

## Research Project on the Jewish-Orthodox Christian Dialogue

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The research project<sup>1</sup> hosted by the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, addresses the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in the context of Orthodox Churches, with special focus on liturgical hymns with anti-Judaic content. Religiously and culturally marked by Byzantine Christian Orthodoxy, the Eastern-European context has an ambiguous position towards Judaism: on the one hand, Eastern Christianity claims an uninterrupted millennial continuity with the early Judaic Christianity, and, on the other hand, early Christianity itself and especially the patristic period is marked by a fierce controversy between Judaism and Christianity, which resulted into “the parting of the ways” of the two religions. The peak of this history and, at the same time, the turning point in Jewish-Christian relations was reached in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially through the Second World War and the Holocaust. Whereas Protestant and Catholic churches have initiated an extensive process of reconsidering their attitude towards Judaism shortly after 1945, by rephrasing theological and catechetical definitions or even by modifying traditional liturgical texts, in the Eastern-Orthodox world this theme has been only sporadically touched upon and without too many concrete effects. The millenary theory according to which the Church is the “new” and “true” Israel is still present in the theology, liturgy and preaching of the Orthodox Church.

The project contributes to the advancement of the dialogue between Judaism and Christianity in Christian-Orthodox context and the consideration of its relevance for inter-confessional and interreligious understanding, by: (1) creating appropriate instruments through the translation of the documents attesting the extant dialogue between Christianity and Judaism; (2) contributing thus to the reception of official declarations in other churches, with regard to the relation with Judaism within Orthodox Churches and

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<sup>1</sup> The project, with the full title *Jewish-Christian Dialogue in the Twentieth Century between Religious Tolerance and Anti-Semitism: Documents, Interpretations and Perspectives in the Christian Orthodox Context* has been made possible through the grant it has been awarded by the Ministry for Education, Research and Innovation, in the 2016 funding competition Projects for Exploratory Research within PNCDI III, PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2016-0699.

of the declarations issued by the Jewish side with regards to its position towards Christianity; (3) offering an actual evaluation of the Orthodox liturgical hymnography from the perspective of the recent relations and dialogue between Judaism and Christianity; (4) setting an international network of Orthodox theologians who will collaborate for the advancement of the dialogue between Orthodoxy and Judaism and for the discovery of common elements that may inspire a collaboration which is theologically and socially relevant for both religions; (5) the creation of a webpage committed to the Jewish-Christian encounter for the Eastern Orthodox context, in which one may have access to all documents and studies of the project and the possibility to publicly discuss upon these textual sources.

It is thus necessary to raise awareness of the existing official dialogue between Judaism and the other two major Christian confessions (Catholicism and Protestantism) in Eastern Christianity by translating them into English. There is also a dialogue between Jews and Orthodox Christians, whose official proceedings are only partially published and those published are not accessible in the languages spoken in Orthodox countries. All these documents, supplemented by official declarations of the Churches, relevant to the Jewish-Christian dialogue, which attest a change of attitude towards 20<sup>th</sup> century Judaism, are being translated, and thus made accessible to the Romanian public in printed editions and online (to be published in the *Documenta Oecumenica* Series at the Institute for Ecumenical Research, and at <http://ddic.ecum.ro/documente/>). The project also evaluates these documents and provides the interpretation suitable to the new context to which is made public, and the current issue of the *Review of Ecumenical Research-Jewish Christian Dialogue and the Orthodox Church* offers such a reading. The international conference in July 9-11, 2019, *The Byzantine Liturgy and the Jews*, will host the most qualified researchers to look for nuanced answers to the more intricate questions pertaining to the anti-Judaism of Orthodox liturgical texts and the more recent history of Eastern churches in their nationalist and socialist context. The proceedings of this conference will be published in the *Edition Israelogie* of Peter Lang Publishing House and Peeters Publishing House.