

FIGHTERS FOR THE CAUSE OF ROMANIAN NATIONAL UNITY: 150 YEARS FROM THE BIRTH OF MIRON CRISTEA, THE FIRST PATRIARCH OF GREATER ROMANIA

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Abstract. This year was proclaimed by the Romanian Patriarchy as the Year of the Great Union's Founders. As the Romanian Patriarchy showed, as a sign of symbolic recognition, one of these personalities that brought their contribution to the Great Union of all Romanians was the Patriarch Miron Cristea. In our paper we'll present the role that Miron Cristea (as Bishop of Caransebes, and later on, as First Metropolitan Bishop of Ungro-Vlahia) had in preparing and in realising the historical and unique event of Great Union, during 1918. Miron Cristea adopted a clear, firm, national attitude, as high priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania historical province, by initiating and giving impetus to different types of regional projects and objectives materialising the 1918 Great Union of all Romanians.

Keywords: *Miron Cristea, Patriarch of Great Romania, 1918 Great Union, Romanian Orthodox Church*

1. Introduction

Born on July 18th 1868, as the first boy of Domnița and George Cristea, a family of peasants "from the parts of Toplița, county Mureș-Turda, from the country of Hungary" (at that time)¹, the future bishop was baptized "Elie" in honour of the feast of St. Prophet Elijah (July 20). All his life and his work as a high hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church and as a high official of the Romanian state, Miron Cristea proudly assumed his peasant origin.

Later on, after entering the ranks of the Romanian Orthodox Church ministers on July 1st 1895, he was appointed secretary of the Archdiocese Consistory in Sibiu, by Metropolitan Miron Romanul. After taking his vows (on June 20th 1902) under the name of Miron (in honour of Metropolitan Miron Romanul), he was later promoted to hypodeacon and then to the archdeacon. In 1902, the Eparchial Synod of the Archdiocese of Sibiu elected him as an Assessor of the Consistorial Congregation for life.² On November 21st 1909, Miron Cristea

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¹ Ilie Șandru, Valentin Borda, *Un nume pentru istorie. Patriarhul Miron Cristea*, Casa de Editură Petru Maior, Târgu-Mureș, 1998, p. 23.

² *Ibidem*, p. 69.