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Dramatising, radicalising, individualising. Purpose and relation of non-historicising and historicising early Christian narratives

Contemporary and antique narratives (both of non-historicising as well as historicising nature) share the attempt at reaching out to readers by drawing on dramatised, radicalised and individualised information. What does not cry out, does not overpaint in stark contrasts, does not focus on memorable events, does not recount wonders and surprises is rarely noted, copied, preserved, perhaps not even produced. Similarly, the meta-narratives of historical studies of these dramatised materials – both in antiquity as well as in contemporary settings – turn towards such material, often highlighting particularly the most dramatised parts of such narratives and evidences, consciously or unconsciously multiplying the inherent dramatised tendencies of the material at hand. Unsurprisingly, such pointed and sharpened world-views embed themselves in rituals, make up calendars and organise life's structures. Feasts are highlights of highlights, momento's of great experiences of the past (Exodus in Israel, the birth and resurrection of Christ in Christianity, 'Īd al-Adhā in Islam), the past is turned into moments of highlights. The question, of course, arises, about the nature of world relations that are implied in such constructions and reconstructions of pasts and futures. Which axes of world relations are muted, which are made to speak? In which ways does resonance as a metareflexion itself play towards an enforcing of a dramatised world, where what is mute is further muted and what resonates, rebounds and be moved to the fore? How does a perspective of resonance lend itself towards a criticism of headline truths, or conversely contributes to it?

Material to look at are classic or contemporary historiographical works of early Christianity and historiographies of the first millennium (Eusebius, Orosius, Gregory of Tours).

References

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