

The Road to the Metropolis.

The Ascension of Miron Romanul to the Highest Ecclesiastical Dignity

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Abstract: After Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna's death, the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania entered a transitional period, during which administrative continuity was maintained by his former collaborators, alongside other clergy and lay leaders. The intellectual elite, whose influence increased during Șaguna's final years, played a key role in guiding Church institutions. Through the adoption of the *Organic Statute*, Șaguna had delegated much of his authority, creating a durable institutional framework that continued to evolve after his passing. In the late 19th century, the dynamics between power groups within the archdiocese and suffragan bishoprics significantly shaped Church life. These interactions became particularly evident during the 1874 Metropolitan elections, which revealed internal rivalries and political manoeuvrings. Personal sympathies and antipathies often took precedence over the stated goal of the electoral congresses—the appointment of new hierarchs—highlighting the complex and often contentious process of leadership succession within the Church. In this context, the one who benefited from a fulminating *cursus honorum* was Miron Romanul, who occupied the metropolitan seat after several election rounds.

Keywords: The Romanian Orthodox Church from Transylvania, metropolitan elections, intellectual elites, political elites, Metropolitan Miron Romanul

Rezumat: După moartea Mitropolitului Andrei Șaguna, Biserica Ortodoxă Română din Transilvania a intrat într-o perioadă de tranziție, timp în care continuitatea administrativă a fost menținută de foștii săi colaboratori, alături de alți clerici și lideri laici. Elita intelectuală, a cărei influență a crescut în ultimii ani ai lui Șaguna, a jucat un rol cheie în îndrumarea instituțiilor bisericești. Prin adoptarea *Statutului Organic*, Șaguna și-a delegat o mare parte din autoritate, creând un cadru instituțional

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durabil care a continuat să evolueze după trecerea sa în neființă. La sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, dinamica dintre grupurile de putere din cadrul arhiepiscopiei și episcopiiilor sufragane a modelat semnificativ viața bisericească. Aceste interacțiuni au devenit deosebit de evidente în timpul alegerilor mitropolitane din 1874, care au scos la iveală rivalități interne și implicații politice. Simpatiile și antipatiile personale au avut adesea prioritate față de obiectivul declarat al congreselor electorale - numirea de noi ierarhi - evidențiind procesul complex și adesea controversat de succesiune a conducerii în cadrul Bisericii. În acest context, cel care a beneficiat de un *cursus honorum* fulminant a fost Miron Romanul, care a ocupat scaunul mitropolitan după mai multe tururi de scrutin.

Cuvinte cheie: Biserica Ortodoxă Română din Transilvania, alegeri metropolitane, elite intelectuale, elite politice, Mitropolitul Miron Romanul

Already a decade had passed since the re-establishment of the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Transylvania, and the Metropolitan Seat of Sibiu was twice widowed – namely, in 1873, with the death of the venerable Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, and a year later, with the election of Metropolitan Procopius Ivascoviici as Patriarch of the Serbs. Thus, in the final months of 1874, in the metropolitan province elections for the person who would occupy the highest ecclesiastical dignity were once again organized. In the transitional period that the Church was going through after the death of Șaguna, those who ensured administrative continuity were, first and foremost, the former metropolitan's collaborators, as well as other clergy and lay people who were active in the leadership of the Church institutions. The role of the intellectual elite in the Church became increasingly more important during the final years of Șaguna's leadership, given the significant trust the reforming hierarchy placed in them. By adopting the *Organic Statute*, he delegated many of his responsibilities and created an institutional scaffolding that continued to evolve after his death.¹ The way in which the power groups in the archdiocese and in the two suffragan bishoprics interacted during the final decades of the 19th century had a decisive influence on the life of the Church, especially in the context of the establishment of new hierarchs. From this perspective, the 1875 Metropolitan

¹ Keith Hitchins and Aurel Jivi, *Ortodoxie și naționalitate. Andrei Șaguna și românii din Transilvania (1846–1873)* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1995), 316.

elections were the setting for real behind-the-scenes games, in which personal sympathies or antipathies overshadowed the main purpose of the electoral congresses, namely the establishment of new hierarchs.

At the beginning of its constitutional life – only six years had passed since the adoption of the *Organic Statute*² as the fundamental law governing the functioning of the Orthodox Church – the Transylvanian Metropolis went through a series of crises during the period following the pastoral leadership of Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna. The turmoil that unfolded during the 1874 electoral congress marked its dynamics, as we will see in this analysis. The “surprise” caused by the resignation of former Metropolitan Procopie Ivașcovici (as Șaguna’s successor) from the archbishopric seat in Sibiu did not go unnoticed by those in the leadership structures of the Metropolis, with remarks being made as early as the plenary session of the metropolitan consistory on August 31, 1874. For instance, one of the consistorial members, politician and president of the Albina Bank at the time, Iacob Bologa, pointed out that the election of Metropolitan Ivașcovici as patriarch of the Serbs was “a violation of the canons of the Church.”³ His pecuniary interest led him to request that Ivașcovici either return or compensate for all the items purchased from the inheritance left by his predecessor.

Regarding the functioning of the bodies at the top of the metropolitan administration in the period following Andrei Șaguna’s pastorate, some of the archdiocese accused the metropolitan consistory of conducting its activities with certain “inconveniences” that affected the course of the meetings.⁴ For example, they criticised the fact that Metropolitan Ivașcovici’s resignation had not been analysed and discussed thoroughly enough, or they commented on the fact that Ioan Meșianu was illegally listed in the Consistory, given that he was no longer part of the archdiocese (after being elected vicar of the Consistory in Oradea Mare). It was written that members of the school and episcopal senate had been operating illegally, as their terms of office had expired, or that, for example, Ioan Bran de Lemeny and Iacob Bologa were more concerned with personal interests than with the problems of the Church.

² Johann Schneider and Ioan I. Ică, *Ecleziologia organică a mitropolitului Andrei Șaguna și fundamentele ei biblice, canonice și moderne* (Sibiu: Deisis, 2008), 232.

³ *Protocoalele ședințelor Consistoriului mitropolitan de la 1874 până la 1880*, Arhiva Mitropoliei Ardealului, no. 101/F. M., 31 August 1874.

⁴ *Cele două congrese naționale bisericesci electorali din 1873 și 1874. Materialu la istori’a bisericescă națională* (Sibiu: Tipografia eredei lui G. de Closius, 1875), 52.

The race for the metropolitan seat sparked a genuine confrontation between the intellectual and clerical elites, who did not refrain from personal attacks, insinuations, or provocative statements. However, the stakes for obtaining a seat in the electoral congress were high. Given that the conflict was being waged on several fronts, two main groups distinguishing themselves in this regard: the archdioceses and the suffragans. The debates between the two large groups of electors took place both during the congress (through articles published in *Telegraful Român*, *Albina*, etc.) and after its end (through the publication of anonymous brochures in 1875, 1880, and 1881). The main strategy employed by both influential groups was to secure the necessary number of votes for their desired candidate during the election period by resorting to tactics revealed to us by sources of the time. One of the publications that provides details from behind the scenes of the election is *Cele doue congrese nationale bisericesci electorali din 1873 și 1874. Materialu la istori'a bisericesca nationala* [*The Two National Church Electoral Congresses of 1873 and 1874. Material for the National Church History*], published in 1875, which received a response five years later in another anonymous pamphlet, *Anticritic'a brosiurei anonime publicate asupr'a celor doue congrese naționali bisericesci din 1873 și 1874 (de mai mulți deputați ai majoritatii congreselor dela 1873 și 1874)* [*Anti-criticism of the anonymous pamphlet published about the two national church congresses of 1873 and 1874 (by several deputies of the majority of the congresses of 1873 and 1874)*]. A year later, the reply was published under the title *Respuns la anticritica brosurei anonime publicate asupra celor doue congrese nationale bisericesci din 1873 si 1874. De mai multi deputati ai majoritatii congreselor dela 1873 si 1874 de unii din cei atacați* [*Response to the Anticritica of the anonymous pamphlet published on the two national church congresses of 1873 and 1874. By several deputies of the majority of the congresses of 1873 and 1874 by Some of those attacked*].⁵ These three sources dating from the time attest to the fact that the metropolitan elections were only a pretext for a series of attacks that were not necessarily related to the elections themselves, but rather to the power groups within the Metropolis. If the first pamphlet was written by Ioan Borcia, the attorney of the Archdiocesan Consistory, the response to it

⁵ *Respuns la anticritica brosurei anonime publicate asupra celor doue congrese nationale bisericesci din 1873 si 1874. De mai multi deputati ai majoritatii congreselor dela 1873 si 1874 de unii din cei atacați* (Sibiu: Tipografia eredei lui G. de Closius, 1881).

was formulated by George Barițiu, each of them supporting a certain candidate for the Metropolis.⁶

According to the *Organic Statute*, the organization of the electoral congress was the responsibility of the Metropolitan Consistory, which, on August 31, 1874,⁷ announced the convening of the national church congress for October 27 of the same year, in its dual forms (ordinary and extraordinary). Although the two congresses were convened for the same day, the ordinary one was postponed until November 3. The two months that had passed between the preparatory meeting and the installation of the new metropolitan created the favourable context for some of the most heated debates in the Romanian Orthodox Church. The frictions and biases that arose among the congress deputies revealed the variety of views on the future of the Church and increased the importance of placing, at the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania, a person who was in tune with the national values increasingly embraced by the Romanian intellectual elite.

In the afternoon of October 26, a preparatory meeting for the metropolitan elections was held, presided over by the Bishop of Caransebeș, Ioan Popasu, elected delegate⁸ of the Metropolitan Consistory, with Ilie Măcelariu replacing Ioan Borgia as secretary of the congress. As provided for in the procedure for electing the metropolitan⁹ contained in the *Organic Statute*, the agenda of the first organizational meeting included the presentation of the following documents: the act of resignation of Metropolitan Procopie Ivașcovici of 13 August, 1874; the circular of the Metropolitan Consistory; the address and response of the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction regarding the convening of the electoral congress and the reports of the diocesan consistories on the election of deputies. Behind closed doors, there was much debate until the first round of voting, and the postponement of

⁶ Paul Brusanowski, *Reforma constituțională din Biserica Ortodoxă a Transilvaniei între 1850-1925* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007), 265.

⁷ *Protocolul Congresului extraordinar național-bisericesc al Mitropoliei românilor greco-orientali din Ungaria și Transilvania convocat la 15/27 Octombrie 1874 pentru alegerea de mitropolit* (Sibiu: Editura Mitropoliei, 1876), 3.

⁸ *Protocoalele ședințelor Consistoriului mitropolitan de la 1874*, 31 August 1874.

⁹ Ioan A. de Preda, *Constituția bisericești gr.-or. române din Ungaria și Transilvania sau Statutul Organic comentat și cu concluzile și normele referitoare întregit* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1914), 242.

the election was the result of lengthy disputes over the legitimacy of certain deputies, protests against others, or the rigging of the voting process in several electoral districts. For example, there were discussions about the intervention of a Roman Catholic notary from Remetea in the election of the congressional deputy there, or the flawed voting procedure in the election of Nicolae Paulovici from Teregova,¹⁰ or other protests that postponed the election date. In that context, the idea arose that the validation of the candidates from the archdiocese had been postponed in order to “attract as many members of Popea’s party as possible to Popasu’s.”¹¹

In the race for the highest ecclesiastical dignity, three candidates initially expressed their open or veiled interest in the metropolitan seat, all of whom were prominent figures in the administrative structures of the Metropolis: Bishop Ioan Popasu of Caransebeș, Archiepiscopal Vicar Nicolae Popea, and Vicar of Oradea Mare, Ioan Meșianu. For Ioan Popasu, it was the second election he had run in, having lost a year earlier to former Metropolitan Procopiu Ivașcovi. In the electoral game, however, those around the candidates were essential, as they were the ones responsible for gaining the trust needed to ensure their victory. The support groups formed around the contenders for the high office were the result of long-standing sympathies or antipathies between the archdiocese and those in the suffragan dioceses. In the midst of the election campaign, they turned to prominent figures who could tip the balance in favour of one candidate or another. Thus, in the archdiocese, Archpriest Ioan Hannia encouraged people to vote for Nicolae Popea, while Vincențiu Babeș lobbied for Popasu in Banat and part of the archdiocese. Among those who sympathised with Popasu were lawyer Popa from Mediaș, Dr. Tincu from Orăștie, and teachers from the gymnasium in Brașov, who would have chosen him because of his origins, the latter’s vote being motivated, according to some, by obtaining subsidies for the Romanian gymnasium at the foot of Tâmpa. Accused of “corruption” or “electoral trafficking,”¹³ Popasu’s supporters defended themselves against criticism by arguing that all the deputies who supported a particular candidate “informed

¹⁰ *Protocolul Congresului extraordinar național-bisericesc*, 26-27.

¹¹ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 56.

¹² Teodor Păcățian, “Două alegeri de mitropolit în Sibiu,” *Transilvania* 60, no. 7-8 (1929): 522.

¹³ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 63.

each other.”¹⁴ In fact, their choice for Popasu was based on their admiration for his merits related to the gymnasium in Braşov, his work as a founder of schools in the archpriesthood, the measures he took as bishop in Caransebeş, etc. For other congress members, such as Vincenţiu Babeş’s close associates, Alexandru Mocioni, and Partenie Cosma, it was much more important to clarify issues such as the defence of the Church’s autonomy and the measures that the future metropolitan would take in this regard.

Rumours circulating in the archdiocese announced Archimandrite Nicolae Popea, a devoted disciple of Şaguna, as the future metropolitan, supported by some of the people of Arad, according to *Telegraful Român*.¹⁵ To ensure that luck would be on their side, the archdiocese organized a trial election¹⁶ during the congress, in which Nicolae Popea obtained 37 votes and Ioan Popasu only 2. Popea’s popularity was rooted in the vicariate period during Şaguna’s time, as he was considered a continuator of his projects and the person who could consolidate the Church reforms that had been begun by the former metropolitan. However, these premises were not enough to secure his path to the metropolitan seat in Sibiu. One of the main vectors of support for the vicar’s candidacy was the metropolitan’s official newspaper, which fuelled the debate between the archdiocese and the suffragans. Under the coordination of editor Nicolae Cristea, a series of articles appeared in *Telegraful Român* over the first few days of the congress, in which the supporters of the other candidates were characterized as a group interested in disturbing the peace “in order to put their influence above all moral interests of the Church,”¹⁷ with Vincenţiu Babeş as the first to be directly accused. Regarding the trial elections organized by the archdiocese, a dispute arose between Babeş, Mocioni, and Simeon Mangiuca on one side, and Ioan Borcia, Ioan Cavaler de Puşcariu, Zaharia Boiu, and Nicolae Găetan on the other. The reason for the division was not strictly electoral but was also related to the way in which the archdiocese related to the suffragans and vice versa. Basically, the archdiocese believed that they pursued the

¹⁴ *Anticritic’a brosiurei anonime publicate asupr’a celorou doue congrese naţionale bisericesci din 1873 şi 1874 (de mai mulţi deputaţi ai majoritatiei congreselor dela 1873 şi 1874)* (Sibiu: Tipografia lui S. Filtsch W. Kraft, 1880), 14.

¹⁵ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 83 (1874): 330.

¹⁶ *Cele doue congrese naţionale*, 58.

¹⁷ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 83 (1874): 329-330.

“common good,” while the suffragans were accused of prioritizing “their own interests.”¹⁸ At the same time, the electors coming from Arad and Oradea Mare believed that the election should have been “dictated by the Holy Spirit”¹⁹ and not by selfishness.

On the morning of November 1, the deputies were called upon to express their choice. The candidacy of Bishop Ioan Popasu forced him to resign from the presidency of the congress, a mission assumed by the bishop of Arad, Miron Romanul. On this occasion, Romanul addressed those present and delivered a message reaffirming the importance of the congress, at which freedom of speech and the rights of each deputy were to be guaranteed, and invited the deputies to cast their votes without regard to “kinship, friendship, or any party affiliation.”²⁰ Meanwhile, the congress notary, Paul Rotaru, had prepared the necessary documents for the voting process: the lists of deputies, the files with the names of each deputy (for drawing lots in case of inequality between the number of deputies from the archdiocese and that of the deputies from the suffragan dioceses), and the voting register. In the first round of voting, 56 deputies from the archdiocese were present, and 53 from the dioceses of Caransebeș and Arad. Thus, it was decided to randomly eliminate three of the archdiocese’s electors to ensure parity within the meaning of the regulations for the organization of the congress.

After the deputies cast their votes, Bishop Ioan Popasu obtained 64 votes, surpassing his main opponent, Nicolae Popea, by 24 votes, with one vote going to Bishop Miron Romanul and another left blank. The result surprised the archdiocesan circles, who were counting on the success of Vicar Nicolae Popea, who, until the day of the election, had been relying on at least 48 votes.²¹ The victory achieved by the bishop of Caransebeș was significant, but only the monarch’s confirmation made it final and irrevocable, and, thus, the wait lasted about three weeks. After the election, Ioan Popasu thanked the congress, promising good relations with the representatives of the clergy and laity for “moral, intellectual, and national growth and culture.”²²

¹⁸ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 62.

¹⁹ *Anticritic’a broșurei anonime*, 6.

²⁰ *Protocolul Congresului extraordinar național-bisericesc*, 38.

²¹ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 84 (1874): 333.

²² *Protocolul Congresului extraordinar național-bisericesc*, 44.

During the same session, a delegation led by Ioan Mețianu was appointed to present the election results to Francis Joseph.²³ Those sent to Budapest spent three weeks there, incurring expenses of 1,400 florins, which was considered too long a stay given the monarch's absence. During this period, Bishop Ioan Popasu waited for the decision in Sibiu, while Miron Romanul is said to have gone to the Hungarian capital immediately after the departure of the congress representatives. Thus, some suspected that he had been summoned by the Hungarian rulers of the time to negotiate his political support at the head of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania, a fact reinforced by the long period he spent in Budapest, until the reopening of the congress.²⁴

While awaiting the monarch's resolution, various topics and issues that could be resolved in the Metropolis were discussed in the press, given the simultaneous convening of the ordinary and electoral congresses. The issue of re-establishing the bishoprics of Oradea Mare and Timișoara, a proposal addressed to the ordinary congress, was then brought up again. The election of bishops for the two new suffragan dioceses was considered an opportune moment, given the holding of the electoral congress. In this context, Ioan Cavaler de Pușcariu proposed, in the pages of *Telegraful Român*, the voting method in the event of the (re)establishment of the bishoprics (the archdioceses to take part in the election of suffragan bishops, just as those in the dioceses elect the archbishop and metropolitan) and the territorial reorganisation of the entire metropolitan province (taking into account the endowments and common funds), with the decisions taken incorporated into the *Organic Statute*.²⁵ During the time that elapsed until the official confirmation of the new metropolitan was received, doubt and suspicion increasingly took hold in the hearts and discourse of those involved in the metropolitan's domain. Rumours about the monarch's decision to invalidate the election of Ioan Popasu were quick to surface, and the press circulated various reasons why the confirmation of the bishop of Caransebeș to the highest ecclesiastical office was delayed. The Hungarian press also commented on the metropolitan election in Sibiu, revealing a certain dissatisfaction with

²³ Teodor V. Păcățian and Vasile Oltean, *Mitropolitul Ioan Mețianu (1828-1916)* (Sibiu: Editura Andreiana, 2015), 73.

²⁴ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 67.

²⁵ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 84 (1874): 333.

it.²⁶ However, the archdiocese, supporters of Vicar Nicolae Popea, were suspected of having intervened to prevent the strengthening of the opposing camp's candidate, an accusation they denied in a pamphlet published in 1875, which stated that "if the archdiocese had wanted to prevent Popasu's confirmation, they would have protested immediately."²⁷ Moreover, they claimed that they had mandated Ilarion Pușcariu to support the official delegation from Budapest that was seeking confirmation of Popasu's election.

In the Hungarian capital, discussions surrounding the election took shape during the following week. The decision of the Council of Ministers on November 8²⁸ regarding the electoral congress in Sibiu reveals several pieces of fundamental information that explain the decision to invalidate the election results. Formally, the document does not raise any objections regarding the legal framework of the election or its legitimacy. However, the Hungarian authorities' problem was a substantive one, strictly tied to Bishop Popasu's personality, as he was not particularly well-liked in high government circles. Some measures taken during his seating in Caransebeș were also contested, as was his sympathy for the Romanian National Party and his insufficient knowledge of the official language (which would have prevented him from taking the oath). Nonetheless, the authorities in Budapest would have liked to have a hierarch in Caransebeș who would thus strengthen the sense of belonging to the Hungarian Crown²⁹ within the bishopric structures there, given the overlap of jurisdiction with the territory of the former border regiment. Furthermore, the Budapest Ministry was aware of the agreement that Ioan Popasu had made with Vincențiu Babeș and Ioan Mețianu to secure the necessary number of votes for the metropolitan seat – a pact considered to be immoral. Another issue included in the motivation for rejecting Popasu's confirmation was the interpretation of an article in the congress's organizational regulations regarding the confirmation of the metropolitan by the monarch. Specifically, the text of the government document emphasized that the validation of the elections was not mandatory, as it was also possible to reject them.

²⁶ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 85 (1874): 337.

²⁷ *Cele două congrese naționali*, 70.

²⁸ Kemény G. Gábor, *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában (1867-1892)*, vol. I (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1952), 473.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 474.

In addition to formulating arguments that did not allow the confirmation of Bishop Ioan Popasu in the metropolitan seat, the decision of the Council of Ministers also put forward the name of the preferred candidate: Miron Romanul. By expressing its direct support for the bishop of Arad at that time, the Hungarian Council of Ministers became responsible for influencing his election.³⁰

After the delegation returned from Budapest, the next meeting of the electoral congress was announced, scheduled for November 28, during which the decision made by the emperor at the suggestion of the Hungarian ministers was to be presented. Until the next round of elections was organized, articles appeared in the Metropolitan newspaper suggesting that Popasu's rejection was the result of political interference and encouraging deputies to set aside their personal affinities and work together for the good of the Church in the next election. The same article also refuted some of the information published by the *Tageblatt* newspaper regarding the re-entry into the electoral race of Nicolae Popea, whose responsibilities as vicar were to be taken over by Ilarion Pușcariu in the event of his victory.³¹

On November 28, 1874, under the chairmanship of Bishop Miron Romanul, the electoral congress resumed its work, which, in the absence of other administrative issues, allowed for the organization of the election in a shorter period of time. As expected, the monarch's resolution was not justified during the meeting, which generated numerous interpretations. At the same time, the congress rejected the request of the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction to be notified of the date of the new elections, a request that could not be granted due to a misunderstanding of Article 151 of the *Organic Statute*. The article in question was related to notifying the monarch about the convening of the congress.³² We must also note the flagrant absence of Bishop Popasu, who had left Sibiu a few days earlier following signals received from Budapest, citing illness.³³ Thus, at the suggestion of lawyer Mircea Vasiliu Stănescu from Arad, a commission of three deputies was elected, responsible for composing an official letter informing of the rejection of Bishop Popasu's

³⁰ Ibid., 475.

³¹ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 90 (1874): 356.

³² Article 151 of the *Organic Statute* is commented in Ioan A. de Preda, *Constituția bisericeii gr.-or. române*, 233.

³³ *Cele două congrese naționale*, 67.

election as metropolitan. As we saw in the first round, the polarization of deputies around their favourite candidate heated up the atmosphere when the vote was resumed. Since a new candidacy by Ioan Popasu was unlikely (prevented by the authorities in Budapest³⁴), the archdiocese and suffragans sought new ways to configure their voting options. In the case of the deputies from the archdiocese, the candidate remained Nicolae Popea, for whom they allegedly demanded that the majority of the congress “blindly obey their will³⁵ thus violating constitutional procedure. At the same time, the suffragans were looking for the most suitable candidate, taking into account, however, that Miron Romanul had the confidence vote of the government authorities.

In order to test the opinion of the electoral deputies, a trial vote was organized once again, in which Miron Romanul obtained 29 votes, surpassing Mețianu by only 3 votes.³⁶ A compromise was therefore needed. Thus, Ioan Mețianu renounced his metropolitan aspirations in favour of Miron Romanul “in the best interest of the Church”³⁷ (as he later confessed to Vincențiu Babeș). The price Romanul paid to remain the only candidate from the suffragans was to support the vicar of Oradea Mare in the upcoming elections for the episcopal seat in Arad. This was not the only condition that Miron Romanul had accepted, but there were also other courses of action that he had undertaken before his supporters. These courses of action were related to the agreement with other Romanian prelates on national issues – the liberal interpretation of the *Organic Statute*, or the reform of the *Telegraful Român* program.³⁸ This last measure could be considered a direct attack on those in the archdiocese. In fact, Miron Romanul’s support was not strictly political or conditional on the acceptance of these conditions, but was also linked to his merits in the diocese of Arad or the vicariate of Oradea Mare. A few years after his election, in a brochure published in response to the attacks of the archdiocese, he was described by his supporters as a man dedicated to his priestly career, with the merit of “having ensured the application of the *Statute* in the diocese.”

³⁴ Kemény G. Gábor, *Iratok a nemzetiségi*, 474.

³⁵ *Anticritic’a broșurei anonime*, 6-7.

³⁶ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 77.

³⁷ Vincențiu Babeș and Ștefan Pascu, *Corespondența lui Vincențiu Babeș. Scrisori primite*, vol. I (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1976), 138-139.

³⁸ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 80.

His efforts related to the Arad National Association for Romanian Culture, as well as his work in the House of Magnates in the context of legislative initiatives related to the introduction of the Hungarian language, were also appreciated.³⁹

Although Vincențiu Babeș supported Romanul in the race for the Metropolis, he was not always a sympathiser of the former bishop of Arad. In 1873, in the race for the bishopric of Arad, two groups emerged, each supporting their favourite. On one side, Partenie Cosma and Ioan Popovici Desseanu supported Romanul, and on the other, Vincențiu Babeș supported Ioan Mețianu. They used the two press outlets, *Lumina* and *Albina*, to support their favourite and to publicly debate the reasons each of the two candidates deserved the episcopal seat. The context of the elections in Arad prompted the publication of an article in *Lumina* by Ioan Slavici (a close associate of Miron Romanul at the time) entitled “Ad rem”, in which Romanul was described as having “impeccable morals, a man whose conduct was matched by a national political orientation.”⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, a response article (also called “Ad rem”) appeared in *Albina*, in which Babeș, while acknowledging Romanul’s intellectual and social abilities, accused him of giving up his position as professor of theology for “a government-salaried position contrary and incompatible with the functions of our Church and our law”⁴¹ or that he was “morally dead.”⁴² Therefore, the context of the 1874 elections represented a reconfiguration of the relationship between the two.

With the resumption of the congress on December 2, 1874, a new round of metropolitan elections was organized in the presence of the new president of the congress, Ioan Mețianu. After the presentation of the documents for the ballot by the congressional notary Paul Rotaru, the inequality between the number of deputies from the archdiocese and that of the deputies from the dioceses was once again noted. Specifically, the archdiocese had 53 electors, the diocese of Arad had 25, and the diocese of Caransebeș had only 19, which required the removal, by drawing lots, of nine deputies from the archdiocese. The nine were: Ioan Papiu, Ioan Cavalier de

³⁹ *Anticritic’ a broșurei anonime*, 29.

⁴⁰ Mihaela Bedecian, *Presa și bisericele românești din Transilvania în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea (1865-1873)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2010), 252.

⁴¹ *Albina* 8, no. 85 (1873): 1-2.

⁴² *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 84.

Pușcariu, Nicolae Rusu, Vasiliu Buzdug, Dr. Avram Tincu, Teodor Vrasmasiu, Ioan Codru-Drăgușanu, Nicolae Cristea, and Moise Lazăr. The voting commission was made up of: Ioan Rațiu, Antoniu Mocioni, and Partenie Cosma. We must thus note that the number of deputies with voting rights in this round was much smaller than in the first round, many of them being absent for a variety of reasons. After the procedures were completed, the voters expressed their choice, but the result remained unconvincing. Regarding this round of elections, the anonymous authors of the critical brochure from 1875 mentioned the presence of an “emissary of the regime”⁴³ named Kiss, who was supposed to ensure Romanul’s election. His presence was not enough, given the result obtained by the bishop of Arad. With 43 votes for Romanul and 45 blank ballots (cast by the archdiocese clergy who protested against Popea’s opponent), the election of the metropolitan had to be repeated the following day. Although there were rumours that the election could be confirmed by the monarch even under these circumstances (the arrival of a telegram from Budapest stating this), Miron Romanul preferred that the election be in accordance with the *Organic Statute* so as not to leave room for interpretation or possible challenges.

Hoping that the third round of voting would yield a convincing result, the deputies gathered on December 3 at the “Church of the Transfiguration” in Sibiu Fortress to cast their votes. Since there was no parity among the deputies this time either, it was necessary to eliminate eight of those representing the archdiocese, namely: Ioan Zaharia, Vasile Buzdug, David Almășianu, Dr. Ioan Meșotă, Ioan Bran de Lemeny, Ioan Preda, Nicolae Popovici, and Ilie Măcelariu. With the 88 deputies present, the candidate had to win a minimum of 45 votes to have an absolute majority.

The result? The Bishop of Arad finally won the electoral congress vote with a majority of 51 votes against Vicar Nicolae Popea, who received no more than 31 votes, with the remaining six being blank votes. Of course, the victory did not belong only to Miron Romanul, but to his entire support group, which would gain more and more ground in the decision-making structures of the Metropolis in the coming period. Among the most active and deeply involved in future decision-making, we mention here: Vincențiu Babeș, Alexandru Mocioni, and Partenie Cosma. At the same meeting, the

⁴³ Ibid., 80.

commission responsible for composing the address announcing the election of the new metropolitan to the emperor was appointed, consisting of Ioan Hania, Vincențiu Babeș, and Traian Miescu. Before concluding the meeting, the newly elected metropolitan expressed his gratitude for the vote of confidence he had received and assured those present that he would strive to work on “building the great national ecclesiastical edifice, whose foundation has already been laid in our *Organic Statute*.”⁴⁴

Three weeks later, the monarch’s confirmation of Miron Romanul’s election as metropolitan arrived in Sibiu, reaching the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy at only 46 years of age.⁴⁵ In fact, *Budapesti-Közlöny* and *Wiener Zeitung*, had already announced his confirmation.⁴⁶ From the report of the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, we learn that the election also fulfilled the wishes of the Hungarian government, which proposed to Francis Joseph I the confirmation of the newly elected hierarch, requesting that he be granted the status of private advisor.⁴⁷ From then on, all that remained was the installation of the new prelate in the metropolitan seat of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania and Hungary, an event scheduled for December 27, 1874. Following the protocol established by the *Organic Statute*, after the Matins service performed in the Church of the Transfiguration, the members of the congress and the priests were to lead the new metropolitan from the metropolitan residence to the church where he was to be installed. The ritual was followed by the reading of the ministerial document confirming the election and the speech of the president of the electoral congress, Ioan Meșianu. This was followed by the inaugural speech of Metropolitan Romanul, after which the Holy Liturgy was celebrated. Although those who did not look kindly on Romanul criticized the installation as being “too pompous” to give the impression that “the joy was universal,”⁴⁸ the scale of the event was doubled by the anniversary of the first decade since the reestablishment of the Metropolis of Transylvania, which was now in its third ecclesiastical leadership in such a short time.

⁴⁴ *Protocolul Congresului extraordinar național-bisericesc*, 80.

⁴⁵ Ilie Dinurseni, *Arhiepiscopul și metropolitul Dr. Miron Romanul. Date adunate și edate* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1898), 4.

⁴⁶ *Telegraful Român* 22, no. 95 (1874): 374.

⁴⁷ Kemény G. Gábor, *Iratok a nemzetiségi*, 475.

⁴⁸ *Cele doue congrese naționali*, 84.

In his speech as president of the congress, Ioan Meșianu spoke about the importance of electing a metropolitan for a Church bereft of a hierarchy, about the legacy of Andrei Țaguna and the pastoral care of Metropolitan Ivașcovici, and about the concerns caused by the cancellation of the first metropolitan elections. At the same time, the vicar of Oradea Mare thanked the deputies for putting the interests of the Church above their personal interests, voting for the one who “will know how to combine the interests of the Church with those of the homeland in the best sense,”⁴⁹ emphasizing that the goal of the Church and the priests was to ensure “the good and happiness of the faithful of our Church, both here on earth and beyond the grave,” the elections of bishops or archbishops being only the means by which this goal could be achieved.

“The ways in which providence has designated individuals to contribute to the common goals of human society are unforeseeable.”⁵⁰ This is how the new metropolitan began his inaugural speech. He also highlighted the legacy left by Metropolitan Țaguna, declaring himself ready to assume the responsibilities of his new pastoral work, which he exercised for the next 24 years: to shepherd the Church of Christ in accordance with the Gospel and church canons, to develop church institutions based on the *Organic Statute* and to strengthen the role of priests in the community. He also spoke about obedience to the authorities and to the emperor, assuring them that he would also be concerned with maintaining the autonomy of church institutions. Last but not least, the metropolitan spoke to those present about the importance of ties with people of other nationalities or religions, and about the spiritual and moral formation of believers through the network of confessional schools.

Much has been written about the 1874 electoral congress in the period that followed, and what was discussed behind closed doors remains largely unknown to this day. What is certain is that during the two months of the congress (which was extended due to the repeated elections, as we have seen), the competition between the various power groups became increasingly acute. This state of affairs continued for many years thereafter, and the attitude of Metropolitan Romanul proved decisive in either smoothing over or fuelling the differences.

⁴⁹ *Protocolul Congresului extraordinar național-bisericesc*, 118.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

In the Romanian political landscape of the final decades of the 19th century, the competition between passivists and activists involved figures from the ecclesiastical world who were present in the political movements of the time. This division also animated those interested in the political orientation of the person who was to represent the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania. The activist past of the former hierarch Șaguna called for caution in choosing the metropolitan in the context of the passive orientation increasingly promoted by the leaders of the Romanian National Party in Transylvania.

Coming from a region part of the former (pre-1867) province of Hungary, where interaction and collaboration with the authorities in Pest and then Budapest was part of normal political life (unlike in Transylvania), Miron Romanul inherited the habit of collaboration with the political decision-makers of the time, which placed him, to a certain extent, in line with the activist attitude promoted by Andrei Șaguna. However, part of the intellectual elite of the time, who gained an essential role in the decision-making structures of the Church, adopted a passive attitude, which they tried to impose on the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Present in government structures since his time in Arad and Oradea Mare, Miron Romanul adopted an open attitude in his collaboration with the Hungarian authorities. Initially, the hierarch's interest in politics began in 1861, when he was involved in organizing the Romanians in Arad into a national party, which he presided.⁵¹ Eight years later, in 1869, he held the position of deputy in the Parliament, a position that allowed him to become familiar with government policy.

As a metropolitan, although he continued to defend the autonomy of the Church following the model of Șaguna,⁵² he was criticized for his moderate stance on the national cause. The criticism he attracted was mostly articulated by representatives of the Romanian National Party, who could only conceive of the relationship between the Church and the nation in terms of the former's subordination to the latter.⁵³ Contested by some and appreciated by others, Metropolitan Miron Romanul was far from having led an easy

⁵¹ Ilie Dinurseni, *Arhiepiscopul și metropolitul*, 2.

⁵² Keith Hitchins and Sorana Georgescu-Gorjan, *Afirmarea națiunii. Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania (1860-1914)* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2000), 167.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 169.

pastoral life.⁵⁴ In order to manage the metropolitan province, he needed, first and foremost, a good understanding and collaboration with the archdiocese, which he also served as archbishop, most of whom were devoted and deeply attached to the Șaguna legacy. Throughout his pastorate, Miron Romanul expressed his admiration for Șaguna, aware of the pressure that succession to the metropolitan throne placed on his shoulders. The context that favoured his becoming metropolitan has often been questioned. And not without reason. Although he enjoyed the support of a significant part of the intellectual and ecclesiastical elite of the time, the support he received from Hungarian political circles caught the attention of his critics. During his nearly quarter-century of ministry, his activity constantly oscillated between those at the top (high government politics) and those close to him (the metropolitan administration), navigating with tact and diplomacy among the measures imposed by political decision-makers and striving to defend the interests of the Romanian people.

⁵⁴ Antonie Plămădeală, *Lupta împotriva deznaționalizării românilor din Transilvania în timpul dualismului austro-ungar în vremea lui Miron Romanul, 1874-1898. După acte, documente și corespondențe* (s.n., 1986), 33.