

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
85 (4), pp. 147-172, 2020

Father and Academic Professor Niculae **M. Popescu - Contributions to the Research of the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church and Byzantine Music**

Zaharia MATEI

Zaharia MATEI

University of Bucharest

Email: mateizaharia@yahoo.com

Abstract

The great priest and academic professor Niculae M. Popescu was one of the most emblematic figures within the Romanian Orthodox Church and within the Theological section of the University of Bucharest in the first half of the XX century. Raised in the Orthodox spirit, Niculae M. Popescu studied in the Theological School “Nifon Mitropolitul” and in the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, while his PhD studies were completed in Vienna. Because of his critical and rigorous spirit, but also due to his high level theological qualifications, he became distinguishable to the clerical authorities in Bucharest who gave him the title of main editor of a few magazines of the Church. He was highly appreciated for his historical and documentative nature reflected in his studies and researches. For this reason, the teaching body of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest named him University Professor of the History Section. He was praised and appreciated by scholar Nicolae Iorga and thus, became a member of the Romanian Academy and vice-president of the highest academic forum in Romania. Alongside his pastoral and university vocations, he was also an accomplished musician. Niculae M. Popescu elaborated his first creations of Romanian musicology dedicated to the Romanian preceptor, Macarie Ieromonahul. Due to his bass vocal tone, composer D. G. Kiriac recruited him as a member of the well-known Romanian choir, “Carmen”, which he also conducted for a long time, as the head of the choral association. His historical

and musicological published creations, as well as his ecclesiastical and academic stance, made father professor Nicolae M. Popescu one of the most enlightening figures within the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the Romanian people.

Keywords

Nicolae M. Popescu, historical studies, byzantine musicology, Macarie Ieromonahul, psaltic music, Carmen Choral Society.

I. Short introduction

Among the great figures of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the Romanian people, there is a very important place dedicated to Nicolae M. Popescu, a distinguished teacher of the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church within the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest and a title member of the Romanian Academy during the first half of the 20th century. Despite passing more than half a century from his death, the face of the father was never forgotten, but remained instilled in the hearts of his disciples, who knew his life on the whole, his joys, his challenges and his sadnesses.

The moral portrait, that of priest and teacher, remains a model for the following generations of priests and theology professors. He was devoted to his dual vocation; the liturgical one and the didactic one. This paper will present his life, activity, preoccupations and his contribution to the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of byzantine music.

II. Life and activity

II.1. Early studies; university and doctoral studies

Nicolae M. Popescu was born on the 10th/22nd of February 1881 in a traditional priest family¹, which dated back to the 18th Century in a

¹ Details referring to the life and activity of Nicolae M. Popescu can be found in clerical magazines, written by prestigious professors of theology such as: Pr. Prof. Ioan RĂMUREANU, "Cuvântare la moartea Pr. Prof. Nicolae M. Popescu (†11 feb. 1963)", in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXXXI (1963 1-2, pp. 77-80; Nicolae I. ȘERBĂNESCU, "† Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu", in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXXXI (1963 1-2, pp. 72-82; Gheorghe ALEXE, "La moartea părintelui profesor Nicolae M. Popescu", in: *Glasul Bisericii*, XXII (1963 3-4, pp. 72-82; Victor POPESCU, "Papa Nae de la biserica Boteanu", in: *Glasul Bisericii*, XXIX (1970)

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

village called Dâmbovicioara, near Titu, Plasa Bolintinu in the county of Dâmbovița².

His parents were Mihai and Dumitra Popescu; his father was a lectern singer at the church in Dâmbovicioara. His grandfather, Dumitru, was a priest and had led the community in Dâmbovicioara between 1852 and 1868, passing away at the age of 46. He remained in the collective memory of his community as a veritable priest. This way, father Nicolae M. Popescu will have owed the choice of becoming a priest to his grandfather. In a piece dedicated to his grandfather, Nicolae M. Popescu emotionally recollects that

“When I was a child, my grandmother took me to the church, by the altar window, and showed me my grandfather’s cross where he laid since he passed away in 1868, at the age of 46. I never met him but the fact that I became a priest and that I fight for keeping a pure soul is due to his memory. The village elders said that a priest like father Dumitru was rare to find in our surroundings”³.

1-2, pp. 72-79; Ioan RĂMUREANU, “Prof. Pr. Dr. Nicolae M. Popescu (1881-1863)”, in: “Centenarul Facultății și Institutului de Teologie din București”, in: *Studii Teologice*, XXXIV (1982) 1-2, pp. 45-46; Dr. Dorina N. RUSU, *Membrii Academiei Române*, Mic Dicționar, Fundația Academică “Petre Andrei”, publishing A 92, Iași, 1996, pp. 290-291; Gheorghe C. IONESCU, *Muzica bizantină în România*, Dicționar cronologic, Ed. Sagittarius, 2003, pp. 327-329; Pr. Prof. Dr. Adrian GABOR, “Preotul prof. dr. Nicolae M. Popescu (1881-1883)”, in: vol.: *Studia ecclesiastica. Contribuții în domeniul istoriei bisericești ale profesorilor de la Facultatea de Teologie din București*, București, Ed. Bizantină, 2003, pp. 52-68. In his study, father prof. Adrian Gabor presents a complete bibliographic list regarding father prof. Nicolae M. Popescu; *** *Dicționar de muzică bisericească românească*, Basilica, 2013, pp. 651-652; Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu – la 50 de ani de la trecerea sa la cele veșnice, în: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, IV / CXXXI (2013) 3, pp. 321-336 (this study was written at the request of father archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, director of the Library of the Holy Synod), and was republished under the following title: “Părintele academician profesor Nicolae M. Popescu (1881-1863)”, in: *Chipuri de lumină 2, Renumiți preoți de mir din trecutul Arhiepiscopiei Bucureștilor*, Ed. Cuvântul Vieții a Mitropoliei Munteniei și Dobrogei, București, 2015, pp. 33-43

² According to the data mentioned in the transcript paper no. 41 from the Registry of transcript papers, within the archives of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest.

³ Pr. Nicolae M. POPESCU, *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul*, Basilica, București, 2015, p. 141.

He went to primary school in Braniștea, near Titu, and in the autumn of 1893 he was admitted top of the list to the Theological School *Nifon Mitropolitul*. In the theological school, he mastered the study of classic languages, history and clerical music⁴. There, he gained a solid theological preparation due to remarkable teachers, such as Dr. Father and orientalist Constantin Popescu (1849-1928), father Ștefan Călinescu (1874-1915), schoolbook publisher and dr. Constantin Chiricescu⁵, Ion Popescu-Pasărea, who was a composer and protopsalt, Gheorghe Brătianu as teacher of linear music⁶, Constantin Georgian who was his Latin teacher, Constantin Banu, teaching the Romanian language and history, and finally, Gheorghe Țițeica, future university professor and academic⁷. For unknown reasons, in February 1901, he left Theology School, an institution which “had formed the basis of his cultural intellect” and became teacher and preparator at several schools in Bucharest. Following his highschool exam, he was admitted to “Saint Sava” National College, where he took the baccalaureate in June of 1902. In the autumn of 1902, he applied to both the Faculty of Letters-Philosophy and to the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. During his studies at the Faculty of Theology, he learned from distinguished professors such as dr. Dragomir Demetrescu for the Universal history of the church, dr. Constantin Chiricescu, mentioned above, dr. Dumitru Boroianu for Church law, father Constantin Gh. Nazarie for Moral theology, dr. Ioan Mihălcescu – the future metropolitan Irineu of Moldova- for Dogmatic theology and dr. Badea Cireșeanu for Practical, homiletic, liturgical and pastoral theology.

At the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, he enjoyed the presence of some illustrious professors, such as Nicolae Iorga, Dimitrie Onciul, the slav

⁴ Niculae I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “Ț Preotul profesor Niculae M. Popescu...”, p. 72.

⁵ On December 5th of 1894, dr. Constantin Chiricescu was admitted for the first time among the teachers of the Faculty of Theology, Bucharest, under an interim. He taught the *History of dogma* and *Patrology* and did so until 1928. Later on, on the 10th of October 1908 he was promoted as dean, according to Pr. Conf. Dr. Daniel BENGĂ and to Lect. dr. Alexandru-Ionuț TUDORIE, in: *Istoricul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă Justinian Patriarhul a Universității din București* (1881-2013), Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2013, pp. 30-31 și 41.

⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicu MOLDOVEANU, *Istoria muzicii bisericești la români*, Ed. Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2010, p. 405.

⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Niculae M. Popescu...”, p. 322.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

Ioan Bugdan and the geographer Simion Mehedinți, all future members of the Romanian Academia.⁸

In June 1907, Nicolae M. Popescu took his Bachelor exam in Theology under the guidance of Nicolae Dobrescu⁹, elaborating on a thesis entitled *Viața și activitatea dascălului de cântări Macarie Ieromonahul*¹⁰, which he published in the following year. Following the defense of his thesis, he received *Magna cum laude*, as can be observed in the second page of his transcript paper attached above. In 1908, he took his Bachelor exam at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy. He got married to Eufrosina Avramescu¹¹, a priest's daughter from Târgoviște. On the 29th of August 1908, he was ordained deacon in the metropolitan church by high priest Nifon Ploieșteanu¹² and was appointed to the church of Zamfira Monastery, Prahova county, where we served only for 2 years. In 1909, the former House of the Church sent him to Banat to research the Romanian churches there, which culminated in a publishing about impressions and interesting

⁸ Pr. Prof. dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, "Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...", p. 322.

⁹ An honourable professor of History of the Romanian Church and a disciple of Nicolae Iorga. He obtained his PhD in History at University of Vienna. In 1911, he became a correspondent member of the Romanian Academy. He was mentioned by Nicolae Iorga in *Răspunsul său* at the reception speech held by father professor Nicolae M. Popescu. He received the title of member of the Romanian Academy during the meeting on June 3rd 1925 ("Răspunsul d-lui N. Iorga", in: *Discursuri de recepție (1919-1936)*, publishing of Academia Româna, Bucharest, 2005, p. 429). Unfortunately, Nicolae Dobrescu died in 1914, at 40 years old. (Pr. Conf. Dr. Daniel BENGA, in: *Istoricul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă...*, Cap. I, p. 34.)

¹⁰ It is important to highlight the fact that, during that time, there was no teaching body of Clerical Music within the Faculty of Theology. This subject was studied and deepened during seminars taught by psaltic music professors. However, the graduates were still able to elaborate on clerical music themes when writing their bachelor theses. Thus, father Nicolae M. Popescu became university professor of History of the Romanian Church in 1922. He allowed the students freedom in choosing subjects related to his domain. A good example is represented by Grigorie Băbuș, who lived within the Cheia Monastery and later on became archimandrite and served at the Patriarchal Cathedral. He also became director of the Library of the Holy Synod and his thesis, *Bibliografia tipăriturilor psaltice ale lui Anton Pann*, was published in 2000, publishing Christiana.

¹¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, "Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...", p. 323.

¹² Pr. N. M. POPESCU, *Preoți de mir...*, p. 147 și Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea. PĂCURARIU, "Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...", p. 323.

facts entitled *Prin Banatul Timișoarei* for the *Romanian Orthodox Church* magazine, and a list of the old books he found¹³. In the autumn of 1910, he obtained a specialization scholarship for History at the University of Vienna, just like his thesis coordinator. In Vienna, he followed courses of Greek and Slavic philology, with teachers such as the famous Czech historian Konstantin Joseph Jirecek (1854-1918)¹⁴, who was also a memorable member of the Romanian Academia since 1914. During his studies in Vienna, deacon Niculae M. Popescu served the Romanian chapel in Löwelstrasse, which was opened and sanctified in 1906 due to the efforts of military priest Virgil Ciobanu (later on, medic and head medic at the Health School in Cluj)¹⁵. After finishing his studies there, in 1913 he obtains the PhD in History through his thesis *Nifon Patriarhul Constantinopolului*¹⁶.

Once he returned to his country, he was ordained deacon at the Cotroceni church in Bucharest, where he served until 1920. Around 1915, he was appointed as redaction secretary for magazine *Amvonul*, edited by the *Societatea clerului român Ajutorul*, and from 1916 until 1919 he was the secretary of the aforementioned editor society¹⁷. In this period of time, he published many pieces that appeared in books, studies and articles in the issues of the *Amvonul*, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, *Convorbiri Literare* și *Revista Ortodoxă* magazines, which will be presented in the chapter dedicated to his work.

The Great Union of Romania in 1918 marks the starting point for a new chapter in deacon Niculae M. Popescu's life. In 1919 he was appointed director of the Office of the Holy Metropolitan of Hungrovlachia¹⁸, though he was only a deacon. On December 13th 1920, he was ordained priest at the church *Schitu Măgureanu* by high priest Platon Ciosu Ploieșteanu¹⁹. Here,

¹³ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, "† Preotul Profesor Niculae M. Popescu...", p. 73.

¹⁴ This renowned professor and historian was a friend of Nicolae Iorga ("Răspunsul d-lui N. Iorga", p. 430).

¹⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea. PĂCURARIU, "Preotul Profesor Academician Niculae M. Popescu...", p. 35.

¹⁶ The paper was appreciated among specialists and was published in *Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, vol.II, XXXVI (1913-1914), pp. 731-798 (and extract, 68 p.).

¹⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea. PĂCURARIU, "Preotul Profesor Academician Niculae M. Popescu...", p. 323.

¹⁸ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, "† Preotul Profesor Niculae M. Popescu...", p. 74.

¹⁹ Pr. N. M. POPESCU, *Preoți de mir...*, p. 147; Father Prof. Dr.. Mircea Păcurariu, "Preotul Profesor Academician Niculae M. Popescu...", p. 325.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

he served until 1926 when he was transferred to church *Boteanu* where he served until 1933. For a short period of time, he fulfilled many clerical duties such as the one of director of the Office of the Holy Metropolitan of Hungrovlachia (1919-1923), during the primary metropolitan rule of Miron Cristea, the future Patriarch of Romania and director of the Theology School *Nifon Mitropolitul* (August 15th 1923 - March 31st 1924)²⁰.

II.2. The didactic activity within the Faculty of Theology

In 1933, he decided to remain only with the position of professor for the History of the Romanian Church, which he won in a didactic contest on June 1st 1922, following into the footsteps of his teacher Nicolae Dobrescu, who passed away in 1914²¹. Nicolae M. Popescu, a priest who grew by God's side, wanted to dedicate himself in a particular way to his university work, thus getting very involved into the spiritual and scholarly formation of the future soul shepherds.

At the Faculty of Theology, he had the honour of teaching alongside his former teachers: Dragomir Demetrescu, Dumitru Boroianu, the iconom Constantin Nazarie, Ioan Mihălcescu (the future metropolitan Irineu of Moldova). Then, he also had the joy of teaching alongside a newer generation such as: Ioan-Popescu Mălăiești, Șerban Ionescu, Petre Vintilescu, Teodor M. Popescu, Grigore Cristescu, Haralambie Rovența, Vasile Ispir, Nichifor Crainic, Ioan Coman; he taught next to professors from other faculties: Lazăr Iacob, Grigore Pișculescu (Gala Galaction) and the archimandrite Iuliu Scriban, and also taught along former teaching assistants that became professors: Nicolae Chițescu, Emilian Vasilescu, Ioan Rămureanu, Ene Braniște, Gheorghe Moisescu (his lecture successor), Nicolae Nicolaescu. They all represented the pillars of the theological system of education in Bucharest. A good part of his disciples became very important Church clerics and theology professors. Among these, Justinian Marina, the patriarch and

²⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. M. PĂCURARIU, "Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...", p. 325.

²¹ In order to work as professor of History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, father Nicolae M. Popescu received the recommendation of professor Ioan Popescu-Mălăiești, professors Ioan Mihălcescu and Dumitru Boroianu. On June 20, 1922, the teaching council accepted the ministerial order to offer the job of university professor to him. (Pr. Prof. Dr. A. GABOR, "Pr. Prof. Nicolae M. Popescu (1881-1963)", in *Studia ecclesiastica...*, p. 54.)

the metropolitan of Oltenia, Firmilian, as well as many other monastery abbots, diocese counselors, archpriests and priests served throughout the whole country and especially within the metropolitan of Hungrovlachia. Moreover, a significant part of the graduates of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest managed to put together and defend many PhD theses under his guidance. Among these, we must mention: Constantin Tomescu (1927), Toma Bulat (1927), who would both later become professors at the Faculty of Theology in Chişinău, the folk priest Dumitru Furtună from Dorohoi (1927), father Constantin Bobulescu from Iaşi, father professor Gheorghe Cotoşman from the Academy of Theology in Caransebeş (1941), deacon Gheorghe Moisescu (1942) who was the parson of the Romanian Orthodox community in Vienna for quite some time and who assisted and succeeded his teaching chair in 1950, deacon Ion Popescu-Cilienii (1945), father Nicolae Şerbănescu (1947) who became the head of his chair later on, and father Gheorghe Liţiu from Arad (1948)²². In 1931, he established a body of publishing that lasted until 1946 when he retired. There, 20 issues debating themes related to the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church, issues related to clerical music and liturgy have been published. Nine of these issued publications contain his signature²³. During his chair activity, he supported conferences at Sala Dalles in Bucharest and at the Summer folk University in Vălenii de Munte, founded and supported by Nicolae Iorga, and proposed historical contexts related to the Romanian folk song which he loved and felt very tied to. Regarding the academic quality of his courses, the regrettable father professor Nicolae Şerbănescu, who was one of his disciples, confessed that: “As university professor, he never forced anyone to participate in his course and yet, during the course of History of the Romanian Church, the room was full of students because his way of talking would enchant through the beauty of his phrase and would maintain the attention through clarity and the logical flow of ideas. The goal he chased was to teach his students to make history. His lectures were usually ending in a succinct summary, and the protagonists were pictured so as to remain in one’s mind. This made it possible for students to affirm

²² For a complete list of all bachelor and PhD graduates of father Nicolae M. Popescu, see: Pr. Prof. Dr. A. GABOR, *Studia ecclesiastica...*, pp. 54-56. Here, the author wrote down all of the titles written by each candidate under the guidance of father N. M. Popescu.

²³ N. I. ŞERBĂNESCU, “† Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 74.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

themselves so that today, after 10 years passed from his teachings, we see faces such as father Montanus from

Singidunum, St. Nicetas of Remesiana, Sabbas the Goth, metropolitan Iachint of Vicina and Petru Movilă, or deacon Coresi the typographer and so on. Father professor Nicolae M. Popescu was always well informed on the subject of matter. Scientific talks with him were meant to fill one with enthusiasm and love towards our past under all aspects. Unfortunately, he did not manage to go through the entire History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, nor was he able to leave a legacy synthesis of this course after he passed away. He was a perfectionist, which is why elaborating on a course book for the History of the Romanian Church was delayed as much as possible, until the time of his death”²⁴.

II. 3. Member of the Romanian Academy

As acknowledgement for the values of his historic research, he was named corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, one of the highest cultural forum of the country, on the 10th on June 1920 due to the proposals of Nicolae Iorga, the Bukovina historian Dimitrie Onciul and the slav Ioan Bogdan²⁵. On July 5th 1923, he was chosen to replace Dimitrie Onciul as head member, in the event of his death (October 26, 1856 - †March 20, 1923). The welcoming tradition into the Romanian academy consisted in a eulogy speech of the new member dedicated to his successor. Therefore, Nicolae M. Popescu evoked the personality and contribution to the History of Romanians of the illustrious historian Dimitrie Onciul, who was recognized from imposing the German school method upon the research field²⁶. In his speech, Nicolae Iorga was addressing the portrait of the newcomer very sweetly:

²⁴ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “†Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, pp. 76-77.

²⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 327.

²⁶ In his speech, father Nicolae M. Popescu pointed out the teaching activity of Dimitrie Onciul at the University of Bucharest, from 1895 and presented the essence of his main studies and historical researches regarding the Romanian population situated on the left of the Danube before the 13th century. The historian was contradicting through his study, the theory of Robert Roesler. Roesler argued that there was no Romanian population there until the Hungarians settled there. At the same time, N. M. Popescu highlighted the strictness and scientific thoroughness of Dimitrie Onciul and how his writings contributed to the unravelling of certain historical dilemmas regarding the history of Romanians. [N. M. POPESCU, “Dimitrie Onciul cu Răspuns de N. Iorga”, in: *Academia Română – Discursuri de recepție (1919-1936)...*, pp. 415-431.]

“For the first time, a priest from the Old Kingdom enters the Academy, a simple priest, who used to be a deacon not too far back, who wears the clothes of Teoctist and Macarie, Eftimie and Azarie, of chronicle writers and rulers, of Varlaam and Dosoftei, of Antim and Damaschin, of Chesarie the enlightened and of the holy father Veniamin, of Dionisie Lupu and Dionisie Romano with humility and pride. A priest who has a church and fulfills his daily church duties, who performs sacramental confession and the Eucharist, who baptizes, marries and blesses the bodies of the dead, a priest who comes to us full of knowledge about suffering and of the gentleness of humanity’s comfort. A humble apostle-like priest...”²⁷.

Towards the end of his response, Nicolae Iorga wholeheartedly advised the newcomer of the Romanian Academy to research and highlight the actions and challenges of his clerical successors of the old Church:

“You have the knowledge of the byzantologist, the knowledge, the patience and the piety of the byzantologist. Stay connected, before all, to the story of the Romanian clergy, because due to its cultural actions, it must be researched in its entirety including every monk or teacher, painter, sculptor, jeweler, and no less—because you are passionate towards the hymn author, Macarie and you yourself have a blessed voice. But whenever you can, look also to the side. Make connections between ours and others’ role here in order to show that we lived for the people too, and not only for blood sacrifices owed to the humanistic culture defended here”²⁸.

At that moment, Nicolae M. Popescu was the only priest in the Romanian Academy. Before him, there were members of the “historical section”: bishop Melchisedec of the Roman and Nicolae Popea of Caransebeș, professor Constantin Erbiceanu from the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest²⁹. After he was welcomed to the Academy, several other

²⁷ “Răspunsul d-lui N. Iorga...”, p. 429

²⁸ *Discursuri de recepție (1919-1936)*..., pp. 430-431.

²⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 327.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

professors were picked as well: Nichifor Crainic (1940), Grigore Pișculescu (1947) and bishop Nicolae Colan from Cluj (1942). Due to his prestige and to his moral and scientific authority, he became the vice president of the Romanian Academy during May 30th of 1939-June 1st 1943. During 1941-1945, he was the president of the “historical section”³⁰. As member of the Academy, he submitted papers and reports within the Academy and within the “historical section”; he was delegated to participate at the International Congresses of Byzantine Studies in Bucharest (1924), Belgrad (1927), Sofia (1934) and Rome (1936). In June 1948, after the communist and atheist authorities of Romania renamed the Academy as “the Academy of the Popular Republic of Romania”, Nicolae M. Popescu, alongside more than 100 of his colleagues (titulars, correspondents, honoured)³¹, was withdrawn the title of academic. After the December revolution of 1989, he was given back his academic status posthumously on the 3rd of July 1990³². Due to his skills, competence and accomplishments, he was trusted with several duties while working as a university professor at the Faculty of Theology and was also a member of the Romanian Academy. Therefore, between 1923-1948 he was a member of the Commission of Historical Monuments, member of the Commission of Street nomenclature in Bucharest (1925-1945), member of the ruling commission of the Military Museum (since 1926), general secretary within the Ministry of Cults (1931); during the governance of Nicolae Iorga, Nicolae M. Popescu was state sub secretary minister within the Ministry of Cults and Arts (March 30th 1938- September 28th 1939), while bishop Nicolae Colan from Cluj, followed by Nicolae Zigre from Bihor, have held the position of ministers³³. At the same time, clerically-speaking, he was titled as member of the Technical Committee of the publishing body “Editura Institutului Biblic” and member of the Commission of religious painting of the Romanian Patriarchy.

³⁰ Within this section, there were many personalities who took part in our cultural activity such as: Simion Mehedinți, Dimitrie Gusti, Ioan Lupaș, Silviu Dragomir etc. (Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 327)

³¹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 328.

³² D.N. RUSU, *Membrii Academiei Române (1866-1996)*..., p. 291.

³³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 328.

II. 4. Father professor Nicolae M. Popescu and the “Palatini” students

A considerably important detail related to the public activity of father Nicolae M. Popescu is that he belonged to the teaching collective of the “Clasa Palatina”, a type of class founded through a special procedure at the request of King Charles II in 1932³⁴, for the royal heir, prince Michael I. Nicolae M. Popescu was the Religious Studies teacher of His Highness. Outside class, father Nicolae also filled in as teacher of the Romanian Language (1936-1937), Latin (1935-1939) and Ancient Greek (1938-1939)³⁵. The father professor offered a confession related to his teaching in a bibliography note towards the end of his piece entitled “Protopolului Lupu Șandru din Borșa Maramureșului”, where he reveals:

“And I, the writer of these lines, have prayed in the Borșa Church of father Lupu Șandru, was frightened at the Turks’ Strait; in the Prislop pass, I saw Dragoș and Bogdan with my mind’s eye, going down the Moldavian valley together with their long-haired people from Maramureș. It was June of 1939 and, as a teacher, I was accompanying His Highness, Michael I, the Great Voivode of Alba-Iulia who was thoroughly and passionately exploring the prideful Maramureș³⁶.

II.5. Father Nicolae M. Popescu and the “Carmen” Choral Society

In 1901, at the initiative of composer, professor and conductor Dimitrie Georgescu Kiriac, the “Carmen” Choral Society was catching roots in Bucharest. Father Nicolae M. Popescu was a member of this choir. Its purpose was to promote and popularize both the Romanian religious and folkloric choral chant and also the universal choral chant in Romania

³⁴ On the 2nd of November 2016, the Romanian Cultural Institute hosted a publishing event of the book entitled *La școală cu Regele Mihai. Povestea Clasei Palatine*. The book author is Tudor Vișan-Miu. The book was published by Editura Corint in a collection titled “Istorie cu blazon”. The author presents important data regarding the activity of the professor within *Clasa Palatina*, among which, Nicolae M. Popescu. We are presented with a few biography notes regarding N. M. Popescu on page 140.

³⁵ Tudor VIȘAN-MIU , *La școală cu Regele Mihai. Povestea Clasei Palatine...*, pp. 177-178.

³⁶ N. M. POPESCU, *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul...*, p. 97.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

and Europe. Throughout its 50 year-long existence (1901-1951), the “Carmen” Choir toured many cities in and outside the country. In 1928, due to the death of its founder, the role of conductor was attributed to professor and composer Ioan. D. Chirescu. Because of his academic stance rich knowledge regarding clerical and traditional music, father professor and academic Nicolae M. Popescu was attributed the role of president of this choral society. The people who knew him described his voice as a “deep and mellow bass tone”³⁷. He was one of the first members of the “Carmen” Choral Society; he was never shy to appear on stage dressed up as a priest with a beard and white long hair, together with the other members³⁸. As president, he dealt with the organization of certain national and international tours in Warsaw, Lvov and Paris. Moreover, he dealt with organizing certain choral performances at Radio Bucharest.

Composer Ioan D. Chirescu reminisced, on a high tone and full of sensibility about this activity of the father academic, in a preach towards the end of father Nae Popescu’s burial mass:

“I heard about him ever since I was a student, but I had not met him in person until 1910 when I entered the «Carmen» Choral Society, founded by D.G. Kiriac in the first year of the present century. Its purpose, to spread choral chant to the people, attracted theologians - including father Nae Popescu - who actively helped conduct the memorable religious concert of harmonized psalms at the Theological Boarding School. In time, we established a cordial friendship and a mutual appreciation towards one another, a friendship that would turn into a strong collaboration during the autumn of 1927, when maestro Kiriac, while feeling very weak, attributed the artistic administration of the choir. Ever since, father Nae who was a good adviser, watched over us so that we would not deviate from the right path of cherishing our national and traditional clerical chant, a path created and settled by «Carmen»’s founder [...]. Due to the tact and skill with which father Nae chased the fulfillment of this great purpose, he managed to successfully tour «Carmen» in Warsaw, Lvov and even got to the heart of France, Paris on

³⁷ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “† Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 76.

³⁸ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “† Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 76.

the occasion of the International Exposition in 1937 [...] The repertoire of the concerts were created at the finest detail and with great seriousness, through the direct participation of the father professor who never missed the hardships nor the artistic manifestations of this choir, despite his high administrative tasks. His appearance on stage next to his beloved students gave them and the conductors the necessary trust in the reliability of the choir. He would also introduce and present the «Carmen» choir's performances on stage; he would do it with such care so that no phrase would need any additional intervention"³⁹.

II.6. Father Nicolae M. Popescu, vocational pastor and a matchless liturgy celebrant

Even though he did not teach Pastoral Theology, father professor Nicolae M. Popescu was a celebrant and a pastor full of grace, very appreciated and loved by both priests and believers. He used to sing and preach beautifully. He felt priesthood from within, as a family legacy which he shared with everyone who served Christ the Saviour. He loved priesthood and the priests of which he spoke about with grand admiration, in words full of fatherly emotion:

“[...] the spiritual life of our people is the result of ages of lament of the myrrh priest. It is true that there were times when many high priests were missing from their chairs; ages when synods, councils, archpriests and even priest schools were out of discussion. However, there never were times in which a village would not have its priest.[...] A long time ago, and in some places even today, the clothes of the priest were not different from the villagers. It was only the long hair and the beard that made the priest stand out even when dressed in a white shirt and coat similar to the villager.[...] The pain of the villager was the pain of the priest.[...] The lament of the village woman, at the tomb of her husband or son, was many times combined with the tear of the widower priest, who had children to raise or children to bury; he is not the cuckoo of the village”⁴⁰.

³⁹ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “† Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, pp. 80-81.

⁴⁰ N. M. POPESCU, *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul...*, pp. 9-10.

One of the high priests of Bucharest, father Victor Popescu (1897-1978), who served between 1952 until the end of his days at Church “St. Anton- Curtea Veche”, pictured Nicolae M. Popescu in a beautiful manner in an article published in 1970, 7 years after his death. As a servant in Church “Boteanu”, “popa Nae”, an address popular amongst those who knew him, never sought recognition through certain artistic effects; he chanted and preached with a lot of ability and was loved by the people because of his humble character. He reveals that in his last years, he served at Church “St. Anton”, preaching beautifully and impressing the believers, who surrounded him with tremendous love. Sometimes, he would preach at Church “St. Gheorghe-Nou”, built by St. Constantin Brâncoveanu and whose life he explored in one of his books. The vulnerable father professor wanted our Church to be filled with good priests, alike those he mentioned in his book dedicated to myrrh priests, but also to psaltic chanters. He would be saddened when hearing about dishonest situations. Thus, he pondered that: “In order to become a good priest, one does not need book knowledge, but pure service. There must be over 10 years of serving the Altar in order to manage to stay close to the souls of the believers”⁴¹.

In his opinion, the vocational priest is the one that prays. Thus, he said:

“When you want to explore the piety of the priest, open the Liturgy Book and see the traces left by the priest’s hands on the pages of the canon prayers to be said before the Holy Eucharist. If the pages are clean and untouched, you will understand how he completes the Eucharist canon.”⁴².

Father Nicolae M. Popescu often disproved some of priests’ gestures. Dressing up and down their holy clothes in front of the believers, discretion and the mysterious atmosphere imposed by the liturgical service were crucial. These were considered extremely important for the spiritual living of the people. In his way of thinking, the priest must be a living model for the believers, always close to their souls, to their joys and troubles, and to offer support⁴³.

⁴¹ Pr. Victor POPESCU, “Popa Nae de la biserica Boteanu...”, pp. 73.

⁴² Pr. Victor POPESCU, “Popa Nae de la Biserica Boteanu...”, p. 75.

⁴³ Pr. Victor POPESCU, “Popa Nae de la biserica Boteanu...”, p. 78.

Throughout his life and activity, father professor Nicolae M. Popescu published books, as well as numerous studies, articles, communications, chronicles, reviews and translations in several magazines such as: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, *Revista Ortodoxă*, *Analele Academiei Române*, *Amvonul*, *Altarul*, *Apostolul* (the Bucharest Archbishopric magazine, firstly published in 1924), *Mitropolia Olteniei*, *Glasul Bisericii*, *Convorbiri literare*, *Universul literar*, *Boabe de grâu*, *Muzică și poezie*. In the last magazine mentioned, he published a few biographies dedicated to some great composers such as Gavriil Musicescu, Gheorghe Cucu and so on (between 1935-1937). He was part of the redaction Committee of magazine *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* between 1921 and 1940. Moreover, it is important to mention the fact that the Holy Synod co-opted him as a member of the commissions dealing with the review of liturgical books. Thus, the 1937 editions of the *Molitfelnicul* and *Aghiazmatarul* were edited and corrected by him; this process took two years of hard work⁴⁴, but was completed with care and toil. After 1946, also the year of his retirement, he wrote less and less. It is also worth mentioning that he translated 3 volumes of *Cuvântări bisericești* of bishop Nicolae Krutițki, from Russian to Romanian; these were issued by the Biblical Institute Publishing and by the Mission of our Church between 1949 and 1952. His last material was published in *Almanahul parohiei ortodoxe române din Viena* in 1963 by his chair disciple and successor, father professor Gheorghe Moisescu, then parson of the Romanian Orthodox community in Vienna. This material entitled *Amintiri din Viena* (pp. 72-75)⁴⁵, was nostalgically pointing out the faces of good Romanians, some that he had met during his PhD studies in Vienna during 1910-1912, to which he added a detailed biography of his son, actor Mihai Popescu, who passed away in 1953⁴⁶. The premature death of his son brought about an enormous pain that affected and weakened his health. After 2 years, in 1955, his wife Eufrosina passed away, leaving

⁴⁴ His work of correcting clerical service books contoured in two of his studies, published in the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* magazin in 1937: “Slavă și Mărire?”, nr. 7-8, pp. 492- 497) and “Diertosind Molitfelnicul”, nr. 11-12, pp. 695-712).

⁴⁵ Father professor Adrian Gabor published his entire list of works in *Studia ecclesiastica* ..., pp. 52-68.

⁴⁶ Actor Mihai Popescu studied at the Conservatory of dramatic arts in Bucharest, and later on at a Conservatory in Vienna, performing on several renowned stages in Europe such as: Vienna, Bielitz (in Poland), Berlin and Bucharest. He passed away on February 24, 1953, at 44 years old.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

father Nicolae M. Popescu lonely and in hardship. He donated his plentiful library to the Library of the Holy Synod. His only wish was to restore the little church St. Sofia from village Dâmbovicioara, where his grandfather Dumitru also served. His severe suffering and his old age acted against the betterment of father academic professor Nicolae M. Popescu so that on the 11th of February 1963 he passed away, after turning 82 the day before. His funeral service was held at church St. Gheorghe Nou in Bucharest on the 14th of February by an impressive collective of servants, and in the presence of father professor and byzantine musicologist Ioan D. Petrescu-Visarion (1884-1970). The choirs that performed were: the choir of theology students conducted by professor Nicolae Lungu and a group of the “Carmen” choir, conducted by professor Ioan D. Chirescu. The obituaries were presented by father professor Ioan Rămureanu, on behalf of the Theology Institute in Bucharest, and by Ioan D. Chirescu from the Conservatory of Bucharest, on behalf of the former “Carmen” Choral Society. Both of them evoked the personality of the man, the priest, the theology professor and the musician Nicolae M. Popescu⁴⁷. He was buried in the Bellu Cemetery alongside his son and his wife, priestess Eufrosina.

III. Studies and researches in the field of History of the Romanian Orthodox Church

The first study within the history field was his PhD thesis titled *Nifon II Patriarhul Constantinopolului*. As a result of his thesis defense at the University of Vienna in 1913, Nicolae M. Popescu obtained the title of doctor in Philosophy. Due to publishing reasons, the author led additional research within the byzantine seminar and in the Royal Library of München, in the Romanian Academy, thus competing and rectifying the paper that was going to be published in 1914 in the Annals of the Romanian Academy, among the Section of Historical Memoirs (2nd edition, XXXVI, 1913-1914), pp. 731-798, but also in the extract, p. 68. In the first part, the author deals with the historical files that concerned the life and activity of St. Hierarch Nifon II, while the second part focuses on presenting the St.’s life

⁴⁷ For additional information, see: Nicolae I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “† Preotul Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, pp. 77-82; Gheorghe ALEXE, “La moartea Părintelui Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, pp. 381-382.

up to the moment of conflict with Radu the Great, his return to Mt. Athos and his passing away. In the last part of his paper, he discusses the disciples of St. Nifon, Neagoie Basarab and Patriarch Nifon, ending with the mass of the saint and a few memories regarding St. Nifon. A second piece of important work was written when he was only a deacon at church Cotroceni and was entitled *Patriarhii Țarigradului prin Țările românești – veacul al XVI-lea*, published in Bucharest, 1914, 48 p. (an extract can be found in the *Convorbiri Literare* magazine). In this piece, the author describes a few patriarchs of Constantinople who visited Wallachia and benefited from the material support of the Romanian lords of the 16th Century. In the same year, he published a booklet entitled *Viața și faptele domnului Țării Românești Constandin Brâncoveanu care a fost tăiat de turci la Țarigrad împreună cu patru feciori și cu un boier*, Bucharest, published by Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 43 p. (initially, it appeared in an issue of the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, magazine, XXXVIII, 1914-1915, nr. 3-4, pp. 355-382). This booklet was written at the request of primate bishop Conon Arănescu-Donici “in order to be gifted to the people on the 15th of August 1914, with the occasion of celebrating 200 years from the death of lord martyr Constandin Brâncoveanu”.⁴⁸ The booklet also presents in a narrative way, the life and activity of the great lord turned martyr: his family, his coronation as lord, his foundations, his typography work and the events that led to his and his sons’ arrest and, eventually, to the moment of confession of faith for which they paid with their lives. He also included the 200 year celebration of these events in the booklet. Between 1914-1915, he published in the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* magazine a piece entitled *Catagrafia Eparhiei Ungrovlahiei în anul 1810*. It was published in several issues and in the extract of the Clerical Books Typography. This piece

⁴⁸ According to father professor Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, “Preotul Profesor Academician Niculae M. Popescu...”, p. 324. The second edition was published in 1915, in “Institutul de Arte Grafice C. Sfetea”, 82 pages with illustrations, in the *Biblioteca Societății Steaua* collection. In 1934, it was re-edited at Tipografia Institutului Biblic și de Misune al Patriarhiei, due to the celebration of 220 years since the martyr death of Constantin Brâncoveanu. After the 1915 issue, in 2013, the booklet was published again by the *dar din har cu binecuvântarea ÎPS Dr. Irineu Popa mitropolitul Olteniei* publishing. The last issue of this book was published by Editura *Basilica* a Patriarhiei Române, Bucharest, 2014, due to the celebration of 300 years since the martyr of the Brâncoveanu family. Since it was sold as an album looking book, this issue appears to be enriched with images, pictures of the two great pilgrimages that were organized in Bucharest in 1934 and 2014. It is 215 pages long.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

presented statistics regarding 1810 priests and parishes. It was requested by bishop Gavriil Bănulescu Bodoni, at the plea of Russian authorities that occupied and administered the Romanian Principalities since 1806 and were known as “exarchs” over the bishoprics of Iași and Bucharest.

Later on, he published a few history articles, for instance: in *Dionisie, mitropolitul Ungrovlahiei, 24 iunie – 24 decembrie 1672*, Bucharest, 1914, 17p. (extract from *Convorbiri Literare*); in the *Revista Ortodoxă* in 1914, he published *Domnița Caplea și Patriarhul Nifon*, pp. 113-117 and *Neagoe Basarab și Sfântul Nifon*, pp. 140-143; in *Amvonul*, he published *Biserica din comuna Dâmbovicioara*, 1915-1916, pp. 24-29, *Bisericele din orașul Târgoviște în anul 1810*, pp. 149-156 and an obituary dedicated *Mitropolitul Ioan Mețianu la Sibiu*, pp. 321-323. After his welcoming into the Romanian Academy, he published a new series of historical studies addressing certain historical and clerical figures or events that marked the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Therefore, the following titles must be mentioned: *Mitropolitul Ungrovlahiei Dositei Filitti*, in *Universul Literar*, XLIII (1927), pp. 51-63; *Niceta Episcopos Remesianae*, publishing of the Theology School of History of the Romanian Orthodox Church within the Faculty of Theology, Bucharest, 1931, 16 p. (he published *De psalmodiae bono* in Latin and towards the end, there are a few notes regarding the life, activity and work of bishop Nicetas); *Viața și faptele părintelui Grigorie Dascălul, Mitropolitul Țării Românești*, revista *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LII (1934), nr. 5-6, pp. 289-305. The latter displays, through vivid language, the life of Grigorie Dascălul as saint, as a humble bishop and scholar of our Church; he dealt with the development of clergy life from all aspects related to the discipline of the clergy, to the alienation of abuses within the Church, to the enlightenment of future priests, translation and publishing of the writings of the Holy Fathers, and also spiritual enrichment. *N-a existat un mitropolit moldovean Teoctist în anii 1491-1498*, in revista *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LII (1934), nr. 11-12, pp. 738-743, is a short paper where he demonstrates, on the basis of historical research, the falseness of some informations present in two ancient Moldavian documents regarding the existence of a bishop named Teoctist between 1491-1498. It is known that the bishop passed away on the 18th of November 1477. His successor was bishop Gheorghe, as mentioned in the old documents of that time; *Gheorghe David, Mitropolitul Moldovei, † 1508, aprilie*, published in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LIV (1936), nr.

1-2, pp. 1-13. In the extract of this paper establishes the date of the bishop's demise and the fact that before his death, he would have worn the Great Scheme under the name David; *Episcopul Melchisedec la 50 de ani de la moartea lui*, published in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LX (1942), nr. 5-6, pp. 172-176, a short biography of the life and activity of this great hierarch and scholar who contributed, through his efforts, to the act of Union among the Romanian Principates; he also contributed to the autocephaly of our Church and to lifting its historical prestige. *Pomenirea Mitropolitului Petru Movilă și a Sinodului de la Iași*, published in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LX (1942), nr. 9-10, pp. 387-402; *Pomenirea a trei sute de ani a Sinodului de la Iași*, in: *Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, tom XXV, Bucharest, 1943 and extract, 19 pp.; *Corespondența lui Iosif Gheorghian cu Vladimir Guettée*, published in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXII (1944), nr. 9-12, pp. 263-315 and extract, 55p., in which he presents a letter exchange between the primate Romanian bishop and a French Catholic priest who converted to Orthodoxy; *Chiril Lucaris și Ortodoxia Română ardeleană*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXIV (1946), nr. 7-9, pp. 425-446 and extract, 23 p., in which father Niculae M. Popescu painted the portrait of Patriarch Cyril Lucaris as a defender of Orthodoxy, of Romanians in Transylvania during the reign of Gabriel Bethlen. Prince Calvin proposed the conversion of Orthodox Romanians in Ardeal to Calvinism to the patriarch, which he never agreed to. The response of the patriarch can be found in the form of a letter written in Latin and dating back to September 1629; *Antim Critopol*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXIV (1946), nr. 10-12, pp. 601-605 and extract, in which we are introduced to the life of the second bishop of Hungrovlachia. Moreover, in this study, the author mentions a certain Scripture written in Greek on parchment paper during the 12th Century; it was found in the University Library of Bologna and it belonged to Antim Critopol, as noted on one of the pages; *Petru Movilă*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXV (1947), nr. 1-3, pp. 9-29; this study was completed for the celebration of 300 years from the passing away of Petru Movilă; *La Alba Iulia odinioară și acum*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXVI (1948), nr. 11-12, pp. 608-620; this study also contains a letter translated from Latin that was addressed to bishop Atanasie Anghel by bishop Teodosie of Hungrovlachia. Also, in the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* library, he published two biographies dedicated to a few myrrh priests from the past, and also *Viața*

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

Sfântului Montanus, presviterul din Singidunum, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LII (1934), nr. 3-4, pp. 145-148, *Ioan „Prevtul” episcopiei aromânilor*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LII (1934), nr. 7-8, pp. 457-460, *Preotul Isidor Moldoveanul la Constantinopol – mai 1401*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LII (1934), nr. 1-2, pp. 3-12 and *Popa Todică de pe Valea Bistriței*, in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LIII (1935), nr. 1-2, pp. 118-122. These 4 biographies, followed by a few more during 1928 and 1930, which were published in *Apostolul* magazine and entitled *Chipuri de preoți*, were later on published altogether in an issue published by Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune in 1942. The issue was entitled *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul*, and it was a paper of 224 pages long where, through the use of a lively Romanian language just as we find in the Synaxarion, we are told the story about 32 myrrh priests that served our people spiritually, culturally and socially. The book has dual value, historical and pastoral. This paper shall reflect upon a few descriptions of the priests that the book describes: deacon and typographer Coresi, whom the author addresses directly through the use of second person pronouns, as if he would speak to him, describing his scholarly work intended for the enlightenment of the Romanian people; father Stoica of Fărcașa, a soldier in the army of Michael the Brave; archpriest Dimitrie Chirescu from Dobrogea, the father of composer and conductor Ioan D. Chirescu; Gheorghe Enescu from Zvoriștea- Botoșani, the grandfather of composer George Enescu; father and church painter Vasile Damian from church St. Mina Vergu in Bucharest; father Ștefan Ionescu-Cazacu, killed during the battle of Mărășești on the 1st of January 1918 etc⁴⁹. Another piece of work, marked as a historical and dogmatic milestone was *Mărturisirea de credință* by Petru Movilă. It was re-edited with the occasion of celebrating 300 years from the Iași Synod (1642) that approved the text of Petru Movilă. This volume was entitled *Orthodoxos Omologhia – Mărturisirea Ortodoxă. Text inedit după Ms. Parisinus 1265, text român după ediția românească de la Buzău 1691*, București, 1942-1944, LXVIII+ 352 p. + 8

⁴⁹ This book was published 3 times until now: 1942, 2002 (206 p.) ,and 2015 by Editura *Basilica* (271 pages). As an addition, this piece was published as a result of Nicolae Iorga's urge to Nicolae M. Popescu, when he first entered the Romanian Academy. At the same time, the book entitled *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul* inspired the creation and publication of another volume dedicated to the myrrh priesthood of the historical Archbishopric of Bucharest entitled *Chipuri de lumină 2*, publishing *Cuvântul Vieții* of the Muntenia and Dobrogea metropolitan, Bucharest, 2015.

pages. In the National Library of Paris, there is a photocopy of the Greek text, which was made available by archimandrite Teofil Ionescu, future bishop, who, at that time, used to be in service at the Romanian church in Paris. The rectification of the Greek text was done by father Niculae M. Popescu, and the first version in Romanian was transposed by deacon Gheorghe Moisescu and translated by Radu Greceanu. The preface was signed by Tit Simedrea, the Metropolitan of Bucovina, and the introduction belongs to father Niculae M. Popescu. The publishing of *Mărturisirea de credință* was accomplished during 1942-1944, under exceptional graphic conditions. In the last part of his life, father professor Niculae M. Popescu published a few studies and articles dedicated to a few Church personalities such as *Nicolae Dobrescu (1875-1914)*, in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, VI (1954), nr. 11-12, pp. 627-635, *160 de ani de la moartea lui Paisie Velicovschi*, in *Mitropolia Olteniei* VII (1955), nr. 1-2, pp. 41-47, in which he evokes the life and the cultural and ascetic spiritual contribution of the great abbot towards the renewal and strengthening of monastic life through translating, publishing and experiencing in a holy way the philocaly writings of the great Eastern ascetic authors as well as the writings of the Holy Fathers, *Lavrentie ieromonahul, diortositor oltean, 1736 – 1751*, in *Mitropolia Olteniei*, VII (1955), nr. 5-6, pp. 323-328. Besides the titles mentioned above, father Niculae M. Popescu published numerous other monographic studies dedicated to specific monastic places, articles that had evoked the lives and activity of certain saints; he wrote chronicles, translations, reports in the Annals of the Romanian Academy and certain studies on diverse subjects.⁵⁰ As a teacher and researcher, he was extremely rigorous, taking every detail into account. His work was not limited to the History of the Church, because through his writings, he managed to touch upon other fields of Orthodox theology. However, the numerous duties and responsibilities he undertook impeded him from creating and disseminating a full synthesis of the History of the Orthodox Romanian Church and leaving that synthesis as legacy to posterity. Father professor Niculae

⁵⁰ Here, we mention a few studies in which father Niculae M. Popescu brings philological semantic explanations of some liturgical terms; “De la priveghere la priveghetoare”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXI (1943) 4-6, pp. 207-224 (the study was also published in the extract of the publishing Seminarul de Istoria Bisericii Române within the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, nr. 16, 1943; “Floriile și Savalia”, in: *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LXIII (1945) 7-8, pp. 363-377 and also in the extract, in the same publishing house, nr. 18, 1945, 13pp.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

Șerbănescu highlighted the religious discipline of his teacher: “He wanted to do everything perfectly and that is why creating a manual of History of the Romanian Church made him anxious and for this reason, he delayed it until his death bed”⁵¹.

IV. Studies and researches in the field of byzantine musicology

In 1903, a year after defending his bachelor thesis entitled *Viața și activitatea dascălului de cântări Macarie Ieromonahul*, father Nicolae M. Popescu published it at the Institute of Graphic Arts Carol Göbl (1908). This paper presents a detailed research on the life and psaltic activity of Macarie Ieromonahul, a psaltic music teacher. For this reason, Nicolae M. Popescu may be considered the initiator of the researches about the personality and work of Macarie Ieromonahul. The book is dedicated to the Carmen Choral Society. The book can therefore be referred to as a *programme book* that deals with the rediscovery and valorification of the psaltic creation of Macarie Ieromonahul. The paper is structured in several chapters: *Semiografia muzicală în Biserica Răsăriteană* (musical notations and reformers)- the musical reform from Constantinople from the beginning of the 19th Century, initiated by the 3 coryphees Hrisant de Madyt, Hurmuz Hartofilax and Grigore Protopsaltul; *Noul sistem muzical în București, școala și inventarea tiparului* - discusses the circulation of the results of this reform in the Romanian Principates, the establishment of the clerical music school under the new system at the Sfântul Nicolae Șelari Church in Bucharest, and the first psaltic music publishings in Greek from the Orthodox East; *Vremuri noi pentru muzica românească, Ieromonahul Macarie* - the process of “romanianization” of lectern chants initiated by metropolitan and patriot Dionisie Lupu and accomplished by Macarie Ieromonahul, Anton Pann and Panaiot Enghiurliu and later on, Macarie himself. Maracie also published the first books of psaltic music in Romanian in Vienna, as well as other psaltic works. His papers remained in the form of a manuscript and can be found at the Library of the Romanian Academy; *Școala lui Macarie și răspândirea muzicii bisericesti* – Macarie is presented here as an administrator of the singers schools where his former disciples were teaching. At the end on this paper, in the Annex,

⁵¹ N. I. ȘERBĂNESCU, “La moartea Părintelui Profesor Nicolae M. Popescu...”, p. 77.

there are many texts that have been published: an anaphora, an 1836 letter from Macarie to father Evghenie, the inconom of the Metropolitan of Bucharest as well as the first pages of his manuscripts in the Library of the Romanian Academy.

Ediția Prohodului Ieromonahului Macarie și edițiile altora, extract from *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, an XXXII (1908), nr. 4 (July), was published in *Tipografia Cărților Bisericești* in Bucharest, 1908. After succinctly presenting the attempts of versification and rhythm creation of the Romanian Lamentation at the Tomb, which precede Macarie's version that was published in Buzău in 1836, the author cites at the request of archbishop Chesarie, Macarie's version as being the most satisfying textually and musically speaking. The author also enumerates other versions of the Lamentation belonging to Anton Pann, Dimitrie Suceveanul, Archimandrite Dionisie, Ștefan(ache) Popescu, Oprea Demetrescu, Arhiereul Ghenadie Argeșiu (Țeposu n.n.) and father Marin Tomescu. Some versions succeeded and that did not. After comparing those, the author concludes by highlighting the superiority of Macarie's version.

Știri noi despre Macarie Ieromonahul dascălul de cântări și directorul tipografiei din Mănăstirea Căldărușani is the second publication of father Nicolae M. Popescu in which he brings arguments regarding the life and activity of Macarie, such as: his attempt to publish psaltic books at Buda and the Greek opposition, his return to the motherland and his trip to Vienna, where he managed to publish the *Theoretikon*, sponsored by Hagi Pop's Chamber of Commerce in Sibiu, Ghiță Opran and Voicu Periețeanu. His brother managed to publish *the Theoretikon*, *the Anastasimatarion* and *the Irmologion* in all of the Romanian provinces. Initially, this paper was published in the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* magazine, XXXIX (1915), nr. 8-9, XXXIX (1916) 10 and 11/1916. The 8th and 9th issues were published in *Tipografia Cărților Bisericești* in 1916. Nicolae M. Popescu notes that due to WWI, he did not manage to extract the other 2 issues. In the 10th and 11th issues, there are a few letters regarding the life and activity of Macarie, including his activity as abbot at the Bârnova Monastery in 1833 and his role as director of the publishing house of Căldărușani Monastery, where he published the *Life of Saints* and *Oglinda omului celui din lăuntru* in 1835.

Father and Academic Professor Nicolae M. Popescu...

Macarie Psaltul – la o sută de ani de la moartea lui (1836-1936), publishing of Editura Seminarului de Istoria Bisericii Române of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest, extract from *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, LIV (1936), nr. 9-10, is a study that shortly evokes the life and activity of Macarie the Psalt. The author synthesized his former publications into one, analyzing and gathering all of the collected data regarding Macarie's musical and spiritual formation which concretised into his psaltic publications, his activity as teacher and administrator of music schools, his activity as publisher and publishing director of the Căldărușani Monastery and the end of his life. Towards the end, the author attaches *Catavasiile la Duminica Floriilor* on the IIIrd voice created by teacher Șărbănuț (who is mentioned in the prefaces of the 1832 Irmologion), taught by teacher Constandin and translated by Macarie from the old writing into the new one, and taught to the monks in the Neamț Monastery in 1832 (extract from ms. rom. 3735, ff. 41- 45, BAR).

Notația alfabetică a lui Petru Efesiu is a study published in the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* magazine, Bucharest, XXXII (1909), nr. 10, 1909, pp. 1190-1198. The author addressed the mystery behind the alphabetic notation used by Petru Efesiu in the 1832 Anastasimatarion. It encompasses chants from the Vespers and Matins Mass and the melodies created by Petru Peloponesiul, Petru Vizantie and Petru Efesiu. The Greek teacher wanted to replace the notation with an alphabetical one. This type of replacement attempt was introduced for the first time in the beginning of 19th Century in Constantinople by Agapie Paliermul; however, his attempt was rejected, as noted by Anton Pann in his Prefaces of the *Bazul teoretic și practic al muzicii bisericești sau Gramatica melodică*.

These are the most important studies of byzantine musicology that father academic Nicolae M. Popescu had left us. Besides these, he dedicated a few articles to some Romanian composers such as Gavriil Musicescu, Gheorghe Cucu and so on; moreover, in his 1942 book entitled *Preoți de mir adormiți în Domnul* he contours the personalities of some of the greatest servants of the holy Romanian altar, including the activity of father Ioniță Năpârcă, named precentor in the beginning of 19th Century whom he describes as :”a Romanian Kukuzelian”.

The work of father academic Nicolae M. Popescu includes a few other pieces on byzantine musicology, such as: „Un manuscris de muzică bisericească, in: *Floarea Darurilor*, Bucharest, 2 sept. 1907; „Rostul

cântăreților bisericești în trecut și în viitor”, in: *Cultura*, Bucharest, VIII (1919), nr. 12, pp. 144-149; „De psalmodiae bono”, Bucharest, 1931 (the text is in Latin, published for Theology students); „Slavoslovia lui Ilarion al Argeșului”, in: *Muzică și Poezie*, (1935), nr. 1, pp. 7-8; „În amintirea lui Gheorghe Cucu (1882-1932)”, in: *Muzică și poezie*, (1936), nr. 9-10, 1936; „Preotul compozitor Petru I. Turcianinov, 1779-1856”, in: *Mitropolia Olteniei*, Craiova, (1956), nr. 8-9, pp. 535-540; „Aniversala părintelui Grigore Costea, în Mitropolia Olteniei”, Craiova, (1957), nr. 1-2, pp. 57-57.

V. Instead of conclusions

In this study, I presented the life and activity of father professor Nicolae M. Popescu, as well as highlight his contribution to the knowledge of the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church and its musical past. His activity as university professor, the clerical responsibilities accomplished in the Romanian Patriarchy, his presence in the Romanian Academy and his presidency of the “Carmen” Choral Society prove his strong personality. He enjoyed a high appreciation throughout the Romanian society due to his academic and spiritual model-like stance. He was a highly spiritual cleric, which is why he remained one of the most memorable figures of the Romanian spirituality, a man of God’s spirit who proudly served and wore the priest clothes offered by God. In the Romanian Church, he served with a lot of love, from childhood and up to the moment of death.