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THE *PERICOPE ADULTERAE* (JOHN 7:53–8:11): JESUS' ANSWER, AN OFFER OF LIFE TO SUFFERING WOMEN

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ABSTRACT. This article explores a probable motivation for the insertion of the Pericope Adulterae (John 7:53–8:11) in the Gospel of John in consideration of the motive of 'living/life' used by the gospel writer. Using John 8:12 as the starting point of this investigation, the article focuses on the warning to the Israelites against idolatry with specific attention to the warning against worshiping the sun, the moon, and the stars (Deuteronomy 4:15–20). It also deals with the Feast of Tabernacles, which is the direct context in which Jesus declared that he is the light of the world. The water ceremony also plays a central role in understanding the bigger picture that unfolds, as well as the Early Church's struggle against heretical Christological teachings of who Jesus was with regard to his human nature and his divine nature.

KEY WORDS: suffering, women, adultery, life, death

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide is a persistent and world-wide problem affecting women of all walks of life. In South Africa it is a widespread, systemic problem to such an extent that President Cyril Ramaphosa, in September 2019, declared femicide a national crisis. The brutal murder and rape of several women and children have made headlines in South Africa during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown period. In an address to the South African nation in June 2020, President Ramaphosa was so perturbed by this scourge that he once again emphasized the crisis by reading out the names of those twenty-one women and children who had been killed in a very short time after lockdown happened (Ellis 2020).

Within the context of the Human Rights and Women's Rights discourses, Manus and Ukaga (2017: 56, 57) point out that since the 1995 Beijing Conference scholars have engaged in a more concerted and serious effort with

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the discourse on Women's Rights, the driving force being mainly that of 'domination, oppression, subordination and exploitation of women in overtly patriarchal societies'. In the same vein, Magezi and Manzanga (2019: 1) quite rightly remark that, 'Gender-based violence as a social structural issue is sustained and perpetuated by cultural norms, values and beliefs that are fed by patriarchy, among other things' (*cf.* Ademiluka 2013; Akintunde 2001; Lasebikan 2001; Oduyeyo 1994, 1995, 2001; Ojo 2002; Ottuh 2014; Uchem 2001).

It is within a similar ancient context that the story of the woman caught in an act of adultery (John 7:53–8:11) plays itself out. Much scholarly attention has been afforded this passage titled the *Pericope Adulterae* (hereafter referred to as PA). Given the importance of the Human Rights and Women's Rights discourses, the PA thus lends itself very well to the debate on these issues.

Prohibition against Adultery

In general academic articles focusing on the pericope, including those focusing on Women's Rights, are mostly written against the backdrop of the prohibition against adultery found in Deuteronomy 22:22–25 (*cf.* Ottuh 2018: 59–82). Amy Smith Carman (2019: n.p.), however, quite rightly points out that the mere phrase—*Pericope Adulterae*—is misleading and based on the assumption that the 'story focuses on a woman and her sins'. She argues instead that the article focuses on sinful, albeit powerful men who abuse powerless women.

Keddie (2001: 312) believes that the passage does not fit in chronologically, but argues that it fits in theologically. He argues from a creation point of view what it means for Jesus to be the light of the world, and suggests that the passage provides a practical application to understand this image of Jesus as presented in John 8:12. For Keddie this passage thus, 'forms a dramatic introduction for 'the light of the world' discourse (John 8:12–59)', which he believes could have been the motivation for the scribe, 'who inserted it in John's Gospel in the first place'. This refers Jesus' pronouncement in vs. 12 that he is the light of the world, and whoever follows him '[…] will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'.

Taking Keddie's statement and Smith Carman's argument into consideration, potentially raise the demand for more focused attention to be given to the PA apart from the valid basis that it provides in dealing with Human Rights and Women's Rights issues. The thesis of this article is that not only does the 'light of the world' discourse refer, but that the bigger context in which the story had been placed, plays out becomes equally significant—the preceding event being the Feast of Tabernacles with the focus on the last day

when Jesus stood up in the temple court and invited people to come to him to drink if they are thirsty and 'streams of living water will flow within [them]'.

The motive of 'living/life' in John 7:35 and John 8:12 is starkly juxaposed to the demand for the woman to be stoned (death; John 8:6). The aim of this article is to explore the importance of this motive as a possible motivation for the insertion of the PA. This will be done by providing a brief background to the the insertion of the PA in its current position. The idea of life and death in the Old Testament will also be explored, as well as what it meant to worship the Holy God. In order to address the immediate surrounding context in which the PA is placed, a brief excursus will be done into the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles with the specific focus on the water and light ceremonies, and lastly the struggle in which the Early Church was engaged with regard to the identity of Jesus Christ.

Brief Background: *Pericope Adulterae*

The big issue relating to the PA is the question of authenticity of the passage, and the debate about its literary character (Johannine authorship). Scholars have for a considerable period of time debated whether it had originally been part of John's Gospel, or whether it had been inserted at a later date. Various authors, amongst them Johnson (1966), Trites (1974), Hodges (1979), and Heil (1991) have tried their best to prove that there are Johannine features in the passage, but despite their best efforts, general scholarly consensus has it that the narrative was not originally part of the gospel based on 'literary evidence of style, syntax and vocabulary [which] suggest a non-Johannine origin' (*cf.* Keener 2003: 735). Carson (1991: 333), for one, argues that the 'numerous expressions and constructions' in the material makes it difficult to authenticate the passage as 'Johannine'. Manus and Ukaga (2017: 59), having identified this passage as an 'illustrative and didactic story', is in accord with this notion, arguing that the internal and historical evidence support the fact that the narrative did not originally belong to John's Gospel. Punch (2013: 1), however, provides evidence through the evaluation of claims of 'non-Johannine' terms in the PA that rebuts these claims, and conclude that this provides 'opportunities for discussing Johannine features in the passage'.

Evidence shows that despite the fact that most of the small manuscripts ('minuscule manuscripts') from the medieval Greek period contain these verses, they are 'absent from virtually all early Greek manuscripts that have come down to us' (*cf.* Brown 1970; Carson 1991: 333; Bultmann 1971). While most contemporary commentators, with some exceptions like Beasley-Murray (1987: 122–123), include this passage in commentaries, all the early church Fathers before the fifth century glaringly omitted the passage with no Eastern Fathers even having cited the passage before the tenth century because of its polemic nature (Carson 1991: 333; Keddie 2001: 311).

According to Keddie (2001: 311), it is evident that despite the omission by the early church Fathers the passage had been well known in the church from early times. Manus and Ukaga (2017: 59), supporting an early reception of the story of the adulterous woman into Christian tradition, point out that it had been as early as 125 CE. Eusebius' records show that Papias, a student of the apostle John, did in fact know and expound a similar passage of a woman accused of many sins in the presence of Jesus (Carson 1991: 334; Keddie 2001: 311). Carson (1991: 333) notes that there, '[…] is little reason for doubting that the event here described occurred', while it seems that contemporary commentators '[…] follow Calvin, who did not believe [the passage] belonged to John, but taught that it was true and edifying and therefore ought to be expounded' (Keddie 2001: 311, 312). Considering everything it appears that the story records an authentic historical event in the ministry of Jesus. A footnote in the ASB (2007: 1587) supports this notion, stating that it is generally believed to be 'a true story about Jesus that was preserved in the oral tradition and eventually added by well-meaning scribes'.

The PA went through a lengthy process before it was incorporated in the New Testament, and has been treated in various ways by Bible translators (*cf.* Knust 2019: n.p.). In the KJV, the NKJV and the ASB, for example, the passage has been included as part of the text, while the NASB have it in brackets. In reference to the NIV, Carson (1991: 333) is adamant that it is 'right to rule it off from the rest of the text'—as Ngewa (2003: 146) describes it, 'The NIV draws a horizontal line at the top and bottom of the passage'. Moreover, other translations like the RSV 'relegate[s] it to a footnote' (Carson 1991: 333), or have it 'either in the margin or at the end of the Gospel' (Ngewa 2003:146). 'Nevertheless, poets, theologians, artists, and scholars continue to mine the story for fresh insights, treating it as «gospel» even if its security with the canonical Gospels has been once again called into question', Knust (2019: n.p.) remarks.

An Offer of Life and Death

Life and death are all-pervasive themes throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament Moses presents a warning to Israel to take care not to worship any idols (Deuteronomy 4:15–20). The warning is framed in terms of familiar creation images (*cf.* Genesis 1:3–27), by which the Israelites are warned against worship of human beings and ending with a warning against the worship of the light-giving entities—the sun, moon, and stars. It is noteworthy that the created entities mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:15–20, are listed in the inverse order compared to how they are listed in Genesis 1:3–27. This places the emphasis on the heavenly bodies (Deuteronomy 4:19), which were considered deities worthy of worship in other religions of the Near East (Christensen 1991: 87),

> … in Egypt, Ra was the sun-god (and Aten the sun-disc), and Thoth originally a moon-god. In Mesopotamia Shamash was the sun-god, Sin the moon-god, and Ishtar the 'star' Venus. In Canaan Shaphash was the sun-god, Yarah the moon-god, and Athtar the 'star' Venus.

In reference to God's allotment of the sun, moon and stars to all nations, Christensen (1991: 87) sees this as God having done 'something extraordinary so far as Israel is concerned', and suggests that the reference to the 'iron-smelting furnace' in Egypt indicates that, 'Israel's time there was seen as a period of testing and purifying'.

The warning to Israel is followed by a promise of well-being (Deuteronomy 4:40). A further, longer admonishment is given in Deuteronomy 13:1–18, with another promise—this time of mercy, compassion and prosperity—which follows at the end in Deuteronomy 13:17–18. Finally, in Deuteronomy 30, Moses reiterates everything he had said about blessings and curses, and then presents the Israelites with an 'offer'—'The Offer of Life and Death'—as the heading reads in the NIV. In vs 15 Moses sets it out clearly before them, 'See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction'. Following in vs 16, Moses gives a three-fold commandment, which is also linked to the promise of blessing—the Israelites are, 'to love the Lord [their] God, to walk in [God's] ways, and to keep [God's] commands, decrees and laws', with the promise that they will live and increase, and that 'the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess'. Should they not heed God's commandment, destruction will follow (Deuteronomy 30:17–18).

Worshiping the Holy God

A brief excursion into the book of Exodus presents an enigmatic picture of the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle that his people built (Exodus 40:34). The major theme of Exodus that God is holy and that God's people are to be holy too is continued in Leviticus and presented throughout the book. Leviticus contains the instructions of how God was to be worshiped by God's people. Leviticus 22 ends with a passage on unacceptable sacrifices, with a clear command in vs 32, 'Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites'. The chapter ends with God pronouncing to Israel, 'I am the Lord who makes you holy and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God' (Leviticus 23:32–33).

Within this context of God being the holy God, God commands Moses to instruct the Israelites on the feasts that God-self has appointed, and which are to be proclaimed as 'sacred assemblies' (Leviticus 23:1–2). The rest of Leviticus 23 then records the Israelites being instructed by Moses on the feasts and festivals, which God had instituted for 'the people of [God's] inheritance' as feasts of worship and commemoration (Leviticus 23:1–44).

Altogether there are seven feasts and festivals, which culminate in the last one, the Feast of Tabernacles (The Feast of Booths; Heb. *Sukkoth*) (hereafter referred to as the Feast), the one feast that would remind the Israelites that God had delivered them out of Egypt, and from their forty years of wandering about in the wilderness and living in tents and tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33–44)—as Burge (2012: 73) describes it, 'The Feast of Sukkoth, then, was also a time to retell the story of desert life and the temptations and victories found there'. God's instructions in Leviticus 23:42–43 were explicit,

> All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles was a joyous occasion (Beal & Carson 2007:451–454; Twelftree 2013: 278). Particularly significant is the insertion of the PA at the end of John 7, which records Jesus' attendance of the Feast in the Temple in Jerusalem, and just prior to John 8:12, where John records Jesus' declaration that he is 'the light of the world'. Buksbazen (1954: 46) describes the Feast as,

> … one of the three great occasions upon which God commanded the Children of Israel to assemble in the Temple in Jerusalem, and present their sacrifices and offerings unto the Lord.

The name literally means 'the feast of booth-making', a term employed by the LXX translators, or otherwise 'the feast of the Jews', as Josephus referred to it (Keener 2003: 704). *Sukkoth* (singular: sukkah; Leviticus 23:42) means 'booths'.

According to the Law, Israel was required to live in booths during the time of the feast. The focus of the Feast was agricultural in nature, but the main interest was that of commemoration, calling up some aspect of Israel's '«Great Story» of redemption' from Egypt (Burge (2012: 73).

It was during the time of the Feast that the story of their desert life was re-told, and the temptations and victories found there were brought back to remembrance with particular emphasis on the story of how Israel worshiped God at God's Tabernacle or *sukkah* (Burge 2012: 73).

Two highly significant ceremonies characterized the Feast. One was the water ceremony, which was characterized by the drawing of water at the Gihon spring and the pouring of water in the Temple. The other was the light ceremony characterized by the brilliant illumination of the Temple. Both water and light images are particularly significant in John's Gospel.

Joyous Celebration of Life

In the Old Testament Jeremiah talks of God as the 'spring of living water' (Jeremiah 17:13). This picture brings the water ceremony of the Feast into clear focus. Israel as a semi-arid country depends very much on its rainfall. In Deuteronomy 11:10–11, for example, Moses explains to the people of Israel what the Promised Land was like, 'The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, but… is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven'. The agricultural context in which the Feast took place thus formed an important backdrop to the water ceremony. In late autumn (mid-October) the harvest season in Israel comes to an end. Rain would fall sporadically within the period from mid-October to mid-March (Burge 1992: 869). It has therefore then always been the belief that rain during the time of the Feast was a sign of blessing from God for the next season (Burge 2012: 74). As Rabbi Lawrence Troster (2018: n.p.) states it so clearly,

> The abundance or scarcity of rain is not a random natural occurrence dictated by changes in geography or climate, but a divine response to human morality. Israel and the land of Israel are bound together in one moral community under God.

The water ceremony is rich in symbolism. Daily, for six days, a procession of priests would go down once a day to the Gihon Spring, which fed the Pool of Siloam (Heb: *Shiloach)*, where a specially appointed priest would then fill a golden pitcher with water, which was carried back to the Water Gate. The water-drawing ceremony was a time of great joy, hence the saying, 'He who has not seen the joy of the place of water-drawing [Heb. *Bet he-She'ubah*] has not seen joy in his whole life-time' (Beasley-Murray 1987: 127), a joy that was associated with Isaiah 12:3, 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation'. Keener (2003: 703) agrees, describing the Feast as, 'one of the most sacred Jewish festivals… associated with joyous celebration' (*cf.* Psalm 42:4). The joy expressed during the water-drawing ceremony is known as, 'The Rejoicing of the House of Drawing Water' (Heb. *Simcha Bet Ha-sho-evah*; Hagee 1999: 154). At the Temple this water would be offered to God at the time of the morning sacrifice together with the daily drink offering of wine (Carson 1991:322). The high priest would ascend the steps to the altar where two silver bowls were pitched at the foot of the altar. Water was poured into one bowl, and wine into the other, which then drained simultaneously onto the altar (Buksbazen 1954: 49; Burge 2012: 75). On the final day (the seventh day of the feast) the priests would proceed around the altar seven times (Beasley-Murray 1987: 114).

With the agricultural cycle in mind, the pouring out of the water was a plea to God to bless the land with rain. In reference to the Old Testament, Leviticus 26:4 and Deuteronomy 28:12 make it expressly clear that the blessing of rain was understood as a promise should Israel obey the covenant, in

contrast to the drought which would result from disobedience to the covenant (Deuteronomy 28:48). In the context of the Feast then, those who could persuade God to send rain, were considered by the Jewish teachers to be particularly pious (Keener 2003: 723).

The symbolism, however, stretches further and deeper than this. Buksbazen (1954: 49) points out that the purpose of the feasts of Israel was to focus the attention of Israel on what God has done in the past (historical; *cf.* Leviticus 23:1–44), and what God will do in the future (eschatological). It therefore logically follows that the water pouring ceremony was related to 'the LORD's provision of water in the desert [historical] and to the LORD's pouring out of the Holy Spirit in the last days [eschatological]' (Carson 1991: 322). The symbolism of the water that flowed from the 'sacrificial rock altar of the temple' was thus intended as a reminder of the water that came from the rock in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1–6; Beasley-Murray 1987: 116; *cf.* Numbers 20:8–13; Psalms 78:15–16; 105:40–41). The priests marching around the altar seven times before the water pouring ceremony was also a reminder of the seven times the Israelites marched around the walls of Jericho. This action was in celebration of God's great power, which caused the walls of Jericho to fall, thus making it possible for Israel to enter the Promised Land (Joy 2018: 3).

Beasley-Murray (1987: 116) furthermore points out that the symbolic pouring of water during the feast refer eschatologically to 'the flowing of living water from the temple in the kingdom of God' (Ezekiel 47:1–11), a picture that is similar to the eschatological picture presented in Revelation 22:1–2, which talks of the 'river of the water of life… flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the street'. Lastly, the symbolism is also significant in light of the reference in Zechariah 14:8, which pictures 'the waters that [would] flow in the new age from Jerusalem to the eastern and western seas' (Beasley-Murray 1987: 116).

While the water was poured from the golden pitcher, the priests sounded the trumpets (Heb. *Shofar*) and the Levites sang and performed sacred music. Meanwhile, as these actions took place, the male pilgrims in the Temple waved their palm branches, chanting the *Hallel*, Psalms 113–118 (Carson 1991: 322). This daily water pouring ritual, which climaxed on the seventh day, the Day of the Great Hosanna (Heb. *Hoshanna Rabba*), was believed to have a deeper spiritual meaning to it—a special Messianic significance. According to Buksbazen (1954: 50), the ritual

> … was prophetic and Messianic in its hope, looking toward the outpouring of the Holy Spirit not only upon Israel, but also on believers of all nations under the reign of the Messianic King.

The closing verses of Psalm 118:25–29 are, as Burge (2012: 51) expresses it—'peculiarly Messianic in nature, a prayer for the speedy salvation through the Messiah'. The Hebrew word, *Hoshanna*, literally means 'save now' (Psalm 118:25; NKJV), which is translated in the NIV as, 'Save us'. Later, in the New Testament, these words were used as a joyous exclamation of praise when Jesus entered Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9). This is followed by the words, 'Blessed is he who comes', the very same words the people used to bless Jesus at the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38).

Living Water

The term 'living water' in Hebrew culture describes water that is 'pure, flowing water untouched by human hands' (Living 2018: 1). The water found at En Gedi, an oasis in the wilderness of Judea close to the Dead Sea, is one example of such pure, living water and has over many centuries provided refreshing clean water to humans and animals alike. The Gihon spring that fed the pool of Siloam was also believed to be a source of living water. The name alludes back to the Gihon river, which was one of the four rivers in the Garden of Eden, and seen as the ultimate source of living water.

This idea of living water had been carried over by the Jews into their worship practices. Mikvehs (ritual baths), for example, were built outside their temple and synagogues. Living water, which came from nearby springs, or which was the run-off from rain was used for these ritual baths, which were symbolic of the cleansing of their hearts before worship.

In Jewish tradition 'living water' has deep symbolic meaning. In the Old Testament God is called 'the spring of living water' (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13). Moreover, the longing for God is expressed as a thirst of the soul. In Psalm 42:1–2, for example, the sons of Korah sing, 'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for the living God'. It is furthermore expressed beautifully in the words of David's prayer to the Lord in Psalm 63:1, 'O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a land where there is no water'.

This 'land where there is no water' points to a place where there is no living water. Waters found in cistern that were built by humans, were muddy and stagnant, and not the best quality of water. As such it was described as 'dead waters'. The reference in Jeremiah 17:13 referring to Israel having forsaken God as the spring of living water alludes to the idea that spiritually the Israelites have turned to man-made cisterns, in other words idols, that contained stagnant and muddy waters, that is 'dead' waters, or no water at all. In Jeremiah 2:13 God laments the fact that God's people have forsaken God, 'the spring of living waters'. God accuses them of having 'dug their own cisterns', which are broken and cannot hold the water, and as such is useless

to sustain life. This idea is repeated in Jeremiah 14:3, 'they go to the cisterns but find no water'. As a result of their sin, of having turned away from God, God has not listened to their prayers for rain, 'The ground is cracked because there is no rain in the land' (Jeremiah 14:4). Earlier, in Jeremiah 3:6–13, God, through God's prophet, brings to light the sins of Israel (Jeremiah 3:9).

Intertwined in this passage one finds both a physical element and a spiritual element of drought. The physical element is a literal drought in the land as a result of Israel having turned away from God in adultery. As a result of this sin against God, a spiritual drought has also taken hold of the hearts and minds of Israel. Instead of outright condemning God's people for this sin, however, God calls them to return to God (Jeremiah 3:14).

In John 7:39, the image of living water is used to describe the Holy Spirit. When Jesus calls out to the crowds and invites them to come and drink from the water of life, it happens in the Temple. This alludes back to Psalms 42 and 63, which speak of the sons of Korah 'leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng' (Psalm 42:4), and of David who has seen God in God's sanctuary (Psalm 63:2). In the Old Testament God's provision of water was seen as evidence of God's grace, and in this sense, an image of the gift of life in God's very presence. It is this very image that would have alerted Jewish worshipers in the Temple to what Jesus is alluding to, and which makes his invitation so much more profound. By making this invitation, Jesus is creating a connecting line between himself and God, the spring of living water. The Temple thus becomes the connecting space God and God's Son, Jesus Christ. It is here that the Jewish worshipers came face to face with Jesus, who is man, but also God.

The Light Ceremony

The light ceremony has direct bearing on John 8:12 as it is within this context that Jesus makes his declaration that he is the light of the world. This ceremony is based on the Jewish ritual practice by which the change in season was recognized in terms of the autumn equinox, the so-called 'dying of the sun' (Burge 2012: 76). From this point on the days would start getting shorter, while the nights were getting longer. This practice of 'recognition' eventually became the ritual, which was incorporated into the ceremony of light to 'hallmark the passing of the season' (Burge 2012: 76).

Four large golden bowls (menorahs) were placed on four stands in the Court of the Women, a space that was buzzing with activity during the Feast. The priests would climb up ladders to fill the giant bowls with oil, while they used the worn undergarments of the priests as wicks. Burge's (2012: 77) description of the activity during the lighting of these menorahs calls up a vivid picture of 'Choirs of Levites' singing while so-called '«men of piety and good works» danced in the Court of the Women, carrying torches and singing

hymns' (*cf.* Carson 1991: 337). The dazzling light, resulting from this ceremony added to the splendour of the Temple, and illuminated all of Jerusalem and surrounding areas. The closing ceremony was a dramatic event characterized by a procession whereby the Levites stood on the steps that led down to the Women's Court. While going down the steps, they sounded their trumpets (Heb. *Shofar*) on each step. They then proceeded to the eastern gate where they turned around to face west in the direction of the Temple's Holy Place, and recited the following liturgy as 'an explicit rejection of pagan life (worshiping the sun)' (Burge 2012: 78),

> Our Fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshiped the sun toward the east; but as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord.

One of the suggestions is that in the context of remembering the past the light ceremony was understood to commemorate the pillar of fire that led the children of Israel by night while they were in the wilderness (Hagee 1999: 147). Another tradition that had its origin later in the history of Israel, however, seems to have given more impetus to the celebration of the light ceremony. This refers back to the time when Jerusalem was under Syrian control, and the menorah (eternal light of God) in the Holy of Holies had been extinguished. Judah Maccabee under whose leadership Antiochus was defeated, ordered the menorah to be lit during the rededication of the Temple (Feast of Dedication; Heb. *Hanukkah*) with the small supply of sacred oil that remained. The menorah burnt for eight days while new oil was purified. Eventually, several ceremonies of Hanukkah and Sukkot traditions became intertwined (Joy 2018: 2). The result was that the light ceremony during Sukkot eventually came to be laden with meaning for Israel. Not only were they reminded of their salvation from Egypt through the singing of the words, 'O Lord, save now' ('O Lord, save us'; Psalm 118:25), but it was also a prayer for rain for the following year's harvest. Moreover, in lieu of Israel's historical salvation from Syria, and within their current context of having been under Roman rule, it also became a prayer for political freedom (Joy 2018: 2)—a looking forward to salvation in the future.

Light—God in Action

Keener (2003: 386) briefly details some examples of the uses of the natural images of 'life' and 'light', which are generally used together in ancient texts. He points out that darkness is used as a negative symbol in most of these texts, which include later Jewish texts (Keener 2003: 387). According to him, Greek texts speak of people who have died as having been 'banished from the «light»' based on an understanding that the world of the dead was dark. The conjoined use of 'light' and 'life' is also a characteristic of Hebrew poetry,

which, according to Keener, could possibly be ascribed to 'a shared eastern Mediterranean imagery of death and the netherworld'.

In the Old Testament context faith in the Lord is linked to God being understood as being the Light of God's people (Psalm 27:1; Beasley-Murray 1987: 128). In reference to Conzelmann's eloquent explanation that, 'Light is *Yahweh in action*', Beasley-Murray (1987: 128) points out that Psalm 44:3 gives 'a remarkable expression of this concept', further explaining that it was this very same concept, which Israel employed in their 'representations of theophany, both for revelation (Ezekiel 1:4, 13, 26–28) and for salvation'.

When John 8:12 is read within the context of the Feast, Jesus' declaration at this point in time that he is the 'light of the world' (John 8:12), is vitally important as it is revelatory in essence. Jesus is revealed as the true light of the world. The use of the word *follow* in verse 12, as Beasley-Murray (1987: 128) explains, is 'employed instead of *receiving* [the light], or *walking in* [the light], or the like' (*cf.* Carson 1991: 338). The invitation by Jesus to *follow* him harks back to the experience of Israel following the pillar of fire that God provided, so leading them through the wilderness (Exodus 13:21, 22).

Within traditional Judaism God is spoken of as the Light of the world. Apart from this, however, Judaism also speaks of the Torah, and the Temple, and of Adam in the same way (Beasley-Murray 1987: 128). Moreover, Wisdom and Torah were understood as 'God's gracious instruction for the ways of life' (Keener 2003: 385). In John 14:6 Jesus claims that he is the truth and the way to God, which, according to Keener, are two roles ascribes to Wisdom and Torah by traditional Judaism. It therefore follows that for pious Jews, and especially the Pharisees who upheld the Law to the letter and those who were teachers of the Law, Torah was life, the Light of the World. Keener (2003: 386) explains that if Jesus had made this declaration in a synagogue, it would have evoked these associations familiar to Jews. The setting, however, is the Temple during the Feast, which, according to Beasley-Murray (1987: 128) makes Jesus' declaration so much more profound in light of the 'celebration of salvation history and eschatological expectations of Tabernacles' by assuming cosmic proportions, and as such becomes filled with 'universal significance'.

The Early Church

Just before Jesus' invitation to the people and his reference to living water (John 7:37–39), the people were talking amongst themselves, asking various questions regarding Jesus' identity, one being the question, 'Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ?' (John 7:26, 27). In this regard Brant (2011: 140), for example, remarks that, 'John does not develop a consistent identity for the crowd or distinguish between groups that he calls the crowd or the Jews'. The emphasis, she says, 'is on the action'. This

Christological question is of utmost importance in terms of what the people in the Temple understood in terms of Jesus' identity, in other words, was he man or was he the Christ that they expected? The same Christological question concerning the humanity and the divinity of Jesus Christ remained on the agenda of the Early Church. Thus, from a very early date, according to Gonzáles (1970: 121), 'The existence of [a] diversity of [nontrinitarian theological] doctrines may be seen already in the New Testament, whose authors are constantly attempting to put an end to'. He points out that New Testament books like Galatians, Colossians, 1 Peter, and important for this article, also 'so-called Johannine literature' deal with this question (Gonzáles 1970: 122). Although there have been many such heretical doctrines, some of the more central ones that the Early Church had to contend with include Docetism (second century), Adoptionism (end of second century), Modalism (late second/early third century), Arianism (late third/early fourth century), and Apollinarianism (fourth century).

Adoptionism, a nontrinitarian theological doctrine, held that Jesus Christ was a man—in Kelly's (1977: 119) words, a '«mere man»… upon whom God's Spirit had descended'. The name of the doctrine refers to the belief held that Jesus as man was adopted as the Son of God at his baptism, at his resurrection, and at his ascension. The central thesis of Docetism, which was closely related to Adoptionism, was that Jesus Christ in his humanity did not suffer for real, but that his suffering was in appearance only. This belief is succinctly summarized in Justin's remark, 'There are some who declare that Jesus Christ did not come in flesh but only as spirit, and exhibited an appearance of flesh' (Kelly 1977: 141). Docetism was totally rejected by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Modalism, in comparison to Adoptionism, did not draw clear distinctions between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The boundaries between the three persons within the Godhead were blurred, which, in Kelley's (1977: 119) words, led 'inescapably to the blasphemy of two Gods'.

Apollinarianism, a belief that stemmed from the belief which Apollinarius held, taught that flesh 'was joined in absolute oneness of being with the Godhead from the moment of its conception' (Kelly 1977: 291). In other words, the Incarnate was understood to have one nature consisting of 'passible flesh' (a human body and a 'lower soul'), and 'impassible divinity' (a divine mind). The central model of Arianism, on the other hand, held that Jesus was a 'perfected creature whose nature remained always creaturely and whose position was always subordinate to and dependent upon the Father's will', in other words, Jesus the Word was inferior to God the Father (Gonzáles 1970: 263). This model maintained that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was created and neither coeternal nor co-substantial with God the Father. The argument, taken to its logical conclusion, asked the question of how it is possible for the

Word to be immutable if 'it is capable of receiving sense impressions transmitted by [that] flesh?' with the ultimate understanding then that Word was inferior to God. In dealing with this problem, the Council of Chalcedon in the fifth century (A.D. 451) ultimately ruled that Jesus Christ had two natures in one person and hypostasis, completely man and completely God (Kelley 1977: 338-343).

A Caveat

The PA seemingly raises a caveat—a sign to the reader to stop and consider the possibility that there is something of significance in the preceding passage regarding Jesus' invitation to come to him and drink of the living water, and the passage that follows where he declares that he is the light of the world. In Deuteronomy 4:13 Moses reminds the people of Israel that God has declared God's covenant to them—the ten commandments—which God had commanded them to *follow*, and which God had written on two stone tablets. The proclamation by Jesus alludes back to God's command that the Israelites should *follow* the covenant, and the decrees and laws (Deuteronomy 4:14), which Moses was instructed to teach the people of Israel. This was 'God's gracious instruction for the ways of life', which is Torah. Jesus, through his proclamation that he is the light of this world, is thus revealed in the Gospel of John as the true light, the true source of life, the fulfilment of the Torah in stark contrast to the created light-giving entities, the sun, moon and stars (Deuteronomy 4:19). Keener (2003: 386) points to numerous Jewish texts, in which 'Wisdom and Torah… provide or embody life'. He also alludes to some Jewish texts, which mention 'the availability of life and light in Torah'. He concludes that, 'Ultimately, God was Israel's life (Deuteronomy 30:20) […] the one who would bless the people to live long in the land if they obeyed his commandments'. In the PA the teachers of the law and the Pharisees have been revealed as the ones who have turned away from God, the ones who seemingly have turned the law into an 'idol', an 'object' of worship, and as such a legalistic tool by which to condemn people should they not follow it to the letter.

Smith Carman's proposition that the story is not so much about the woman caught in adultery as it is about the Pharisees and their sinful behaviour has strong grounds. First, they accuse Nicodemus of having been deceived by Jesus (John 7:47), and then, in their arrogance conclude that that must be a curse on the mob (John 7:49), because they don't know the law, and lastly they dismiss Nicodemus' question (John 7:51) based on where he comes from—Galilee. Beale and Carson (2007: 456) points out 'the supreme irony' found in this picture as those 'appointed guardians of the law themselves fail to keep the law in the way they deal with Jesus'. Then they brought the woman to Jesus to test him in how he would answer according to the law.

Reading the prohibition in Deuteronomy 22:22–25 might at first seem to be a condemnation to death should anyone not be obedient in keeping the law. However, the law of God was not given to condemn people to death. At the core of God's law there is the choice—if one is obedient, there is the blessing of life, but if one is disobedient, the curse is death. The law of God always, under all circumstances, upholds life in all its dimensions, thus the Judaist understanding that Torah is 'God's gracious instruction for the ways of life', and even more so equating God with the springs of living water and Torah as the light of life. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees, however, has turned the law of God into a legalistic tool holding the Jewish people to ransom, and in this specific case to literal condemnation of the woman to death—as Keddie (2001: 313) describes it, 'Spiritual darkness frequently hides behind a cloak of apparent light' in reference to the teachers of the law and the Pharisees being 'the leading luminaries of Jewish society'. Jesus' invitation and declaration are therefore then so much more profound in terms of who he claims to be.

This article supports Keddie's (2001: 312) suggestion that the PA provides a 'dramatic introduction for «the light of the world» discourse'. The question of why this passage had been inserted just before John 8:12 in fact focusses the reader's attention on Jesus' declaration that he is the light of the world. Read against the backdrop of Deuteronomy 4:19 it becomes clear *what*, or rather *who* the true light of the world is in contrast to the sun, the moon, and the stars, which have been created by God to provide real light to the world.

Looking at the bigger context of the Feast of Tabernacles, which precedes the PA in John 7 brings one closer to an understanding of what the motivation could have been for the passage to be inserted here. Understanding the connection that Jesus made when he made the invitation for people to come to him to drink of the living water, and the Old Testament understanding of who God is (the fountain of living water), makes it possible for the reader to understand what was happening in the Temple at that moment. The Temple in this context becomes the space for the connecting point between God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

This article proposes that the PA was a purposeful insertion with the intention of raising a caveat in order to focus the reader's attention on who Jesus truly is. He is truly man, and he is truly God—two natures in one. In light of the historical background of the struggles that the early church had in dealing with the Christological question of Jesus' humanity and his divinity, and the heresies related to this question, it seems highly likely that the PA had been inserted in its position (John 7:53–8:12) as a deliberate response on the part of the Early Church's reflection of who Jesus is. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees, whom one would have expected would clearly understand who Jesus was, were the very ones who wanted him dead. The presence

of the PA thus makes Jesus' proclamation within the Temple context then so much more profound in terms of him testifying that he is God—the true source of living water and the true light of the world.

In this story injustice is perpetrated by the powerful religious men of the time, the Pharisees, who wants the woman to be condemned to death, while the man who was part of the affair, was not spoken of again or brought to the fore for judgment. Jesus, the One who is sinless, is the only one who has the right to judge and to forgive. This picture is a powerful reminder of what is happening in South Africa with so many women (and children) condemned to suffering abuse and even dying as a result of societal and religious inequalities that exist between men and women. It is against this gross injustice in South African society that not only the church, but everyone should take a stand and be challenged to speak out, and, in Ottuh's words, 'create more awareness on the need to treat men and women with equity' (Ottuh 2018: 77).

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