

**“TO THE BELOVED CLERGY AND THE PEOPLE”.  
THE DISCOURSE OF THE ORTHODOX ECCLESIASTICAL ELITE  
IN TRANSYLVANIA IN THE PASTORAL LETTERS  
DURING THE YEARS OF THE GREAT WAR<sup>1\*</sup>**

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**Abstract:** *The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy was characterized by a confessional diversity and a sinuous relationship between the State and the Churches in its territories. A key player on the scene of numerous political events in the dualist period was the ecclesiastical elite. These leaders of different churches often found themselves in a position of precarious balance, placed at the boundary between the loyalty to their confession, nationality and political views. Starting from these premises, the present study proposes a critical reexamination of the relation between the high Romanian Orthodox cleric and the believers they were guiding, through the perspective of the pastoral letters sent out with the occasion of Christmas and the Easter holidays. We consider these messages of the hierarchs to reveal new sides of the complex relationships between the national Churches and the Hungarian State, highlighting the attempts at dialogue, as well as the common / separate goals of the two actors, seeing the need to avoid the disastrous consequences of World War I.*

**Keywords:** World War I, Austria-Hungary, ecclesiastical elite, pastoral letters, relationship Church-State, mentalities, discourse, dynastic loyalty.

The centenary of the Great War meant, for the Romanian historiography too, the revival of the analysis dedicated to this subject, an extremely generous one in investigation niches, seemingly capable of arousing and maintaining new

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interpretations as straying away in time from the horizon of the period between 1914 and 1918. Over one hundred years after the outbreak of the war, the landscape of autochthonous historical research has attempted to align itself to more social and has especially privileged cultural memory studies, which have already gained much ground in Western European milieus.<sup>2</sup>

From a depersonalized conflagration, with general, mass actors – army, intellectuality, peasants, government, etc. – we witness nowadays a increasingly detailed and individualized landscape of the Romanian war scene, which goes beyond the elite categories.

However, since the reactions of the rural strata in the years of the war are the most difficult to comprise within a historical analysis,<sup>3</sup> research remains mired at the level of the elites in the attempts to recover the atmosphere of the years 1914-1918, either when discussing the political elite, the military, intellectual or ecclesiastical one. When the analysis focuses on Transylvania, the latter category cumulates some particular scenarios, as its positions were more tensely felt, and the loyalties involved over-complicated the scene. In a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional space such as the one of the Hungarian Kingdom, the Church represented more than a human-divine institution, an essential pillar in the process of national identification. Even though, as representatives of the Churches, the identity reference for hierarchs was, firstly, a confessional one, the ecclesiastical elite of non-Hungarian groups also assumed a political stance, often finding itself in the situation in which it managed difficult relations with numerous partners: central authorities, the national groups they represented, certain political formations, superior ecclesiastical hierarchs, etc.

Benefitting from such a wide range of potential actions, for these hierarchs with multiple agendas, the war meant the major challenge for their spiritual shepherding activities. In historiographic attempts of Manichaean separation between heroes and traitors of the Transylvanian landscape in the first years of the war, with the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1918 as absolute point of reference, the clerical elite in Transylvania was often subject to a brutal de-contextualization, as, over the years,

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<sup>2</sup> For a general image of the historiography of the Great War, see Jenny Macleod, Pierre Purseigle, *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, Leiden – Boston, Brill, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The Western historiography also remarks this limit to the knowledge of the war. Éric Alary, *La Grande Guerre des Civils 1914-1919*, Paris, Perrin, 2013; Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany 1914-1923*, Oxford – New York, Berg, 2007. There were, however, some notable exceptions within the Romanian historiographical milieu: Eugenia Bârlea, *Perspectiva lumii rurale asupra Primului Război Mondial*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2004; Carmen Albert, Valeriu Leu, *Banatul în memorialistica „măruntă” sau istoria ignorată (1914-1919)*, Reșița, Muzeul de Istoria al Județului Caraș-Severin, 1995; Nicolae Bocșan, Valeriu Leu, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană 1914-1919*, vol. I, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012; N. Bocșan, V. Leu, M. Bedecean, I. Moscovici, *Marele Război în memoria bănățeană (1914-1919)*, vol. III, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2015.

they were easily labeled as traitors of national interests. Thus, the constraints that the ecclesiastical hierarchs were subject to in the years of war, were overlooked. This category was, more than ever, in the period between 1914 and 1918, experiencing the pressure of these troubled times and forced to face the ever-increasing interferences of the state in its own sphere of activity, in the context of the exceptional state of war.

In such a context the Transylvanian politics were limited during the war, laconic and careful in expression, increasingly limited communication channels with the Romanian electorate due to censorship and self-censorship,<sup>4</sup> the ecclesiastical elite ended up accumulating several prerogatives of representation of the Romanian element in Dualist Hungary. From this point of view, the discursive reactions of the superior Romanian clergy in Transylvania between 1914 and 1918 constitute relevant sources for the message produced by these "representatives of the nation" in major crisis moments for the society corpus.

In this study, we have opted for a preliminary analysis of the discourse disseminated by Romanian Orthodox bishops/archbishops in Transylvania during the years of the war, strictly focusing on the message they produced in pastoral letters presented on Christmas and Easter holidays, to the parish populations. During these two major holidays of Christianity, the corpus of believers was much more vulnerable, from an emotional point of view.<sup>5</sup> The message of the hierarchs needed to respond to a horizon of expectations strongly influenced by the numerous existential dilemmas within the entire Transylvanian society during those uncertain times. In this sense, the pastoral letter becomes the strongest communication channel between the bishop and the mass of believers, through the direct, non-intermediated message it involves, in moments in which the necessity of consensus within the community was more stringent than ever. In a context which demanded a lot of precaution in discourse, the upper clergy needed to provide, within these pastoral letters, interpretations of present states, military, economic and political events, which had, however, repercussions on the moral profile of society. Our analysis does not propose to approach the theological subtleties comprised within the message of the hierarchs, but to remain anchored in the historical present in which these pastoral letters were produced and to which their text makes reference. Thus, we emphasize issues concerning the clash of loyalties, a test extremely difficult to go through in the

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<sup>4</sup> Alexandru Vaida Voievod, *Memorii*, vol. IV, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1998, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> During the time of these holidays, we see that on the front, even the military stake of the conflict can be put on hold. Some lines written by a soldier are relevant in this sense: „What else should I write? It's very cold around here, but our soldiers have winter clothes. They all have one wish: to win and to be home for Christmas. It can happen that many of us, having this wish, to sleep our eternal sleep this Christmas, in the same land of Galicia, Romanians, Russians, Hungarians, in one hole. Because death erases all hatred!” *Câmpul morților. Luptele din Galiția. În fața cetății Przemysl*, „Românul”, IV, 1914, no. 233, p. 1.

context of the war, the way in which the military conflict was explained to the believers, the motivational competences, but also the social reactions urged by the hierarchs from the Transylvanian community.

An analysis of the message of these pastoral letters could not begin without a succinct presentation of those from which the discourse had originated, the Romanian Orthodox bishops and archbishops in Transylvania during the years of the war. Between 1914 and 1918, the high hierarchs within Orthodox Church were: in Sibiu, Ioan Mețianu, up until 1916, and later Vasile Mangra, in Arad – Ioan Papp, in Caransebeș – Miron Cristea. These are four different profiles of hierarchs in terms of their attitudes towards the war depending on the coordinates of their training and development, but also on some of the stances they had taken in the past towards the political authorities.

“Pious man of the Church, without fanaticism... in politics *giving onto Caesar what belongs to Caesar* – especially that his life had been lived together with this Caesar”,<sup>6</sup> Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu was the eldest of the Orthodox hierarchs during the years of war.<sup>7</sup> His development was relevant for a steady clerical track, taking on the long hierarchical journey step by step. After he was ordained priest in 1853 in Râșnov, he was elected archpriest of Bran in 1859. From the period of time that he held this position also dates his first encounter with the political stage: Ioan Mețianu was an active deputy in the Cluj Diet of 1865.<sup>8</sup> From the position of vicar and president of the Parish Consistory in Oradea,<sup>9</sup> he was elected bishop of Arad on February 2<sup>nd</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> 1875, and received the confirmation of the monarch on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1875.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Oameni care au fost*, vol. IV, București, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă „Regele Carol II”, 1939, p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu was born on May 9<sup>th</sup> 1828 in Zărnești (m. Zernest), Făgăraș county. He came from a wealthy family, as his father, Bucur Mețianu, was a teacher and church singer, and his mother, Maria, was the daughter of the Zărnești archpriest, Bartolomeu Baiu. He went to secondary school at the Roman-Catholic Gymnasiums of Brașov and Cluj, and to superior studies at the Theology Institute of Sibiu. Végváry Ferenc, Zimmer Ferenc, *Sturm-féle országgzülési almanach, 1910-1915*, Budapest, Kapható a kiadóhivataban, 1910, p. 37; Valeria Soroștinean, *Viața religioasă și sentimentul religios la românii ortodocși din Transilvania*, Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2005, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2002, p. 283.

<sup>9</sup> Ioan Mircea Bogdan, „Episcop arădean ajuns mitropolit al Ardealului”, „Altarul Banatului”, VI (XLV), 1995, no. 4-6, p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> In the period of time between his election and the confirmation, he was ordained monk at the Hodoș-Bodrog monastery. He became protosynghel and, later, archimandrite. He was ordained bishop on March 30<sup>th</sup> 1875. Through his accomplishments throughout his long leadership of the Church (1875-1898), Ioan Mețianu laid the basis for a solid religious, educational and cultural life. Ioan Dimitrie Suci, *Monografia Mitropoliei Banatului*, Timișoara, Editura Mitropoliei Banatului, 1977, p. 202.

After Metropolitan Miron Romanul passed away, Ioan Mețianu was elected (December 17<sup>th</sup> / 29<sup>th</sup> 1898) and later confirmed by the emperor-king as successor to the leadership of the Romanian Orthodox Church of Transylvania and Hungary, and he was instated in the Metropolitan and archdiocesan chair in Sibiu on February 28<sup>th</sup> / March 12<sup>th</sup> 1899.<sup>11</sup>

The outbreak of the international conflagration placed the activity of the Metropolitan in a new context. The sinuous relations with the Hungarian government,<sup>12</sup> the population's material hardships, improving the spirits and physical state of soldiers on the battle front, the numerous deportations and arrests within the ranks of priests were only some of the issues that the Metropolitan saw he needed to find a solution to, during the Great War.<sup>13</sup> He passed away on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1916, only months before the Romanian army entered Transylvania.

Successor to Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu was Vasile Mangra, a member of the high Orthodox clergy, whose framing in historiographic discourse proved to be extremely problematic, especially due to the political mutations that this hierarch took in extremely sensitive moments for the "national issue of Romanians in Hungary". After graduating from the Theology Institute in Arad, Vasile Mangra<sup>14</sup> was attracted to the Transylvanian cultural and journalism scene, as he activated as editor of the official gazette of the Arad diocese – *Lumina*, which he led between 1874 and 1875 – and, starting with 1877, of the weekly paper *Biserica și Școala*. In 1875, appreciating the zeal and efficiency of Mangra, bishop Mețianu appointed him substitute teacher at the Arad Theology Institute, within which he was active until 1893, where he also occupied, for a short period of time, the position of temporary director.<sup>15</sup>

Out of the four Orthodox hierarchs taken into consideration in this research, Vasile Mangra was most attracted to the political scene, as he was one of the most vocal members of the Romanian National Party. Because of his participation in the Memorandum action, Mangra was obliged, at the pressures of the political authorities, to resign from his position as professor. Once his didactical career ended,

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding the ecclesiastical, educational and cultural accomplishments of Metropolitan Mețianu in the study signed by Paul Brusankowski, *Activitatea mitropolitului Ioan Mețianu reflectată în lucrările sinoadelor arhidiecezane*, in *Personalități zărneștene. Mitropolitul Ioan Mețianu (1828-1916)*, Zărnești, Editura Garofița Pietrei Caiului, 2006, p. 26-37.

<sup>12</sup> He holds an interesting corresponding activity with the Hungarian leader Tisza István, who also continues the negotiations with Romanians in the first years of the war. Ioan Mișu, *Spiciuri din gândurile mele politice, culturale, economice*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1938, p. 117-130.

<sup>13</sup> V. Soroștinean, *Viața religioasă...*, p. 191-201.

<sup>14</sup> Vasile Mangra was born on Mars 25<sup>th</sup> 1850, in Săldăbagiu (m. Körösszáldobágy), Bihar county, as the son of priest Mihai Mangra. Marius Eppel, *Un mitropolit și epoca sa : Vasile Mangra 1850-1918*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006, p. 21-25.

<sup>15</sup> M. Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor...*, p. 266.

he focused all his energies on church and political issues. After he was ordained a monk by abbot Cornel Zsivcovici, in 1879, thus entering the Hodoș-Bodrog monastery, he was elected vicar of the diocese Consistory in Oradea,<sup>16</sup> in 1900. The bishop seat elections in Arad in 1902 represented an important moment in the church career of Vasile Mangra. Benefitting from the support of the “activist” group in Arad and of some ministers of the Széll government, Mangra was seen as the main favorite. Even though he was elected bishop, Mangra did not obtain the confirmation from the part of the emperor-king, as he was considered a nationalist agitator.<sup>17</sup> After this moment, a shift in his political orientation occurred. The pretender to the bishop seat was more and more attracted to a political collaboration with the Hungarian governmental authorities.<sup>18</sup> His intentions materialized at the parliamentary elections of 1910, when Vasile Mangra ran for the Ceica constituency, Bihor county, as adherent to the program of the National Party of Labor (m. *Nemzeti Munkapárt*), winning the MP (Member of Parliament) mandate.<sup>19</sup> Repudiated by the entire nationalist press in Transylvania, Mangra would be labeled as an “outcast” for a long period of time,<sup>20</sup> becoming the hierarch with the most controversial public image. On July 24<sup>th</sup> / August 6<sup>th</sup> 1916, with the support of the Hungarian political authorities, he was elected Metropolitan of the Romanian Orthodox in Transylvania and Hungary, ordained in Oradea of October 16<sup>th</sup> / 29<sup>th</sup>, that same year.

The governmental position of the Metropolitan was visible in the first years of World War I. Urging the Romanian nation in Hungary to see the war as a confrontation between the Slavic and German cultures, associated with the call to renounce the relentless politics of RNP in favor of a Romanian-Hungarian collaboration, were the results of him having appropriated the political ideas of prime-minister Tisza István.<sup>21</sup> During his leadership, Romanian troops passed over the Carpathians. When they retreated, the Metropolitan in Sibiu needed to explain to competent political forums the attitude of some of the priests who had collaborated with the “enemy”, and some even took refuge with Romanian troops.<sup>22</sup> The distrust

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<sup>16</sup> M. Eppel, *Un mitropolit ...*, p. 83, 97-98.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 260-261.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem*, Vasile Mangra, activitatea politică (1875-1918), Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2004, p. 200-201.

<sup>19</sup> Teodor Neș, *Oameni din Bihor (1848-1918)*, ed. a II-a, Oradea, Biblioteca Revistei Familia, 2006, p. 485.

<sup>20</sup> The article of Octavian Goga, „Un fals Coriolan”, published in „Tribuna”, XIV, 1910, no. 54, 1910 immediately after Mangra’s decision to run on the lists of the governmental party had the value of a public execution for him.

<sup>21</sup> M. Eppel, *Politics and Church in Transylvania (1875-1918)*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2012, p. 177-178.

<sup>22</sup> Sebastian Stanca, *Contribuția preoțimii române din Ardeal la Răsboiul pentru Întregirea Neamului 1916-1919*, Cartea Românească, Cluj-Napoca, 1925; Septimiu Popa, *Temnițele Clujului*.

with which Tisza István treated the issue of Romanian priests in Transylvania from that point onward could never again be surmounted. The loyalty declarations that the political and cultural elite in Transylvania were obliged to sign in the spring of 1917<sup>23</sup> indicate an "archaic political culture" of the central authorities in Budapest, who desperately appealed to these formulas of forced loyalty.<sup>24</sup> Invoking the "unpatriotic" behavior of some Romanian teachers in the autumn of 1916, minister Albert Apponyi prepares, at the beginning of the next year, the project of the "cultural zone", through which confessional schools in the border counties of Transylvania were nationalized.<sup>25</sup> This was another experiment that was extremely difficult to approach by Romanian hierarchs.

On October 1<sup>st</sup> / 14<sup>th</sup> 1918, Metropolitan Mangra passed away, shortly before the war ended and before the Union of Transylvania with the Romanian Kingdom.

During the years of the Great War, Ioan Papp<sup>26</sup> was the leader of the Arad diocese, another example of a hierarch, who had conscientiously risen on the diocesan administrative ladder, stopping at every step. He decided to enter the monastic life in 1900, when he was ordained a monk at the Hodoș-Bodrog monastery.<sup>27</sup> On January 30<sup>th</sup> / February 12<sup>th</sup>, he was elected bishop of Arad, thus ending the vacancy period following the death of bishop Iosif Goldiș.<sup>28</sup> He held the bishop's seat in Arad for more than two decades, up until his death on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1925.

Bishop Ioan Papp was the leader of the Arad diocese during an extremely delicate period of time for the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania and Hungary, as well as for the Romanian nation. He positioned himself on the front lines of the struggle to maintain the full autonomy of the church, in the context of

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Însemnările unui popă românesc, Cluj-Napoca, 1937; Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea română și întregirea neamului*, vol. I-II, București, Tipografia „Vremea”, 1940; Mircea Păcurariu, *Politica statului ungar față de Biserica românească of Transilvania în perioada dualismului (1867-1918)*, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1986.

<sup>23</sup> About 200 Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania and Banat signed these declarations. Ioan Rusu Abrudeanu, *Păcatele Ardealului față de sufletul Vechiului Regat: fapte, documente și facsimile*, București, Cartea Românească, 1930, p. 275.

<sup>24</sup> Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires. Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East 1914-1923*, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> M. Păcurariu, *Politica statului ungar ...*, p. 164-178.

<sup>26</sup> He was born on December 20<sup>th</sup> 1847 / January 1<sup>st</sup> 1848, in Pociovești (m. Pócsavelesd) of Bihor county. He went to secondary school within the Greek-Catholic Gymnasium of Beiuș, and superior studies at the Theology Institute of Arad. For a short period of time, he taught hermeneutics and pastoral theology to students of the Theology Institute of Arad. Pavel Vesa, *Episcopia Aradului. Istorie. Cultură. Mentalități (1706-1918)*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006, p. 157.

<sup>27</sup> T. Neș, *Oameni din Bihor...*, p. 460,

<sup>28</sup> Végváry F., Zimmer F., *Sturm-féle országgzülési almanach ...*, p. 40.

intensification - at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – of the magyarization politics adopted by governments in Budapest. He opposed the interference attempts of the Hungarian central authorities in educational matters and those of the church, through speeches held in the Chamber of Magnates in the Parliament of Budapest.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of the outbreak of World War I, bishop Papp was forced to face new challenges. From the series of the new directions of his activity during the Great War, we mention the project of founding an orphanage in Beiuș. Initiated just briefly before the start of the international conflagration, the creation of this orphanage became an even more stringent necessity as the number of the orphans considerably grew as a result of the sacrifice of Romanian soldiers in the Austrian-Hungarian army.<sup>30</sup> The end of the war and the accomplishment of the Union of Transylvania with the Romanian Kingdom found bishop Papp in the position of replacement for the Metropolitan – seat left vacant as a result of the death of Vasile Mangra –, consequently becoming one of the most important members present at the National Assembly at Alba Iulia.<sup>31</sup>

Starting with 1910, Miron Cristea<sup>32</sup> occupied the bishop seat of Caransebeș. He would be the future Patriarch of the Greater Romania. Consistory assessor in Sibiu after graduating from his studies, he became involved in journalistic and cultural projects in the Transylvanian center – he is editor-in-charge of *Telegraful Român* (1898-1900) and president of the Sibiu department of ASTRA (1905).<sup>33</sup> Ordained monk in 1902 at the Hodoș-Bodrog monastery,<sup>34</sup> his accession at the bishop seat of Caransebeș meant the end of the long period of vacancy which followed after the death of bishop Nicolae Popea, marked by disputes regarding his successor in the bishop seat, brought on by the will of the Hungarian authorities to impose a hierarch who would be closer to Budapest. Even though he did not correspond to the profile agreed by the Hungarian government, Miron Cristea managed to obtain the confirmation due to the common effort of the Romanian

<sup>29</sup> P. Vesa, *Episcopia Aradului...*, p. 161-163, 165-169.

<sup>30</sup> Ioan Bolovan, *Primul Război Mondial și realitățile demografice de Transilvania. Familie, mortalitate și raporturi de gen*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2015, p. 129-131.

<sup>31</sup> P. Vesa, *Episcopia Aradului...*, p. 172, 175.

<sup>32</sup> Bishop Miron Cristea was born on July 18<sup>th</sup> 1868, in Romanian Toplita (m. Maroshéviz), Maros-Torda county, being one of the eight children of George and Domnita Cristea. He went to secondary school at the German Borderline Gymnasium in Nasaud, and went to superior studies within the Theology Seminary in Sibiu and the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the Royal University of Budapest. Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești of Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000, p. 433.

<sup>33</sup> M. Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor...*, p. 141.

<sup>34</sup> I. Rusu Abrudeanu, *Patriarhul României Dr. Miron Cristea, Înalt regent*, Cluj-Napoca, Napoca Star, 2009, p. 132-133.

political leaders of national and pro-governmental orientation, as well as the categorical intervention of Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu.<sup>35</sup>

These biographical accolades of the bishops are important, as they greatly influence their discursive positions during the conflagration, their reactions organically emerging from the hierarch profile they publicly assume. Their frequent encounters with the political factor, their invitations to the table of political negotiations<sup>36</sup> are emblematic to the relation of constraints and restrictions which existed between the two instances in Dualist Hungary. The text of the pastoral letters could not be fully interpreted without these decors that ordinate their public discourse.

The Christmas of 1914 represented the first major holiday of the Transylvanian society, under the under the existential temporariness imposed by the war.<sup>37</sup> The community of believers of the diocese was now dramatically divided, after decades of peace, between those on the front lines and those back home. All three hierarchs feel that they must respond, within the text of the pastoral letter, to the issue of the outburst of this war, to offer explanations for this rhythm rupture in the lives of the believers. Even though bishop Ioan Papp proposes a *politically correct* explanation, “this war has not been started with the intent of expanding the boundaries of the empire, but only following the imposed circumstances, in order to defend the imperial prestige, the Throne and the interests of Its nations, something each and every one of us do, when seeing that the neighbor longs for our wealth or legacy”,<sup>38</sup> the majority of hierarchs believe that this conflagration was a consequence of believers straying away from religious-moral norms: “a great part of the people have forgotten both the love of God and His exaltation, as well as the love and goodwill amongst each other.”<sup>39</sup> Going further with this line of reasoning, all hierarchs will create this dissociation between a *good war* and an *evil war*.

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<sup>35</sup> More on the activity of bishop Miron Cristea in Daniel Alic, Eparhia Caransebeșului în perioada păstoririi episcopului Miron Cristea (1910-1919). Biserică și societate, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană – Editura Episcopiei Caransebeșului, 2013, p. 71-81.

<sup>36</sup> The Hungarian political authorities sought, at the beginning of 1914, to propose as discussion partners, the Romanian hierarchs, and not the leaders of RNP, as they were aware of the fact that representatives of the Church could not assume radical positions, as the latter. In the letters Tisza wrote to Romanian hierarchs, he said: “I do not desire that the Romanian National Party or any other corporation to take an official stance. My wish is only that my initiative be met as warmly as possible by leaders with authority.” Gróf Tisza István Összes Munkái, II, Budapest, Franklin - Társulat, 1924, 501\ d, p. 277 apud. Sever Stoica, Iuliu Maniu, Cluj, Meyer, 1939, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> Our study does not aim at a chronological approach of the pastoral letters of Romanian hierarchs in Transylvania, preferring to rather follow some thematical axes of their discourse.

<sup>38</sup> Ioan Papp, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Telegraful Român”, LXII, 1914, no. 136, 30 December 1914/12 January 1915.

<sup>39</sup> Ioan Mețianu, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Telegraful Român”, LXII, 1914, no. 134-135, 25 December 1914/7 January 1915.

The war in its destructive dimension and the mutations brought on by the new type of military confrontation are translated to the believers of the Caransebeș diocese, by Miron Cristea, as follows: “The savages in the dark times long ago would kill each other with arrows and spears; even the wild beasts in the forests fight face to face, two against two. While the peoples, those fighting amongst themselves these days – the most cult ones and civilized ones – have revolvers and automatic guns, from which one man can unleash hundreds of bullets within the hour; they have mortars with giant bullets, with which they crush entire cities and the most fortified strongholds, with iron and concrete; they even have shooting machines, with which you utterly sweep entire companies of people, as the reaper reaps hundreds and thousands of blades of green grass at a time.”<sup>40</sup> This new paradigm of the technological war, the total war, of the devastating carnage, is one that also affects the text of the pastoral letters, which do not aim at softening the dark perspectives of the confrontation in the minds of the believers. And for Ioan Papp, the present he lives belongs to the extraordinary history, such conflict having no equivalent to “a threatening and unmatched war in the whole history of mankind”, “neither in the voice of the people, nor in the charters of the past, do we find trace of a war such as the one we are facing now, in which millions of soldiers of states and empires stand before millions of soldiers of other states and empires, so there is no track of a war fought by a world against another world of men.”<sup>41</sup>

For Vasile Mangra, the war was nothing but a fulfillment of the Scripture, a retake on biblical tragedies: “Because Christ the Lord Savior said: “That nation will rise over nation and empire over empire and there will be hunger and plague and earthquake all around.”<sup>42</sup> This temptation to tie the desolate present to the biblical past represented common grounds for the pastoral letters of these hierarchs who were facing the situation of finding an explanation in conformity to the theological profile in tumultuous times that the mass of believers was going through. This rhetoric exercise of translation of suffering from a mundane plane to an eschatological one, was re-dimensioning the perspective of the war and was mobilizing everybody’s expectations towards the spiritual plane.

Outside of the apocalyptic dimension, of the *evil war*, the military confrontation could also be one that was positively valued if it represented an experience through which man reaches God: “Even this war, along with all other evil and misfortune it brings, had its good parts, that it awakened in the souls of people,

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<sup>40</sup> Miron Cristea, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Foaia Diecesană”, XXIX, 1914, no. 51, 21 December 1914/3 January 1915.

<sup>41</sup> I. Papp, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Biserica și Școala”, XXXIX, 1915, no. 52, 27 December 1915/9 January 1916.

<sup>42</sup> Vasile Mangra, Pastorală de Paști, „Telegraful Român”, LXV, 1917, no. 23, 30 March/12 April 1917.

more and more, the sense of Christian love. Proof that people started searching more frequently for the holy church and share its gifts. Then, to stay away from evil and do good deeds, especially merciful deeds."<sup>43</sup> Along with this idea of the war seen as a catalyst of faith, "the war brought everyone closer to God"<sup>44</sup>, also omnipresent between 1914 and 1918 in Romanian theological environments in Transylvania, and not only, the *good war* represented, for Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu, the chance for Romanians to demonstrate their loyalty towards the state from the trenches: "for us, Romanians, this war also had that good part, that, through it, we have again proven our unwavering faith and loyalty to the High throne and country, and the unmatched bravery of our soldiers, recognized by those above, and all these great patriotic virtues entitle us to the most beautiful hopes of a better and happier future."<sup>45</sup> This idea was unanimously accepted by the entire Romanian society in Transylvania<sup>46</sup> and used at that moment as a strong mobilizing element.

All hierarchs are preoccupied with the consequences generated at the end of the war by the military participation of Romanian Transylvanians. The loyalty they mean to induce is not one *per se*, free or based on the power of tradition, on the contrary, it is one conditioned by the way in which central authorities would reward the role of Romanians in the war at the end of the conflict. The solidarity of the Romanian element with the imperial cause had the value of a blank check, hoping that, in the end, the decisive factors would admit and offer the appropriate rights to those in the front lines: "even during times of ever-desired peace, to be considered brothers, just as we are now, in hard times, that we are all facing."<sup>47</sup> The same bishop of Arad, Ioan Papp, confessed in the pastoral letter of 1914 that he awaits the day "when this is what they [the political authorities] will tell us and our nation: 'Starting now, you are not only citizens, but you are true sons of the Hungarian state, and if

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<sup>43</sup> I. Mețianu, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Telegraful Român”, LXII, 1914, no. 134-135, 25 December 1914/7 January 1915.

<sup>44</sup> M. Cristea, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Telegraful Român”, LXIV, 1916, no. 1, 5/18 January 1916.

<sup>45</sup> I. Mețianu, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Telegraful Român”, LXII, 1914, no. 134-135, 25 December 1914/7 January 1915.

<sup>46</sup> Even from 1915, the Romanian press in Transylvania insistently vehiculated the idea of monumental statistics which would register the human and material sacrifice brought by Romanian communities during the war. Stimulated by this idea, Teodor Păcățian, president of the historical section of the Transylvanian Association for the Romanian Literature and The Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA), proposes to the Central Committee of the prestigious institution in Sibiu the accomplishment of such a project exactly so that, at the end of the conflagration, should the Central Powers be victorious, having proven their loyalty within the trenches, Romanians could claim their political-national rights. Teodor Păcățian, *Jertfele românilor din Ardeal, Banat, Crișana, Sătmar și Maramurăș aduse în războiul mondial din anii 1914-1918*, Sibiu, Editura Asociațiunii, 1923.

<sup>47</sup> I. Papp, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Telegraful Român”, LXII, 1914, no. 136, 30 December 1914/12 January 1915.

you are sons, you have not only the right to existence, but also to development and validation in your mother tongue, with the help of the state and under the protection of its laws.”<sup>48</sup> The diocesan in Arad highlights, in his pastoral letters, the responsibilities of the Austrian-Hungarian political power regarding the Romanian element in the monarchy: “I also have the conviction that the sacrifice brought on by our brave soldiers, for the Throne and the Country, present its rewards to our nation, even in this world.”<sup>49</sup> The war is used as political negotiation, between the Romanian element in Hungary and the authorities, led not by arguments inspired from historical right or ethnical statistics, but from a considerable human military effort. What Iuliu Maniu, Alexandru Vaida Voievod and the rest of the RNP members did not manage to accomplish through political exercise, could now be obtained on the battle field of Galicia or on the Italian front.

Even though he does not formulate concrete demands, Ioan Papp is the most consistent in reiterating, in his pastoral letters, this political value that the Romanian sacrifice for the war would require in the future. This is also the reasoning through which they explain to the grieving believers the physical disappearance of soldiers on the battle field: “thus, the number of our fallen heroes raises, from the ashes of which we expect the sun of our justice will rise.”<sup>50</sup> Actually, the pastoral letters during the years of war represent essential instruments in the configuration of a cult of Romanian Transylvanian heroes. Their deaths are transformed into an exercise of admiration, and associated with national-political implications.<sup>51</sup> Their sacrifice is no longer one that can be regarded as a singular, personal tragedy, on the contrary, it gains a dimension of ethnical memory that transcends history: “their graves will be just as many stones of granite, which will prove for all centuries to come and in the most doubtful way the ancestral virtues of our nation.”<sup>52</sup>

Besides this cult of heroes that the text of the pastoral letters loads with adequate argumentation, the message of the hierarchs, remaining in the same symbolic plan, also has the role, starting with the end of 1916, of producing the portrait of the new emperor, familiarizing the rural world with the image of young Carol. The portrait sketched by the hierarchs emphasized the side of the peace-maker sovereign, reiterating a series of themes of the monarch image pattern that functioned

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<sup>48</sup> Idem, *Pastorală de Crăciun*, „Telegraful Român”, LXII, 1914, no. 136, 30 December 1914/12 January 1915.

<sup>49</sup> I. Meșianu, *Pastorală de Crăciun*, „Telegraful Român”, LXIII, 1915, no. 136-137, 24 December 1915/6 January 1916.

<sup>50</sup> I. Papp, *Pastorală de Paști*, „Biserica și Școala”, XL, 1916, no. 15, 10/23 April.

<sup>51</sup> For a complex interpretation see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *Războiul redescoperit: 1914-1918*, București, Corint Books, 2014, p. 222-254.

<sup>52</sup> I. Papp, *Pastorală de Crăciun*, „Biserica și Școala”, XXXIX, 1915, no. 52, 27 December 1915/9 January 1916.

even from the times of Joseph II.<sup>53</sup> The ascension to the throne of Carol was a good pretext to resuscitate the "glorious throne of his ancestors": "the crown of St. Stephen, worn before by His Grace and peaceful King Francis Joseph I, was now placed on the head of His Grace our King Carol IV, who, before his coronation, sent word of peace to the enemy states, which hardens us, and also all the nations of the Monarchy and the countries allied with us, in the belief and hope that the dawn of peace has arrived through the ascension to the throne of this king. And in this belief and hope we must believe even more that the peace offering was not because the monarchy and its allied powers felt weak in continuing this war, but out of true Christian sentiment, and fatherly love towards the Christian nations faithful to his royal Scepter, in order to stop the carnage, which demands too high and meaningless sacrifice."<sup>54</sup> The pastoral letters signed by Orthodox hierarchs in Transylvania projected a quasi-sacralized image of the new emperor as a paternalist Apostol, stripped by any political-military stakes, with the sole aim of "conquering the hearts" and "the happiness of its nations". To such a leader, as Vasile Mangra would conclude, they must bring as much sacrifice as necessary.<sup>55</sup>

Besides these projections of the imperial leader, the hierarchs' pastoral letters also constitute an interesting barometer for the social temperature of Transylvania. The unstable context led to a series of extreme reactions within the society, and Miron Cristea also brought forth the cases of suicide of women left home, alone.<sup>56</sup> The church must properly manage such transgressions from the Christian morality and the community one<sup>57</sup> and inspire a sense of social responsibility even in this tense environment.

Analyzing the pastoral letters of the four hierarchs at the top of the Transylvanian church hierarchy during the years of war, we see the dynamic, strongly social way of conceiving an articulate community survival program, present in the texts signed by Miron Cristea. Ever since the first pastoral letter during the war, he set the main coordinates by which the Romanian society in Transylvania

<sup>53</sup> Doru Radosav, *Arătarea împăratului*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană – Dacia, 2002, p. 26-27.

<sup>54</sup> I. Papp, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Biserica și Școala”, XL, 1917, no. 52, 25 December 1916/7 January 1917.

<sup>55</sup> V. Mangra, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Telegraful Român”, LXIV, 1916, no. 100, 20 December 1916/2 January 1917.

<sup>56</sup> M. Cristea, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Telegraful Român”, LXIV, 1916, no. 1, 5/18 January.

<sup>57</sup> The war produced "mutations of morality", registering numerous practices which were unceivable before the autumn of 1914. Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Paula Bolovan, *War and Society: The Impact of World War I on the Family in Transylvania*, „Transylvanian Review”, XIX, 2010, Supplement no. 1. For a more detailed image, see: I. Bolovan, *Primul Război Mondial și realitățile demografice de Transilvania: familie, moralitate și raporturi de gen*, Cluj-Napoca, Școala Ardeleană, 2015.

must function in the new context: *work* “all those who stayed home must work hard, to accomplish everything, so that – for everyone through his own means – to not leave his fields unworked and let our means of earning grow little. Those who do not have their own land, to help others, so that they, themselves, could be helped through their hard work” and *sparing* “Of course, we should have started to spare a long time ago, not when it is too late. During good times, we must spare for the bad times. But who hasn’t yet, should start doing it now.”<sup>58</sup> The main agent who has to be made aware of the importance of good administration is the woman: “Especially women must spare. Leave all unnecessary expenses. Leave all arrogance, spoil, silks, luxury, as well as red blush or other paraphernalia, on which they spend a lot of money. [...] in this regard and let men be careful with their women, fathers with their daughters, fathers-in-law with daughters-in-law, as 10 men could not gain what one wasteful woman can spend.”<sup>59</sup> The entire community must function, in Miron Cristea’s views, as autarchically as possible, activating their autonomous leverages of resistance and not necessarily waiting for help or salvation from the state.<sup>60</sup> Obviously, such urges of social discipline could be found in the pastoral letters of other hierarchs, though such frequent and insistent articulation of these principles is, without a doubt, the hallmark of bishop Miron Cristea, during the years of war.

Although, in the first part of the conflagration, the message of the Church representatives could be comprised in the phrase “let us reconcile with the circumstances”,<sup>61</sup> as time went by and as they realized they did not see an end to this war, they insinuate an increasingly grave sentiment of personal and community insecurity: “great and founded are our fears and concerns, especially because of the uncertainty which we face the close and distant future, as man’s eye cannot go through this dense fog covering it.”<sup>62</sup> While in the first pastoral letter during the war, the bishop of Arad was quick to mention that this is a defensive conflict for Austria-Hungary, with a strong reason to protect the territorial integrity of the empire, at Christmas, in 1917, he would note, disconcerted: “we must understand now even the

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<sup>58</sup> M. Cristea, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Foaia Diecesană”, XXIX, 1914, no. 51, 21 December 1914/3 January 1915.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*. The motif of the spending woman is also a frequent one for the bishop of Arad, Ioan Ignatie Papp, related to conclusions of a biblical parable: “Smart women built homes, and crazy ones destroyed them with their bare hands”. I. Papp, *Pastorala de Paști*, in „Biserica și Școala”, XL, 1916, no. 52, 25 December 1916/7 January 1917.

<sup>60</sup> Confronted with the issue of a high number of orphans, the bishop of Caransebeș asks priests to convince the wealthy people in their parishes to adopt the parentless children. M. Cristea, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Telegraful Român”, LXIV, 1916, no. 1, 5/18 January.

<sup>61</sup> I. Papp, *Pastorala de Paști*, „Biserica și Școala”, XL, 1916, no. 52, 25 December 1916/7 January 1917.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem*, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Biserica și Școala”, XXXIX, 1915, no. 52, 27 December 1915/9 January 1916.

fact that this war is not led by the judgement of the sane mind, but only by urges of the heart, from which, according to teachings of the holy book, "evil thoughts arise, murders, the uncleanness of life, theft and false testimony."<sup>63</sup>

Especially relevant for the spirit of the community are these discourse mutations appearing in the text of the pastoral letters of the hierarchs as we approach the end of the war. Surprising in this context is the pastoral letter at Christmas 1917, signed by bishop of Caransebeș, Miron Cristea. The discursive exercise he practiced was extremely dangerous, with a lot of references that could be easily regarded, by the Hungarian authorities, as forbidden challenges against the *national unitary Hungarian state*. In order to grasp the way in which Cristea built this argumentation that could have very easily sent him to the internment camp in Sopron, we reiterate a generous fragment of his preaching: "Beloved spiritual sons! Right in the course of this war, highly enlightened men of the nations have brought forth from one edge of the world to the other, the true meaning of the so-called democracy. You have, as well, heard or read about democracy; so it is good to know, what does it mean? True democracy could be nothing else than the cleanest form of love of the people in all its strata. [...] The spirit of this democracy, promoted by a large number of scholars and apostles, full of zeal and energetic will, have produced these days such large movements, a thought so alive, that – like a strong wind – it tends to overthrow all injustice that has been done and is still being done especially against the huge mass of the poor and those relieved of their rights, or stopped from sharing the good from people who have, until now, worked more and more against their own interests. This movement of democracy asks that every social class: nobles and peasants, rich and poor, capitalists and workers, etc. to take part, with their decisive word, where the future and the fate of nations and countries is being woven, so that not only for every nation, but – if possible – for every man to be assessed rightfully [...] Democracy demands that – as the duties of our countries lay on the shoulders of each and every one of us – we all take part, intermediated or not, directly or indirectly, to their ruling, so that for each and every one of us, the path to climb on the social ladder is open, and you are not stopped to climb as high as your honesty, mind, talent and labor allow you to. And – if democracy does not allow it for a class of men to do their business on the backs and the account and the detriment of other classes – it just as well does not allow a people to oppress and hurt another, but every nation, every people, to have the right to live by his interests, with his language, with his tradition and customs, and all that belongs to it, in its own way. In a word, it demands that every nation, every people – either small or big – to be its own master, to rule itself, to the good and advancement of the country and mankind. That is democracy." For the argumentation to fit within an innocent area from a political point of view, but

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<sup>63</sup> Idem, Pastorală de Crăciun, „Biserica și Școala”, XLI, 1917, no. 52, 24 December 1917/6 January 1918.

also decisively mark a persuasive element, Miron Cristea identified true democracy, which has, as could easily be seen in the quote above, the hues of national self-determination, in... the Holy Scripture: “[...] who has more clearly shown the rightfulness of any nation to its own language and own national life, than the Lord Christ himself [...]? [...] and the rulers of the countries, diplomats, led by the spirit of modern democracy, must be led in their steps towards peace by the everlasting truths of the law of Christ, which demands: that to every nation to be given what it deserves and what is rightful of its nature and of God, meaning to engage each nation on *rightful justice*.”<sup>64</sup>

Miron Cristea used the pretext of this pastoral letter to familiarize the believers with the new political culture of the present: national democracy. His endeavors appear all the more hazardous, if one takes into consideration the area where the message is being spread: every parish contained in the Caransebeș diocese.

Along with the dichotomy that functioned especially at the beginning of the conflagration, *the good war / the evil war*, there is another one they make reference to, not by accident, after 1916: *the war outside / the war inside*. The one to intensely verbalize the latter issue is the new elected Metropolitan, Vasile Mangra. In his pastoral letter of 1917, in a context in which the entire Transylvanian society was still strongly confused by the military actions taken only several months before, when the Romanian troops entered the region, the archbishop of Sibiu talks about the peril of an internal conflict, localized within the deep strata of the Romanian society. Responsible for the production of these community cracks within the Transylvanian society are, in the vision of the archbishop, those “lying prophets”, who, “under the mask of nationalism and utopian ideas” attempted to “break apart the branches that have grown together for centuries from the trunk of the tree of the Hungarian state.”<sup>65</sup>

Even though Vasile Mangra attempted to neutralize the action of these destabilizing forces through such rhetoric: “the Romanian people, however, of all social categories, can make the difference between the Eastern winds and the Western ones, knows from where salvation can come, and from where, its death”, he could only realize that there are “a series of intellectuals and priests who, forgetting their duty to the country and the shepherd, who give their soul to the herd, fall into the temptation to conquer the land of our country, but which, thanks to God and to the bravery of our armies, in several days, has been completely beaten and thrown out from within our boundaries”. In this context, the hierarch in Sibiu prepared the believers to face the propaganda assault that was being prepared for them, to stay away from “temptation, to be careful to what is going on in the world and around you, to not fall into the traps of doom”. The Archbishop believed that the war must produce a *pax nationalia* and,

<sup>64</sup> M. Cristea, *Pastorala de Crăciun*, „Biserica și Școala”, XLII, 1918, no. 3, 14/27 January.

<sup>65</sup> V. Mangra, *Pastorala de Paști*, „Telegraful Român”, LXV, 1917, no. 23, 30 March/12 April.

as well, a *pax confesionalia*: "let us love one another without minding our religion or our nationality". However, aware that the herd of believers was made vulnerable in front of the Hungarian authorities through the attitude they had at the Romanian troops' march in Transylvania, always suspected of lack of attachment to the values of the Kingdom of Hungary, Vasile Mangra asked the priests to remedy this situation and, through "apostolic abnegation", to transform the strayed sons into "believers that fulfill the laws of the state". Remaining consistent in his political project to which he had adhered long before he was elected archbishop, Vasile Mangra proved, also within the text of these pastoral letters, that he was convinced of the viability of the solution provided by the Romanian-Hungarian conciliation, him being the supreme diocesan representative who most frequently relates towards his believers, in his messages, to the state referent from Budapest.

In the text of the pastoral letters, the bishops saw the need to translate, make sense out of and even make intelligible the harsh reality of the war to the believers who were profoundly marked by the mutations produced by this military conflict. Depending on the profile of each hierarch, the Transylvanian ecclesiastical elite takes different public stances, from the bishop who is loyal to the state authority to the diplomat bishop and the socially reforming bishop. Are these a series of interesting nuances that potentiate the role of these pastoral letters as relevant historical sources for what could be considered the Romanian dimension of the war, lived back home. At the same time, our research attempted to establish the way in which "the religion of the war", a syncretism of religious and patriotic sentiment<sup>66</sup> is articulated and structured from the highest clerical level to an area intensely subjected to tests of loyalty between 1914 and 1918. The accommodation with the situation of war meant, for each of these hierarchs, the practice of a rhetoric aimed at the survival of the community, strategy that did not only target aspects of moral-affective nature, but some even much more pragmatic, from the economic-social sphere.

Without any claims of exhausting the subject, this study was interested in analyzing the evolving discursive reactions of a major actor in strengthening the home front during the Great War, the Transylvanian ecclesiastical elite.

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<sup>66</sup> Definition belongs to A. Becker, S. Audoin-Rouzeau, Războiul..., p. 154-158.