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“People of the Book”? Textuality and Orality in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

Abstract: The frequently used catchphrase “Mosaism and Christianity – religions of the book” places the origin and centre of the Judeo-Christian tradition on the sacred texts, to the expense of the orality of the teachings. The historical source of the assertion – i.e. the Qur’an, which refers to Jews and Christians as “people of the Book”, and which proves that it is a late one – 7th century AD – may cast doubt. After all, is it an absolute nature of the written word in this specific religious context? My article provides an answer to this question. Using a classical rhetorical perspective, we will determine the proper relationship between text and orality in Judeo-Christian culture and identify those reductive and subjective approaches that can lead to a distorted perception of the present topic.

Keywords: orality, textuality, Judeo-Christian tradition, people of the Book, classical rhetoric.