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Axa prioritară 1 *Educația și formarea profesională în sprijinul creșterii economice și dezvoltării societății bazate pe cunoaștere*

Domeniul major de intervenție 1.5 *Programe doctorale și postdoctorale în sprijinul cercetării*

Titlul proiectului: *Științele socio-umaniste în contextul evoluției globalizate – dezvoltarea și implementarea programului de studii și cercetare postdoctorală*

Contract: POSDRU 89/1.5/S/61104

Beneficiar: Academia Română

Dr. Daniel BENGA

IDENTITY AND DELIMITATION.

PROCESSES OF DELIMITATION FROM THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN PRACTICES AND THE PAGAN SOCIETY IN A CHRISTIAN SYRIAN COMMUNITY OF THE 3RD CENTURY

The delimitation process of formerly pagan Christians from the Pagan Society and the Syrian Judeo-Christians who still preserved many Jewish practices, has been little examined until today. In my research project, I intend to analyse the processes, changes and developments which triggered separation, but at the same time created a new identity inside a Christian Syrian community of the 3rd century consisting of pagan and converted Jews, on the basis of the most important „Church Constitution” of this century, namely the *Didascalia Apostolorum*.

The community described in the *Syrian Didascalia* is located in a neighbourhood marked by tension. On the one hand, it lives as a Christian minority inside the majority pagan society and, on the other hand, it must account for its Jewish heritage. Thus, the author of the writing, very likely a bishop (probably of Jewish origin), develops a whole theory and strategy, in order to delimit the Christian identity of his believers both from the pagan society, and the Judeo-Christian practices. Through theoretical and practical indications, drawn especially from the Bible, he tries to construct a Christian ethos, through which to secure the identity of the members of his community in the face of the Jewish practices, and to help the Christian community differentiate itself from the pagan environment.

I intend to analyse in this research project two key points of the topic *Identity and Delimitation*, which have enjoyed little attention in previous research: 1. The unique

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interpretation of the Old Testament law, as the didascalist wants to impose it, and the restructuring of the Easter celebration, as delimitation from the Jewish Pesach, and 2. The way in which problems of daily Christian life are solved (the i/(m)morality of public baths, the prohibition of shows, the reception of travellers, the stance on pagan literature), in a majority polytheistic society. These two issues reflect important developments and changes inside a Christian community, which contradict the static understanding of ancient Christian institutions which has prevailed until now.

What authority lies behind these delimitation processes? How are the proposed changes justified? How are authoritative and normative texts (such as the Bible) interpreted? These questions and many others must accompany the study of the topic of this project. Moreover, I will try to create a history of the reception of the solutions presented in the *Didascalia*, on the basis of subsequent interpretations of this „Church Constitution” and other sources.

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