etc. On the French Revolution and its implications, see Francois Furet, *Reflecții asupra revoluției franceze*,

As the Byzantine emperors acted on this delicate problem, so did A.I. Cuza together with the Government of Romania. They continued to support the Church, but they also secularized assets that did not even go to the Romanian Orthodox Church. The sense of religiosity was preserved in the Romanian rulers, but it was also appealed to the sense of the surrounding reality, which required this reform to be carried out.

All the successive gentlemen in Romania's leadership appreciated this reform as extremely good, continuing the church activity. Thus, during the reign of King Carol I, the successor of A.I. Cuza, the Romanian Orthodox Church will succeed in obtaining autocephaly in 1885<sup>61</sup>. During the reign of Ferdinand I, after the unification of all the territories inhabited by the Romanians, in 1918, the Romanian Orthodox Church will be raised to the rank of Patriarchate.

### **3. The attitude of the Romanian clergy towards the secularization of the monastery assets**

In a study devoted to the attitude of the priesthood towards secularization, some representatives of it - the Archimandrite Euphrosin Poteca and the priest Grigore Musceleanu - who promoted the interest of the Romanian people, considered that the attitude of the Greek monks towards the worshiped monasteries is an abuse, which must be abused<sup>62</sup>. The consecrated monasteries had become state by state, because, the archimandrite Euphrosin Poteca said, they were only a source of income, having no monastic order.

The attitude of the Euphrosin archimandrite starts from the fact that "*to receive strangers, to feed the hungry pre and the others, in their wealth, this is a Christian thing, and to alienate lands from the homeland, to receive, so to speak, so many foreign states in the breast of our state, how many monasteries are worshiped, this is against public law, this is great abuse of the state. However, this abuse, after a good understanding of public law, of the law of the nations, of the natural law, of the political law and finally of the national property right of our age, can be rectified without injury to the soul, and even more whirlwind that these monasteries are built, like all monks who would live in and endowed with food for all these monks. Now this condition is not observed, for the monks themselves are not, nor the monastic order.*

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trad. Sorin Antohi, Mircea Vasilescu, col. „Societatea civilă”, Editura Humanitas, București, 1992; Albert Mathiez, *Revoluția franceză*, trad. Camil Mureșanu, Leonard Altbuch, Editura Politică, București, 1976.

<sup>61</sup> See the volume „Autocefalia - Libertate și demnitate”, Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2010, 648 p.

<sup>62</sup> Pr. Gabriel Cocora, *Cum a fost privită de preoțime secularizarea averilor mănăstirilor închinat*, în „Glasul Bisericii”, XXII (1963), nr. 11-12, pp. 1050-1053.

*Therefore, the condition was violated: they lost the right to damages even after the civil lawsuit*<sup>63</sup>.

Priest Grigore Musceleanu, in the pages of the newspaper "Church", addresses the problem of secularization. In his opinion, "... God, never suffering from their deeds, has breathed his spirit into the ruler and his government to put an end to these humiliations; and so at 13 o'clock, the Government of His Highness brought the project, deposited it on the bureau of the Chamber, the Chamber inspired by the same spirit of nationality, voted the so-called project and so the Monasteries said so far worshiped to return the Romanians as their ancestral wealth. In the evening illuminations were made throughout the capital. Cheerful to see on all sides. I did not think there was a Romanian who would not enjoy himself and would find any finding that he cannot be Romanian"<sup>64</sup>.

After the monastery's assets were secularized, the Romanian Orthodox Church was in a rather difficult situation. During the secularization, not only the assets of the worshiped monasteries were confiscated, but also those of the non-worshippers. In a so-called Memoir on the state of the priests in Romania and on their moral and material position, published in 1888, the worthy bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu mentioned: "*The church assets were taken by the state and their revenues are used for other destinations, apart from a minimum part still reserved for the support of some church institutions, such as bishops, seminars, some monasteries, which are also soon to be abolished; still small grants are given to the former monasteries, reduced to simple communal churches, in rural and urban communes... The church therefore and its servants remained on the account of rural and urban mayors. But they did nothing to improve the condition of churches and priests*"<sup>65</sup>.

#### **4. The consequences of the law of secularization of the monastery assets in the life of the Romanian people**

Both the contemporaries and the followers of the law enforcement of the secularization of the monastery assets tried to present pros and cons on the effects of this measure in the life of the Orthodox Church and the Romanian people. In a speech given by the minister Alexandru Lapedatu in the Romanian Parliament, during the interwar period, in response to the questioning of Bishop Bartolomeu Stănescu, the benefits of applying this law for the country and for the Romanian people are presented. Referring

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<sup>63</sup> G. Dem. Teodorescu, *Viața și operele lui Eufrosin Poteca*, București, 1883, p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Pr. Gabriel Cocora, *Cum a fost privită de preoțime secularizarea averilor mănăstirilor închinat*e, p. 1052.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. † PF Daniel, *Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 150 de ani de la adoptarea Legii secularizării averilor mănăstirești din 1863*, în vol. „Secularizarea averilor bisericesti (1863): motivații și consecințe”, Editura Basilica, București, 2013, p. 7.

to the benefits of the law, the historian Nicolae Dobrescu says: "The church's assets taken by the State from the uninhabited earthly monasteries, as well as from the consecrated ones, have done much good to the country. The appropriation of the peasants would have been impossible if the State had not had the property of the Church: the estates he had secularized. Many of the country's current institutions, its flowering would have been delayed if the assets of the secularized Church had not been available to her. The roads, the country roads, the public schools, the military force would not have developed so much and so fast, if the material resources, the wealth of the national Church had been lacking. The governments of the country, lacking for the moment for money, eventually found deep loans abroad, because it had as guarantee the vast territories taken from the Church"<sup>66</sup>.

Among the beneficiaries of secularization are: the Romanian state, which was able to fulfill its social, economic and political needs; the clergy of myrrh, who with the ownership of the peasants benefited from receiving plots of land; but also all the Romanian peasants who were appropriated by the Agricultural Law of 1864. According to the historian Nicolae Iorga through the secularization of the monastery assets, initiated by A.I. Cuza "Prince Cuza wanted to complete the work started by Alexandru Ghica and Mihail Sturdza, of stripping off any autonomy, power and authority of the church, located in purely spiritual regions that are, church, neighbors with death"<sup>67</sup>.

By adopting the Law of secularization of the monastery assets, not only the assets owned by the worshiped monasteries are secularized, but also those held by the non-worshiped monasteries, bishops or parishes. In this way the Orthodox Church will be deprived of the material means necessary for the proper development of its cultural and social activity. "By secularizing its assets, the Church of the Romanian people, as a supporter of the educational and philanthropic work, became dependent on the support of the State, which proved either insufficient or even totally absent, in many cases"<sup>68</sup>.

A lot of secularized monasteries, of great artistic value, will be left in dereliction<sup>69</sup>. The churches of the secularized monasteries will be transformed into parish churches, closed or transformed into warehouses. "In the buildings of other

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<sup>66</sup> Nicolae Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române contemporane*, vol. I (*Istoria Bisericii din România 1850-1895*), Tipografia „Bukarester Tagblatt”, București, 1905, p. 151.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Dănuț Zuveac, *Cum a lăsat Cuza bisericile și mănăstirile fără averi: „Voia să dezbrace de orice autonomie, putere și autoritate biserica”*, [http://www.infoziare.ro/stire.read.php?newz\\_id=16201430](http://www.infoziare.ro/stire.read.php?newz_id=16201430)

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> See Ierom. Marcu-Marian Petcu, *Mănăstiri și schituri ortodoxe din Moldova, astăzi dispărute*, Biblioteca Națională a României, București, 2010, 476 p. This study gives us a very precise situation on the problem.



monasteries, the state housed schools (Bistrița, Vâlcea county), hospitals (Hurezi, Socola, Mărcuța, Coletina, Dealu), nursing homes (Orgoești chapel, Tutova county), penitentiaries (Inățești, Râmnicul Vâlcea, Văcărești, Mislea - Prohova County, Bucovățul Nou - Dolj County, Lipova - Vaslui County), homes for the elderly (Răchitoasa - Bacău County), schools for non-commissioned officers, weapons depots (Dealu), etc. They have lost their significant role in previous centuries”<sup>70</sup>. Also, properties of these monasteries will be bought by influential politicians.

After the law of secularization of the monastery assets was applied, the number of monastery dwellers decreased drastically. In 1872, the number of monks and monks reached 3955 (1707 monks and 2248 monks). Between 1872-1902 their number will decrease to 2491 (749 monks and 1742 monks), because in the period 1902-1919 it reaches 2171 (689 monks and 1482 monks)<sup>71</sup>.

Even though the Rural Law of 1864 also provided for the allotment of arable land to the churches (17 hills in the Romanian Country or 8 and a half hawks in Moldova), the respective lot proved to be insufficient to support the priests, the singer and the sexton of each church, as well as the maintenance of the place of worship. This is why, by the Communal Law of 1864, it was stated that "every commune owes its care to the cult, the church or the churches to which it belongs. She owes to pay the priests of her churches”.

In general, this provision of the law, however, will not be respected by the mayors. Priests and parish churches will be maintained from the offerings of the faithful<sup>72</sup>. A better situation will be served by the priests in the churches that belonged

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<sup>70</sup> Pr. Conf. Dr. Mihai Săsăujan, *Situația mănăstirilor românești după secularizare*, în vol. „Secularizarea averilor bisericești (1863): motivații și consecințe”, Editura Basilica, București, 2013, p. 96.

<sup>71</sup> Ministerul Cultelor și Instrucțiunii, *Casa Bisericii (1902-1919)*, pp. 213, 234. Pr. Conf. Dr. Mihai Săsăujan, *Situația mănăstirilor românești după secularizare*, p. 97.

<sup>72</sup> Regarding this aspect *The Regulation for the means of maintenance of the clergy on the churches maintained by the urban and rural communes* (May 1874), states the following: “Art.4. For the maintenance of the clergy at the communal churches, it will be taken as a rule the maintenance of the clergy at the churches of the state, both urban and rural”.

Article 5. For the maintenance of the clergy from the communal churches as well as for other necessary expenses for the maintenance of the cult, the following will be used:

a. Income from the properties that would have those churches, the properties harassed by the pious Christians for the maintenance of the clergy and the churches towards their eternal remembrance;

b. The money offerings given by the pious Christians during the holy offices in the church, such as at the prosecution, at the anaphor, at the weddings, at the baptism; also the jumpers etc. Also here are the offerings presented by the pious in one of the two discs that are carried through the church at the end of the liturgy.

to the monasteries whose assets were secularized. After their assets entered the state patrimony, certain amounts were provided in the state budget for the salaries of priests and for the maintenance of places of worship<sup>73</sup>. "One thing, however, was not done on the occasion of secularization and it is to be regretted that it was not done; namely, a Fund was not set up with a special purpose to serve the maintenance of Churches, clergy, as has been done in other countries, in Austria (Bukovina), France, Italy and even Russia. It is the fault of the hierarchs at that time ... not to have spoken their word in favor of the Church, the clergy, so in the will of fate the churches and the clergy remained until 1893, when a rectification was made... If on the occasion of secularization it would have constituted a fund from which the Church had precluded its material needs, as well as the intellectual ones, we believe that today the situation of the Church and of the Roman clergy (both material and moral) would have been quite different"<sup>74</sup>.

On the material status of the Romanian priesthood, after the secularization of the monastery assets, it is worth mentioning the statistics prepared by the Minister of Cults, Alexandru Lapedatu, in the period immediately following the creation of the big Romania. The statistics provided that, at that time, only 3% of the Orthodox parishes in the Old Kingdom and 2% of the Transylvanian Orthodox parishes could be fully maintained by their own means, while, in the same regard, the situation for other cults was as follows: 5% from Greek Catholic parishes, 21% of the Hungarian Hungarians, 23% of the Reformed Hungarians, 53% of the Catholic Hungarians and 85% of the Lutheran parishes<sup>75</sup>.

In 1876 the situation of the priest was presented as follows: in the five suffragan bishops (Argeș, Buzău, Danube de Jos, Râmnic and Roman), of the 2839 priests, 14.68% did not receive any salary; 3.78% received annual salaries between 1-20 lei;

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*All these offerings are submitted to the parish in a certain box locked and sealed with the seal of the church. It opens at the end of each week, in the presence of all the clergy of the churches, the money deposited is numbered and divided into two equal parts; one side takes the parish with his help and divides it equally between the priests, the other is divided equally by the number of the other clerics. The money in the box and their distribution are spent on what is kept in the church, and each subscribes to what he has received.*

Art. 6. *The offerings received by the clergy for offices performed in particular on the houses of the parishioners do not fall into the category of offerings submitted to the church. Clerics are not responsible to account to anyone". Cf. Nicolae Isar, op. cit., pp. 221-222.*

<sup>73</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. III, p. 117.

<sup>74</sup> Nicolae Dobrescu, *Studii de Istoria Bisericii Române contemporane*, vol. I, pp. 151-152 și 103.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. † PF Daniel, *Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 150 de ani de la adoptarea Legii secularizării averilor mănăstirești din 1863*, în vol. „Secularizarea averilor bisericesti (1863): motivații și consecințe”, Editura Basilica, București, 2013, p. 9.

18.24% between 20-50 lei; 31.82% between 50-100 lei; 14.93% between 100-150 lei; 6.9% between 150-200 lei<sup>76</sup>. The hierarchs received, according to the Synodal Law of 1872, monthly salaries of 3082 lei (metropolitan) and 1541 lei (bishops)<sup>77</sup>.

Measures in favor of the priesthood were taken only in 1893, when for the salaried priests were set salaries from the state budget, by the Law of the clergy of the south. But this measure also had negative aspects: many Orthodox parishes were abolished. In 1914 only 56.3% of the Orthodox places of worship in Romania were served, the others being closed throughout the year<sup>78</sup>.

He had reached a rather delicate situation for priests as some communes, after signing contracts with them to ensure their pay, did not respect them. *"It is true: the communes, when vacated by priests, meet with seminarians to give them the necessities for living: part in money, part in product. In this sense I make inscriptions, subscribed by all the inhabitants and certified by the local town halls. But after the priest settles in common, they forget the duty they have imposed on them to support their priest, and only a small number fulfill the duties they have taken. Most, as soon as they see that they have a priest in common, forget any debt to him. From here - you live badly between the priest and the inhabitants. Some priests believed in the right to claim their right through the judicial authorities and received sentences to execute on debtors, by seizing domestic objects. This brought to an end the villagers' enmity over those priests that their position became unbearable, and they had to ask for barter, and the church authority was forced to stop the priests from running to such extreme measures"*<sup>79</sup>.

Another reason for the extremely modest living of myrrh priests was their high number. *"The main obstacle to improving the fate of the priests was their large crowd, which is why the parishes were very small and, therefore, also very insignificant and void; for what incomes could the priest bring to the parishes composed of 15-50 inhabitants? While, on the contrary, as long as the number of priests will be limited, the parishes will increase as well, and therefore the means of living the priests will be increased"*<sup>80</sup>.

In 1902 a small church fund (the House of the Church) was established, which, like the School House, was under the administration of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction. This fund, however, comprised only a small part of the church assets secularized by Al. I. Cuza in 1863.

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<sup>76</sup> Ioan Gh. Savin, *Biserica Română și noua ei organizare*, București, 1925, p. 70.

<sup>77</sup> Prof. Dr. Paul Brusanowski, *Proprietăți mănăstirești. Secularizarea din 1860-1864*, p. 1169.

<sup>78</sup> Ioan Gh. Savin, *Biserica Română și noua ei organizare*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>79</sup> Melchisedec Ștefănescu, *Memoriu despre starea preoților din România și despre pozițiunea lor morală și materială*, București, 1888, pp. 11-12.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

The injustice of secularizing the monastery assets will not be removed even after the church unification in 1925. In 1926 the new Church Effort received only 16,952 ha and 4029 m<sup>2</sup> for the dioceses of the Old Kingdom, under the administration of the Ministry of Cults. The first patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church considered that the duty of the Romanian state to the Orthodox Church amounted to approx. 301 million lei<sup>81</sup>.

The law of church unification of May 6, 1925 also established that metropolitan and eparchial centers must receive sessions of 200/100 ha of arable land and 500/300 ha of forest. The royal decrees of 1937 and 1938 established for the 87 existing monasteries the granting for use of 18,800 ha forest and 600 ha arable land<sup>82</sup>. Most of these assets will be nationalized by the communist regime.

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<sup>81</sup> Chiru C. Costescu, *Colecțiunea de Legiuri bisericești și școlare adnotate*, vol. II („Legea și Statutul pentru Organizarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române din 6 mai 1925. Adnotată cu desbaterile parlamentare și Jurisprudențele referitoare. Cu expunerea de motive a Domnului Al. Lapedatu, ministrul Cultelor și Artelor; cu rapoartele și discuțiunile generale de la Senat și Cameră și cu un index alfabetic”), Tipografia Curții Regale F. Gobl FII, București, 1925, pp. 155-156.

<sup>82</sup> \*\*\*, *Patriarhia română. Consiliul Central Bisericesc. Rapoarte generale asupra situațiunii bisericești din punct de vedere administrativ, cultural și economic în Patriarhia Română, în cursul anilor 1935-1938*, București, 1939, pp. 501-506.