

This research aims to bring additional knowledge and understanding regarding the life and activity of Archbishop Teofil Herineanu, one of the Romanian hierarchs whom history has unfortunately wronged, leaving him almost forgotten in the dusty corners of memory. Through this work, we strive to closely examine the personality of this great hierarch, who played a prominent role from the end of the first half of the last century (a period culminating in the establishment of communism) both within the Church and in serving his fellow people, until three decades ago when he passed into eternity.

In essence, our endeavor has been to document his life and activity through evidence, documents, and testimonies that verify and complete them, focusing on analyzing his reactions to the difficult situations he encountered.

As a hierarch of the Church, he spanned the entire communist period—elected bishop in 1949, serving until his passing in 1992—his activity being marked by the "abominations" and turmoil of times that were difficult for the Church.

We strongly believe that "history is the teacher of life" and that, therefore, it can help us eliminate past mistakes, especially now, when a change is more necessary than ever in Romanian society. The elaboration of this work was born precisely from the desire to present some key events from our recent history, particularly the early decades of communism, marked by the regime's attempt to destroy not only political opposition but also culture and faith.

The biographical study of Hierarch Herineanu aims to define his personality and demonstrate his undeniable contribution to Romania's historical trajectory in the second half of the last century.

Through a deep study of his life, we concluded that he dedicated his entire existence to the service of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian nation.

We have structured this work into six chapters, attempting, as much as possible, to capture the most relevant aspects of Teofil Herineanu's biography, cultural activity, and leadership, first as the Bishop of Roman and Huși, and later as the Bishop and Archbishop of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj.

The Romanian Orthodox Church attained the status of an autocephalous (independent) Church after numerous efforts and trials that can be traced throughout its historical past.

Generally, we speak of the Romanian Orthodox Church as being firmly established starting in the 14th century.

As far as we know, the movement for the recognition of autocephaly began immediately after the Union of the Romanian Principalities (1859) and the unification of their state life (1862), which also made necessary the organization of the national Church in line with Romania's new, considerably elevated political status.

The recognition of the Church's autocephaly in 1885 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate brought great satisfaction and joy in Romania, both among ecclesiastical and lay circles.

Obtaining autocephaly was the crucial and decisive step toward the establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate in 1925, thereby crowning centuries of ecclesiastical efforts that elevated Romanian Orthodoxy not only on the domestic front but also internationally.

The unification of the Romanian national state in 1918 required the reorganization of its key public institutions, including the unification and organization of the Orthodox Church across all Romanian territories under the leadership of the Holy Synod in Bucharest.

The relationship between Church and State is one of mutual recognition. The Church and the State must be in harmony. For what happened during the communist years, a significant part of the blame also falls on the preceding political regimes, which, instead of granting greater freedom to the Church so it could become an independent institution, merely used rhetoric while, in reality, attempting to annex it to their political interests.

The Church knew that its mission was not to fight against the State or an unjust system like communism, but rather to find solutions in those times to defend the ancestral faith and national values.

The events of December 1989 found the Church-State relationship in an unfortunate situation. On one hand, the Church was accused of collaborationism; on the other, it lacked a legal

framework to establish its relationship with the post-communist political power. After the fall of communism, the situation of religious denominations improved significantly, at least in terms of their official recognition and acceptance.

Today, the Romanian Orthodox Church is a well-established institution, with a dynamic and active presence in society, capable of responding to the imperatives of the era, guiding the nation toward the long-desired harbor of prosperity, stability, and peace.

It is worth noting that, in recent years, the history of the Church has become a privileged domain of historical science in Romania, becoming a subject of research and critical debate from both perspectives. From case studies to exhaustive analyses, we are witnessing an ever-expanding body of literature that is constantly enriched by diverse and comprehensive research efforts. Through this, not only institutions but also personalities who shaped the Church and placed it within the complex reality of their times are brought to light.

The memorable act of December 1, 1918—the Union of Transylvania with Romania—created opportunities for the assertion of Transylvanian Orthodoxy.

On July 8, 1921, the Royal Decree establishing the Diocese of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj, with its headquarters in Cluj, was published in the Official Gazette, and on September 28, 1921, the first bishop of Cluj, Archimandrite Nicolae Ivan, was elected.

Following the passing of Nicolae Ivan on February 3, 1936, the episcopal seat of the Diocese of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj remained vacant. On April 29, 1936, the Church Electoral College elected Nicolae Colan.

In 1957, after Bishop Nicolae Colan of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj was elected Metropolitan of Transylvania, the Cluj diocese became vacant. On December 19 of that same year, Teofil Herineanu was appointed to lead it.

He was always concerned with combating sectarian movements, carried out major repairs on churches and parish houses, and was engaged in writing, publishing articles in various

periodicals, as well as sermons, meditations, and translations. He had a particular interest in translating I. B. Chautard's work *The Soul of the Apostolate* from French into Romanian.

A man of prayer and Scripture, he built his entire pastoral ministry on these foundations and instilled them as core principles in the consciences of the priests he guided.

From his installation as bishop in December 1957, he worked tirelessly to recover Church properties and expand theological education by constructing new buildings for the Eparchial Center and Theological Seminary.

One of his greatest joys was the rediscovery of the icon at Nicula Monastery.

We wish to emphasize that one of the reasons for choosing this topic is our admiration and love for our past, as well as for the exceptional personality of Archbishop Teofil Herineanu, whom we aim to introduce to contemporary and future generations.

A man of both the Church and his nation, Teofil Herineanu fought for the affirmation of ecclesiastical, cultural, national, and social values, engaging in their protection and promotion for the renewal of the Church and the regeneration of the nation.

In his long pastoral journey—43 years as a hierarch, covering an extensive geographical area—Bishop and later Archbishop Teofil visited hundreds of parish and monastic churches, always delivering teachings, encouraging the construction of new churches, and restoring existing ones in the traditional Romanian style.

Our research results unequivocally demonstrate the significant role Herineanu played in Romania's historical development.

How was he perceived by his contemporaries? Respected and ridiculed, courted by politicians, betrayed and loyally supported, Archbishop Teofil remained steadfast through the many turbulent years of change.

He exercised moderation in all things—compassionate, prayerful, and patient, a formidable negotiator who rarely lost a battle. Through perseverance and diligence, he successfully fulfilled his mission of keeping the Church united in stormy times.

He left behind a Church firmly rooted in faith, open to dialogue, united, and respected.

The complexity of this research topic was approached objectively, evaluating facts impartially and academically, while navigating through diverse perspectives on Herineanu. The bibliography includes both general and specialized works, memoirs, secular and ecclesiastical press, as well as documents from the CNSAS Archives.