

Patriarch Elie Miron Cristea (1868-1939)

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A LONGSIDE OTHER Romanian personalities from Toplița district, such as Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, Alexandru Nicolescu, Emilian (Dumitru) Antal, Elie Câmpeanu, and Vasile Urzică, Elie Miron Cristea played a significant role in the events that led to the Great Union of 1 December 1918.

In the context of the Centenary of the Romanian Patriarchate, we intend to present a part of the biography, opera and fruitful activity of the first Patriarch of All Romania, who, for more than four decades, worked in the service of the Romanian Orthodox Church. More than that, we have been able to include some photographs from St. Prophet Elijah's Monastery Museum in Toplița, courtesy of Archimandrite Emilian Telcean, abbot of the monastery, to whom we send our appreciation and gratitude.

Elie Cristea was born on 18 July 1868, in Toplița Română, Turda County, Reghin District, in the family of Romanian peasants George and Domnița Cristea, as the third of their eight children. The future monk Miron would go through all the stages of the church hierarchy, becoming Metropolitan-Primate of the Orthodox Church of Romania and, later, the first Patriarch of All Romania.

At the age of 6 he was enrolled in the primary school in Toplița Română, where he was initiated in the secrets of the alphabet. Two years later,¹ in 1879, on the advice of his teacher, Iosif Moga, his parents decided to transfer him to the Evangelical Lutheran Gymnasium in Bistrița, close to his mother's birthplace (Pinticu Village, Teaca Commune). There he quickly learned German, so that, at the end of the four years of lower gymnasium, he obtained the "1st class with distinction" grade.

At his insistence, his parents let him continue his studies at the Romanian Greek Catholic Superior Gymnasium in Năsăud, which he attended between 1883 and 1887, having



FIG. 1. DR. ELIE MIRON CRISTEA,
PATRIARCH OF ALL ROMANIA, 1929

illustrious teachers, who instilled in him a rich humanistic culture. There, in the seventh grade, the young Elie Cristea received the 1st prize for the paper “The Life and Writings of Publius Virgilius Maro: The Description of the Inferno”; then, in the eighth grade he received once again the 1st prize for two other papers, “Marcus Tullius Cicero: Biography and His Importance as a Statesman and Writer” and “Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary (1740–1780).”

He distinguished himself in the Virtus Romana Rediviva Book Club, becoming its coordinator; during that period he also made his journalistic debut, in the literary magazine of the school, with a piece called “The Virtue,” a free translation of Georg Joachim Zollikofer (1886), supervised by Professor Grigore Pletosu.²

One year later (1887), in Oradea, he published a literary sketch titled “Prosit!” (Cheers!), in Iosif Vulcan’s *The Family* magazine, issue no. 33.³ At that same time, he proved to be quite passionate about Romanian folklore, aware of its importance in promoting the national identity. In this regard, he wrote an interesting communication titled “Birth and Development of Games in General, as well as the Expansion of Romanian National Games.”⁴ A valedictorian, in July 1887 he passed his final exam, obtaining the “Eximio modo” grade.

Between 1887 and 1890 he studied at the Andreian Theological and Pedagogical Seminary in Sibiu, where he was extremely active, both in the Andrei Șaguna Cultural Society, whose president he became in 1889, and through the articles published in the Sibiu periodicals *The Romanian Telegraph* and *The Tribune*; he published his articles under different pseudonyms, to avoid lawsuits: “Elijah of Urseni,” after the name of the small village of Toplița Română where he lived, and “Polux.”⁵

After graduating from the seminary, he applied for a Moga Foundation scholarship, in order to study at a university abroad, but he did not receive any response. Therefore, he made another request to the Archbishopric Consistory in Sibiu, expressing his willingness to accept a teaching position: “The undersigned, after having completed clerical studies at the Andreian Seminary, humbly decided to apply for a teaching position in any of our confessional schools.”⁶

Consequently, he worked as a teacher and headmaster for one year at a confessional school in Orăștie. On 16 July 1891, he again applied for a scholarship with the Archbishopric Consistory in Sibiu, in order to study at Francis Joseph University in Cernăuți, which had a Faculty of Theology.

Finally, through a former professor at the Sibiu Seminary, he succeeded in persuading Metropolitan Bishop Miron Romanul to grant him a state scholarship of the Transylvania Society, in order to attend courses at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the Hungarian Royal University in Budapest (1891–1895).

There he took classes in German, Hungarian, and Romanian literature, then in Psychology, Pedagogy, and Natural Sciences, being elected, from the first year, secretary of the Petru Maior Student Society. During the Memorandum Trial (1894), together with 12 other Romanian students, he drafted a manifesto addressed to the Romanian people in Transylvania, asking them to ensure the largest possible attendance at that trial. In the autumn of the same year Elie Cristea went, with a large delegation of Transylvanian students, at the Students’ Congress in Constanța, where he began advocating the principle of the affirmation of Romanian national unity.

On 15 May 1895, at the aforementioned university, he defended his PhD thesis titled “Eminescu: Élete és művei, Tanulmány az újabb román irodalom korából” (Eminescu: Life and Art, a Study of the Latest Period in Romanian Literature). He also translated this first exegetics on Eminescu into Romanian and published it at Aurora Printing House in Gherla, led by Todorán Endre (1895).

Returning to Sibiu, the young Cristea entered the church service, being entrusted with various and multiple missions, at first as bishopric secretary (1895–1902), while also having a diligent and meritorious journalistic activity.⁷ That led to the appointment of Dr. Cristea as the editor of the journal for administrative and ecclesiastical news, *The Romanian Telegraph*, for three years, and also brought him a position in the steering committee of the ASTRA (Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Romanian People’s Culture), 4th Division, Sibiu (1896).

In 1905 he was elected chairman of this division, thus becoming a member of the Central Committee of the Association; in parallel, he served as president of the Romanian Music Association, holding both positions until 1910. Among the numerous actions undertaken by Dr. Elie Cristea in the service of the cultural progress of the Transylvanian Romanians, we mention collecting and publishing Romanian proverbs, chants, and sayings; his continuous concerns, as inspector of the Orthodox confessional schools, related to solving some problems of the Romanian education system (literacy courses, school construction and reconfiguration, endowment with village libraries and others); he campaigned for the establishment of the Museum of the ASTRA, bringing his contribution, together with Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, to the endowment of the sections of History and Ethnography, as well as for the establishment of the Society for the Creation of a Romanian Theater Fund.⁸

Between 1902 and 1909 he was elected counselor (assessor) at the Archbishopric of Sibiu, proving himself a skilled manager and organizer of the administrative activities carried out at the Metropolitan Center in Sibiu.⁹ He was tasked with a hard mission, to study and draw up a plan for the interior painting of the new cathedral in Sibiu, gathering a rich material which he published in 1905 in Sibiu under the title “Iconography and Drawings in the Eastern Church.” He thus succeeded in redirecting church painting and iconography towards the Byzantine style and spirit.¹⁰ During this time, he was ordained as an unmarried deacon (30 January 1900), then as archdeacon (8 September 1901), and entered monastic life (23 June 1902) at Hodoș-Bodrog Monastery (Arad County); he received the monastic name of Miron, in honor of Metropolitan Bishop Miron Romanul. Later he became a hieromonk (a monk who also serves as a priest, on 13 April 1903) and protosinghel (vicar of the bishop, 1 June 1908).

Like the Transylvanian writer and militant Octavian C. Tăslăuanu, who had published in *Luceafărul*, no. 7 of 1906, a chronicle whose message was to proclaim the great act of Romanian unification, under the suggestive title of *Resurrection*,¹¹ Dr. Elie Miron Cristea, published, in *Țara Noastră*, no. 16 of 13/26 April 1908, an article titled *Resurrection...*, in which he stated the following:

Therefore, you too, the Romanian people, should not despair in the suffering and distress of your plight, for resurrection is not confined only to nature, and an ideal is not resurrected only in church, for certainly the salvation and the victory of ideals will also come in the life of

*our people, as it seeks to break the chains hindering the development of its Romanian self and to advance faster towards its golden future. After the many years of our suffering what must come is the restoration of our rights, which are due to us and which we deserve as the most loyal citizens of the homeland. [...] Therefore, Romanian people, firmly believe in the ideal of your rights, hope and be certain of its fulfillment!*¹²

On 1 May 1909 Miron Cristea established the Lumina Cultural Bank in Sibiu, "...a strong lever for the cultural ascension of the faithful Romanians in their homeland,"¹³ which, out of the interest rates accrued, intended to offer scholarships and to financially help the families willing to learn a craft.

As a result of the rich administrative experience accumulated throughout this period, combined with his considerable intellectual background, on 3 December 1909 he was elected Bishop of Caransebeș, with 31 votes in favor and 24 against, and enthroned on 8 May 1910. In his investiture speech he mentioned, among other things, the love for the homeland, saying: "When I ask of you the most ardent love of the country, I cannot forget to urge you to love and defend your home and your ancestral land, as well as your Romanian law and language."¹⁴

He thus managed to truly "capture our hearts, and the young generation, which puts so much hope on his future as a bishop, will certainly not be disappointed."¹⁵

In the nine years of his episcopate in Caransebeș, Miron Cristea remained faithful to the three basic desiderata of the Romanians: the schools, the Church, and the Romanian culture, which he considered to be the cornerstone of national consciousness.¹⁶

The leadership of the Romanian National Party, which had met in Oradea on 12 October 1918, approved the text of the declaration of independence of the Romanians in Transylvania, drafted by Vasile Goldiș, which would be read six days later by Dr. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, in the Parliament of Budapest.

That speech stirred great enthusiasm among the Romanian students in Budapest, including the nephew of Bishop Miron of Caransebeș, Dumitru Antal, a 2nd year student at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Hungarian Royal University in Budapest and the president of the Petru Maior Students Society (October–December, 1918). Dumitru Antal, who would later become bishop under the name Emilian, together with a colleague, Ion Chinezu, a native of **Sântana de Mureș**, issued an appeal to the Romanian students in all university centers (Vienna, Budapest, Cluj, as well as at the theological institutes in Blaj, Oradea, Lugoj, Arad, and Caransebeș) to mobilize in the struggle for the national ideal. Still, on the advice of Vasile Goldiș, the appeal was not made public, so as not to disclose the "battle plan"¹⁷; Dumitru Antal received the mission to return to Transylvania for the establishment of the Romanian National Councils and Guards on the Upper Mureș Valley.¹⁸

Returning to Bishop Miron of Caransebeș, one should mention the radical initiative he took in issuing a circular, adopted by the Orthodox Synod in Arad on 10 November 1918, which removed the name of the Emperor of Austria from the liturgical service. Instead, he decided to include "...our supreme national rulers and the great council of the Romanian nation, for the salvation and forgiveness of their sins, and for the Lord especially to raise them up and help them in all their endeavors, for the common good."¹⁹

The same measure was adopted by the Greek Catholic Church, whereby the names of the Habsburg emperors were forever removed from the Holy Mass.²⁰ On 21 November

1918, Bishop Miron Cristea, together with other Romanian hierarchs in Transylvania (Iuliu Hossu, Dimitrie Radu, Ioan I. Papp, Valeriu Traian Frențiu), signed an adhesion document, in which they adopted a firm position in favor of supporting and collaborating with the Central Romanian National Council, the political organization of the Romanians in Transylvania. The same Romanian clergy contributed to the establishment of the Romanian National Guards in Transylvania, with the purpose of ensuring public order and organizing meetings of the people requiring the unification of Transylvania with Romania.²¹ Miron Cristea also helped shape the public opinion in preparation for the Great Union of 1 December 1918 through his speeches, sermons and articles, published in local newspapers or in various periodicals of the Romanian Church.

According to a manuscript by Dumitru Antal entitled “Memories of the Revolution of 1918 and of the Assembly of Alba-Iulia, 1 December 1918,” nowadays in possession of historian Vasile Netea, after Vasile Goldiș read the Unification Resolution

*He was welcomed by the whole room with unanimous and thunderous applause. We all trembled at the greatness of this moment that had sealed the new fate of our nation for centuries to come.*²²

Bishop Miron Cristea spoke before the Great National Assembly in Alba-Iulia, gathered on Horea’s Field, delivering an enthusiastic speech on the historical document recognizing the unification of all Romanians in one sovereign state. The end of that speech, entitled “Glorious Greater Romanian Nation!,” is apothecic:

*I firmly hope that, since we who have gathered here in Alba-Iulia have unanimously decided to unite today with Romania, so the voice of the whole nation will focus on a single desire, which I can express in just three words: To the Tisza! Amen!*²³

Following the request of the President of the Ruling Council of Transylvania, Iuliu Maniu, a committee was set up to elect the leadership of the Grand National Council, as well as that of the Ruling Council itself and of the delegation to leave for Bucharest. The delegation included Vasile Goldiș (president), Miron Cristea, Iuliu Hossu, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, and Caius Brediceanu; they presented the decisions of the Alba-Iulia Assembly to King Ferdinand I of Romania and to the Romanian Government.

On his arrival at Bucharest’s North Railway Station, on 11 December 1918, Bishop Miron Cristea delivered once again a memorable speech:

*The last time I was here, none of us even dared to dream that our future arrival in the capital of Romanianism would include the momentous task of handing over our entire ancestral land—Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș—to the motherland, namely, to our dearest Romania. And behold, today the boldest dream is accomplished!*²⁴

The next day, around noon, at the Royal Palace, the Throne Chamber hosted the ceremonial presentation of the Document of the Great Union. According to Miron Cristea, towards the end of that event, King Ferdinand I of Romania had a conversation with his consistorial secretary, Dr. Cornel Corneanu, saying:

I wanted to confirm the good things I had heard about the Bishop of Caransebeș. And who could help me more with this than his secretary! Therefore, I hope that you will not be offended if we take your Bishop Cristea, making him Metropolitan-Primate.²⁵

Returning to his bishopric activity, in the spring of 1919, at a congress of priests held in Sibiu, in his speech he underlined the connection between national identity and the Church:

alongside our people, especially the Church—the Romanian Orthodox Church—its most prominent and historic institution—had to endure, with its clergy, during the dire times, the most terrific attacks and persecutions. Our enemies knew that this Church was not only a divine, but also a national fortress, which, by its eastern creed and righteousness, set apart and solidified the Romanian people into a most resilient entity and protected it from the infiltration of the spirit that sought to destroy it. That is why our enemies saw in the Romanian Orthodox Church, from their point of view, the greatest danger.²⁶

Thus, aware of the role that the Romanian Orthodox Church had played in preserving the unity of Romanian consciousness and the unity of the nation, he requested to start the necessary steps to provide the Church with a juridical, constitutional status, as a national Church of all Romanians. Worthy of mention is also the very active involvement of Bishop Cristea in numerous charitable and postwar social organizations, supporting the initiatives of the Romanian elite to establish the Society for the Protection of War Orphans. As a sign of appreciation for the work carried out, in its meeting of 7 June 1919 the Romanian Academy made Bishop Elie Miron Cristea an honorary member.

In a speech delivered at the Bucharest University Aula on the first anniversary of the Great Union (1 December 1919), Miron Cristea fully expressed his confidence in the development and modernization of Romania, enthusiastically praising the great sacrifice of the Romanian Army in the accomplishment of Greater Romania:

What fate would have befallen us if the Romanian Army had not been able to rebuild itself—in number and equipment—so that it could not only defend the Dniester and the Tisza, but even conquer new territory? Thus, the Romanian soldier will forever remain the pride of our history; he will remain the symbol of the salvation and unification of the Romanian nation.²⁷

On 21 December 1919, at the Romanian Athenaeum, the Ecclesiastic Electoral College of Romania appointed Miron Cristea, with an overwhelming majority (435 votes out of 447), to the See of the Metropolitan Church of Wallachia, with the title of Metropolitan-Primate of the Orthodox Church of Romania. The supreme desideratum of the new Metropolitan-Primate focused on the thorough and unitary organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church, in all the geographic and historical provinces of Romania,

thus, not only reviving the ancient spiritual bonds of the motherland with the Romanians in Transylvania, Banat and the Hungarian parts, but also completing the unity of the Eastern Orthodox Church with the Romanians everywhere.²⁸

During this period he contributed to the revival of the Romanian Orthodox Church magazine (1921), founded and organized the Biblical and Orthodox Mission Institute (1922),

founded *The Apostle* magazine of the Archbishopric of Bucharest (1924), the General Association of the Romanian Orthodox Clergy (1923), the Theological Seminary in Craiova and the Theological Seminary for War Orphans in Câmpulung Muscel (1922), also setting up new bishoprics, such as: the Bishopric of Oradia (1920), the Archbishopric of Vad, Feleac and Cluj (1921), the Bishopric of the Army (1921), headquartered in Alba-Iulia, the Archbishopric of Tomis (in Constanța, 1923); in Bukovina, alongside the Archbishopric of Chișinău, he founded two more bishoprics: the Bishopric of Cetatea Albă, in Ismail, and the Bishopric of Khotin, in Bălți.²⁹

In his countless orations, speeches and sermons, he consistently invoked the need to strengthen the consciousness of both nation and country; of those, two are more suggestive for this approach: his “Speech on the Episcopal Synod,” of 10 February 1920, and the “Speech on the establishment of the Banat regional section of the society for the *Protection of War Orphans*,” of 15 April 1920.

In the first one, Miron Cristea reminded listeners that

*the national and political unification of Romanians everywhere was adopted in the Legislative Bodies in an endeavor that my Romania had never experienced before. Before being voted in the Legislative Bodies, we voted for this unification in Alba Iulia, Cernăuți, and Chișinău. [...] after hundreds of years, after a thousand years, we have found that we have the same garb, the same tradition, the same language, the same soul, and if this soul, in everyday circumstances, has always been preserved in all its Romanian national ingenuity, the merit for this lies—alongside the conservatism of our Romanian people, our peasant people, whose stubbornness and obstinacy make them more attached to language than to their own life ... alongside this conservatism of the nation, our soul was kept by our holy mother Church, this mother of ours.*³⁰

In the second speech, besides the historical importance of the Great Union, he also invoked the unique mission of his generation:

*Our unification with the old kingdom of Romania is the most significant moment of the past two thousand years of our nation. A greater one cannot be reached. This great accomplishment also required great sacrifices. Together with these great heroes and martyrs of our National Unity, it will remain in the minds of our future generations alongside our entire generation of today, because out of all, God chose us to work together and to witness the greatest event in the history of the Romanian people. Therefore, we are the most blessed generation.*³¹

In 1922, Metropolitan-Primate Miron Cristea participated in the consecration of the first 10 utility planes made in Romania; on that occasion, the director general of Aeronautics, Colonel Gheorghe Rujinski, handed him an album containing some photographs that captured the event. The entire collection of original images is currently in the Museum of St. Prophet Elijah's Monastery in Toplița.

As Metropolitan-Primate, Miron Cristea was part of the Central Coronation Commission dealing in detail with the organization of the sacred part of the crowning ceremony of the sovereigns of Greater Romania, King Ferdinand I of Romania and Queen Mary. On that issue he had many talks with Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu, seeking to ensure that the solemn act would be blessed by the Church in the good Romanian and Orthodox tradition.³²



FIG. 2. PICTURE FROM THE CONSECRATION
OF THE FIRST 10 HANSA-BRANDENBURG BIPLANES, MAY 8, 1922

On 15 October 1922, the memorable coronation ceremony took place at the Alba-Iulia Cathedral, Miron Cristea enunciating the King's Crowning Prayer, as well as the blessing and traditional acknowledgment of the Church. The next day, in Bucharest, the Metropolitan-Primate Elie Miron Cristea received from King Ferdinand I of Romania the highest civil order, "Carol I of Romania," the high cross rank with a collar, for his entire activity in the struggle for the unity of Romanian nation.³³

The new historical and political context of Romania after 1918 offered the premises for elevating the See of Metropolitan-Primate of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the rank of Patriarchate, an expression of the will of the intellectual and ecclesiastical elites.³⁴ Thus, following the decision of the Holy Synod, on 4 February 1925 Miron Cristea became the first Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (Patriarch of All Romania), the investiture taking place on 1 November 1925. At the Royal Palace, in the Throne Chamber, the Royal Decree of Investiture was read by the Minister of Religious Denominations, Alexandru Lapadatu, and King Ferdinand I of Romania handed Miron Cristea the Patriarch's Crosier.³⁵

Among the activities carried out in his new patriarchal position, we mention: initiating, writing, and securing the adoption of the statute for the organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church (1925); establishing the Academy of Religious Music in Bucharest (1927); the erection of the current Patriarchal Residence (1927–1931); initiating the program of building a new Patriarchal Cathedral (1929); establishing the Missionary Bishopric for the Romanians in America (1934) and the Maramureș Bishopric (1937); printing the Synodic Bible translated by priests Gala Galaction and Vasile Radu; the promotion of the dignity of the Romanian Orthodox Church worldwide.³⁶

On 20 July 1927, Patriarch Miron Cristea became a member of the Regency Council, serving until 8 June 1930, when he resigned. In February 1938, King Carol II of Romania appointed him to form a new Government; Miron Cristea then drew up a document stat-

ing his firm commitment to the national interest in all spheres of activity.³⁷ He remained Chairman of the Council of Ministers until the day of his passing, on 6 March 1939, in Cannes. His lifeless body was brought to the country, and on 14 March 1939 was buried in the crypt of the narthex of the Patriarchal Cathedral.

Over the course of time, many articles, studies, monographs and correspondences about Miron Cristea's life and work have been published and re-published, reflecting the complexity of his ecclesiastical, cultural, social and political work, subsumed to the national ideal. To honor the memory of the high hierarchy, in 1990 the Miron Cristea Cultural Foundation of Toplița was founded, which, since 1998, organizes annually, around the celebration of the Great Prophet Elijah (July 20), a cultural-scientific manifestation titled the Miron Cristea Days. It is encouraging that since 2007 most of the communications have been included in a volume named *Sangidava*, currently not indexed in any international database. During this time, Patriarch Miron Cristea also became the spiritual patriarch of a gymnasium school in Toplița and of the theoretical high school in Subcetate, Harghita County. As a sign of profound appreciation and for the preservation of the memory of the first Patriarch of All Romania, in 1996 he was awarded the post-mortem title of honorary citizen of Toplița, Harghita County.³⁸

In 2000, at the Typographic Publishing House in Miercurea-Ciuc the doctoral thesis of Elie Cristea was reprinted, in an edition prefaced and edited by Professor Ilie Șandru from Toplița. Also, the Patriarch Miron Cristea Cultural Center, whose purpose is to carry out a series of cultural, scientific, didactic, and philanthropic activities, has been operating within the Covasna and Harghita Bishopric of Miercurea-Ciuc since 2001. We must also mention here St. Prophet Elijah's Monastery of Toplița, built in the patriarch's courtyard and consecrated in 1928 by its founder, Dr. Elie Miron Cristea, together with the son of one of his sisters, Bishop Emilian Antal, who later became one of the abbots of the monastery (1952–1971).

In the museum of the monastery, inaugurated in 1995, there are numerous cult objects commemorating the memory of the founder of the holy establishment. In 1925 a mausoleum monument was inaugurated in the northern part of Toplița, at Gura Secului, where 771 Romanian soldiers who sacrificed themselves in the battles for the liberation of Transylvania were buried, a landmark which in the near future will be included in the list of historical monuments in Romania; its frontispiece features a text written by Patriarch Miron Cristea.



Notes:

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Abstract

Patriarch Elie Miron Cristea (1868–1939)

Born in Toplița, Harghita County, Dr. Elie Miron Cristea (1868–1939) is one of the artisans of the Great Union, also with an important activity during the interwar period. He is considered to be a model of the Romanian aristocratic spirit, whose origin lies in the dignity and nobility of the Transylvanian Romanian peasant. In 1890 he graduated from the Andreian Theological and Pedagogical Seminary in Sibiu. A year later he obtained a state grant from the Transylvania Society, which offered him the opportunity to continue his studies at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the Hungarian Royal University in Budapest where, in 1895, he received his PhD in Philology. Between 1895 and 1902 he served as bishopric secretary at the Archbishopric of Sibiu, being appointed, for three years, editor-in-chief of the *Romanian Telegraph* magazine, and respectively president of the ASTRA (Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Romanian People's Culture), 4th Division, Sibiu, until 1910. Between 1902 and 1909 he was appointed counselor at the Orthodox Archbishopric of Transylvania in Sibiu, where he dealt with various administrative activities, including drawing up the plan for the interior painting of the new cathedral in Sibiu. On 8 May 1910 he was elected Bishop of Caransebeș; then he emerged as a great fighter for the unity of the Romanian people, both as a cleric and as a member of the Transylvanian Romanian delegation who presented the Unification Document in Bucharest. On the last day of 1919 he was elected Archbishop of Wallachia, with the title of Metropolitan-Primate of the Orthodox Church of Romania, and then, in 1925, he became the first Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (Patriarch of All Romania). In times of political crisis, he was a member of the Regency Council (1927–1930) and then President of the Council of Ministers, in a national unity government.

Keywords

Toplița, Transylvania, national identity, Romanian Orthodox Church, Patriarchate