

**TOPIC: *SUKKOT* AND THE FERTILITY OF THE EARTH AS
BACKGROUND TO THE INTERPRETATION OF JOHN 7:37-39 IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS
IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

By

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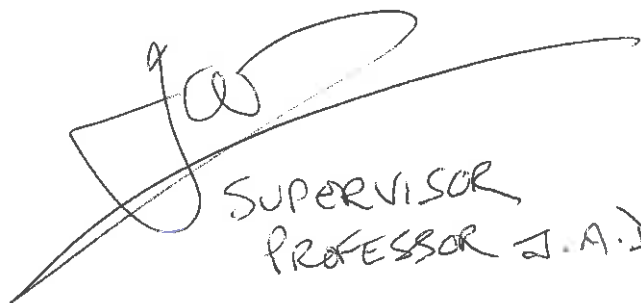
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Abstract:

This thesis provides a theological and exegetical reflection on the water and environmental crisis in South Africa. The central aim of this thesis is to create a basis for the formulation of an African contextual hermeneutic of the environment using the text of John's Gospel as a resource. This study will formulate and utilize an African contextual hermeneutic of the environment to interpret John 7:37-39. This reading will focus on the three poles of a contextual reading of a text, namely my context as a South African reader concerned with water and the environment; a literary reading of the text against its own historical context, and a dialogical appropriation of the text in response to the questions of the South African environmental crisis. Out of this process, the study will identify points of agreement between the African understanding of nature and Christian approaches to nature in ways that can help in the formulation of an African Christian hermeneutic of the environment.

The study conducts an overview of the water and environmental crisis both globally, and in South Africa. In this area we look at the contributing factors of the rate of environmental degradation and the possibility of clean water running out. Also we will look at the African approaches to fertility and rain making and how their ethics towards the environment can help in creating a Christian ethic of caring for the environment. This will be linked to a study of the feast of Tabernacles as a background to reading John 7:37-39. in light of my concerns for the fertility of the earth and the assurance of abundant rains.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction of Study

This study focuses on the water and environmental crisis in South Africa, a country located at the southern tip of Africa. The country is divided into nine provinces and has approximately more than 2,500 kilometres of the coastline. South Africa is known for its richness in minerals such as Gold, coal and diamond among other things. It is further known for its richness in flowering plants and Game farming areas. Some of the natural forests have faced a high rate of depletion due to the fast rate of population growth and the need for development and this has resulted in water resources being under stress and other natural resources. Furthermore, due to climate change, South Africa has been experiencing extreme weather patterns, such as heat waves, flooding and drought. These events have resulted in adverse implications on the already semi-arid region and have resulted in probabilities of fresh water being depleted and the environment being unhealthy for human life. It is for this reason that we have sought to reflect theologically on the water and environmental crisis using the Bible as a resource for creative dialogue and deliberations. This research will look at how John 7:37-39 can be interpreted in ways that can respond to the water and environment crisis in South Africa.

1.2 Motivation for the research

My motivation for doing this research is the level in which the Bible has been held as a Sacred text in the African context and consequently been given more precedence. Furthermore, the text has also been understood, since the emergence of African biblical scholarship, to be able to respond to the current African issues. Most African scholarship has placed its emphasis on issues relating to poverty and politics in the African continent; authors such as Gerald West, Itumeleng Mosala to name a few. My interest is that there is current increasing concern for issues relating to the escalating level of industrialization which is the direct cause of the depletion of natural resources such as water and the destruction of the environment which affects the livelihoods of people more especially those who depend directly on the environment for their livelihoods. It is with this

situation that this research topic stated above has become my interest because the government has been the one making efforts in slowing the rate of the depletion of the environment and not much has been vocally said by the Church regarding the environment. My focus is therefore on what the Christian community can contribute in the formation of a basis for a Christian theology, from an African perspective, of the environment using the biblical text as a guiding resource in order to create dialogue.

From the Methodist perspective there has not been much that has been written about the environment except one article by Dion Forster (2008); which is a response to the environmental crisis within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. This article gives a detailed analysis of why the Methodist Church in South Africa has not given much attention to environmental concerns but not much has been established by the Methodist Church of Southern Africa towards a Christian Theology of the environment.

This research will look at the biblical understanding of fertility which is understood in terms of the feast of tabernacles and Ezekiel 47, and how Jesus picks up the theme in John 7:37-39 in order to show his active involvement in the fertility of the earth and consequently, the environment. This will be linked with the water symbolism in the fourth gospel signifying the flowing of the Spirit and the active role of Jesus in creation and how this can be used as a basis for an African contribution for a theology of the environment.

1.3 Preliminary literature review

The feast of tabernacles serves as background to the text of John 7: 37-44 as the utterance that Jesus makes in verse 38 is linked to the flowing of the water that takes place during the feast of tabernacles on the last day. Jones highlights the importance of the feasts in the fourth gospel because the water motif in the fourth gospel is linked to a certain feast or a special day in the life of the Jewish community. For example, Jesus changes water into wine while attending a wedding feast in Cana (2:1-11), the discussion he has with Nicodemus calling him to a birth of water and Spirit takes place within the context of a Passover feast, the healing of the blind man at the pool of Bethzatha takes place while Jesus is in Jerusalem for an unnamed feast (5: 1-18), and chapter 7 takes place in the

context of the feast of tabernacles and many other appearances of the water motif has a feast as a marking event (Jones, 1997:151). Koester further identifies that the feast of tabernacles takes place “in the fall, toward the end of the long dry season” and the pilgrims would gather for a week of prayer and celebration for the coming of the rain which would bring prosperity and fertility for the coming year (Koester, 2003: 197).

Koester and Jones agree that the utterance that Jesus makes is most likely to have taken place on the last day on which the outpouring of the water from the water pitcher by the priest in to the small bowl with the spout that drains water into the altar takes place (Koester, 2003: 197 and Jones, 1997:152). According to the Mishnah, the outpouring of the water was a visible petition that as God had provided water before to his people, he would send the rain again to his people and providing fertility over earth and consequently making the people prosperous for the coming year (*m. Sukkah* 4:9). Wai-Yee Ng identifies that behind the ideology of the writer of the fourth gospel is the creation typology rooted in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the evangelist expresses the creation typology using symbols (Ng, 2001:194). In this creation typology, Jesus Christ is understood as the source of both creation and salvation according to John (Ng, 2001:163). It is on this typology that I would like to build my research and show the link between the flowing of the Spirit and the fertility of the earth and how this can be used to create a basis for a theology of the environment using John 7: 33-39 and Ezekiel 47 as the background to its interpretation. The gap is that Ng, though having done this analysis of the typology in the gospel, in her analysis of John 7: 37-39 not much of this theme is alluded to as more emphasis is on the eschatological nature of water symbolism in the Fourth Gospel.

Both Koester and Jones believe that their analysis of water symbolism, in John 7: 37-52, gives insight of the identity and character of Jesus, just as it does in the other sections in the Gospel. Jones briefly explains the significance of the utterance Jesus makes at the feast as it relates to the Old Testament events of the feast (1997: 155) but does not link it with Ezekiel 47, as my interest is in creating that link. Koester makes the link of 7:37-39 with Ezekiel 47 but looks at it from a Christological and discipleship perspective

(2003:199), not directly linking Jesus as a replacement of the temple in the New Testament. While on the other hand Ng acknowledges that Ezekiel can be directly linked with the temple motif which is found in the prophetic book of Ezekiel which is written after the time where temple worship had been ended and the temple theme is used as a theme to signal hope (Ng, 2001:177). In linking Ezekiel 47 and John 7: 37-39, Ng notes that the 'water-temple' imagery is dominant in both the texts but also the 'water-spirit' theme and that the temple is the centre of Jerusalem and Jerusalem is the centre of the whole earth (Ng, 2001: 179).

My attempt is to link the temple with Jesus and that the pouring out of the water from Jesus' side, which is understood as the pouring out of the Spirit to the world, can be understood in terms of fertility and the direct involvement of Jesus in the fertility of the earth. Joachim Jeremias takes the theme of the temple as the centre of the earth as being the navel of the earth through which the fertility of the earth is dependant on as it is where the Spirit of God flows out in to the earth.

Current research that has been done on the theology of the environment has placed much of its focus on the Old Testament writings, though I do acknowledge that there is a strong emergence of writings regarding environmental conservation using the New Testament too. In the work by Nehring (1994), *Ecology: A Theological response*, the research is mainly on the causes of the destruction of the environment and the response is mainly from the context of India and the theological models are also applicable to that context. This is also true for the work that has been done by researchers such as Martin-Schramm and Stivers (2003), *Christian Environmental Ethics: A case Method Approach*, which though it gives insight on the current situation of the environmental problems in the world and gives important principles of theology in order to curb the destruction of the environment, the context is mainly that of the West, namely New York. This is another gap in literature that I identified that not much in African Biblical Scholarship has been written and my concern is a biblical approach to creating a basis of a theology of the Environment that is from the context of Africans, especially South Africa.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is an African contextual hermeneutic of the Bible, with the focus on issues of the environment and environmental concerns. According to Justin Ukpong (2000), African biblical hermeneutics have as their core concern, the concern to bring the biblical Text and the African context into dialogue. Moreover, though it gives voice to the world behind the text, much of its concern is based on the communities which receive the text and the concerns of these communities become the subject of the interpretation of the text (Ukpong, 2000:11). African contextual hermeneutics also look at African resources such as art, myths and its approach to the Bible is informed by everyday life issues such HIV and AIDS and in this case the concern for the environment (West, 2001:88).

In this instance, this framework will help look at how issues of fertility and feasts such as the feast of tabernacle, conducted in order to have a fertile land in the Old Testament, can help in understanding and interpreting John 7:38, with Jesus offering himself as the temple and a site of fertility. Moreover, this framework will then help look at the understanding of fertility from the African point of view and how this interpretation of John 7:38, in the African context, can form basis for a theology of the environment and water conservation in the context of Africans.

In order to do this, the socio-historical analysis will be the guiding research methodology for this research. This methodology will focus on the historical and social analysis of the world behind the text and further that of the present African context in order to come up with a way of interpreting John 7:37-39 in addressing concerns of the environment in South Africa.

1.5 Research design and Methodology

Type of study: My research is an exploratory study which deals with analyzing and finding ways of exploring future grounds of research for a formation of an African Christian theology of the environment. As explained by Terre Blanche et.al (2006), this type of study is a flexible form of study which aims at making investigations into areas of study which may have little research done on them (Terre Blanche et.al, 2006:44).

Furthermore, it is a qualitative research where available researched data will be used in order to make an analysis of the relevance of the feast of tabernacles in issues relating to the fertility of the earth in the Old Testament, and also mentioned in Ezekiel 47, and how John 7:37-39 has been interpreted by other scholars.

Research methodology in detail

In establishing the context of the study, which is South Africa, the socio-historical analysis method will be used in analyzing the current situation of the environment and water usage in South Africa. In this analysis, written material such as newspaper articles, books, online journal articles and published articles will be used in order to give a detailed analysis of the state of the environment. In defining terms, available books in the field of environmental theology and other fields relevant to my research will be consulted.

A socio-historical analysis of the Old Testament rites of fertility and the importance of the temple as a site of fertility will be done in order to further show the importance of the temple in the fertility of the earth according to Jewish custom. This will be done through a literature survey of the available written material, such as the Mishnah and other rabbinic writings which give details on the feast of tabernacles and fertility. Then using the information from the authors mentioned in the literature review, namely Jones, Koester and Ng, I will show the link between the feast of tabernacles and the utterance that Jesus makes at the feast of tabernacles in John 7:37-39. Having shown the link, I will then do my own detailed exegesis of John 7:37-39, as a way of providing an interpretation of the text in such a way that can help create a basis for an African approach to the Christian theology of the environment. This exegesis will be mostly my own work but referral to commentaries on the text of John 7:37-39 and other research articles will be used in order to explore the text fully. Recommendations and suggestions will then be made as to how this interpretation can be useful in the Christian Churches as to create an environmentally conscious community. In order to create a link between Ezekiel 47 and John 7:37-39, an analysis of how symbols and symbolism as a literary device function in both texts and how this develops water to function as a symbol

representing the Spirit. This will therefore call for a brief overview of what a symbol and the theories by J. Miles Foley and Victor Turner will also help in creating the connection between Ezekiel 47 and John 7:37-39.

1.5.1 Towards defining 'symbol' as a literary device

According to *The New Shorter English Dictionary*, a symbol can be defined as;

A thing conventionally regarded as representing, typifying, or recalling something else by possessing analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought; [especially] a material object representing an abstract concept or quality” (Brown, 1993:3183).

Alternatively, Larry P. Jones in his monograph on water symbolism in the fourth gospel, defines a symbol in two ways; firstly, as an object which is referring to another while also retaining some significant importance which needs to be carefully surveyed to understand the other. Secondly, a symbol stands for something outside of what it is and points to a greater or immediate reality outside of its own (Jones, 1997:14). Important points to note from these two definitions offered by the dictionary and Jones is that, firstly, the symbol is understood to not only be representative of the other ‘object’ but as also sharing in some way the nature or some aspects of reality with the object it points to. This is further supported by the assertion Dorothy Lee makes when defining a symbol and says that, “it [a symbol] bears or conveys within itself the realities to which it points” (Lee, 1994:29). Furthermore, in order to understand the ‘other object’ which in most instances may be abstract in nature, you need to understand the nature and the specification of the object which acts as a symbol. By combining literary, socio-historical and theological elements, Craig Koester in defining a symbol, further points out that a symbol can be a person, an image or an action that “is understood to have a transcendent significance” (Koester, 2003:4). This shows that a symbol is not only limited to being an object but can also be a person or a visualized image familiar to a certain community. Therefore, a symbol is used to explain that which can not be seen or explained in definite ways and needs an accessible object with similar qualities to shed some light on its nature; though not fully, but through the interpretation by the audience, some aspects can be explained.

It is important to note that one can see similarities between a metaphor and a symbol when used as literary devices. Although metaphors and symbols are related on a continuum, there are broader applications of symbols making them different from metaphors. For example, a metaphor provides a tenor and a vehicle and leaves the reader to interpret the relationship between the two. While on the other hand, a symbol presents the vehicle with the absence of a tenor and it is the responsibility of the reader to discern the tenor. The cultural or traditional information provides the broader context within which the vehicle serves as, in order to help the reader find its meaning (Jones, 1997:14; Culpepper, 1983:182-83).

Three important elements are involved in enabling an object or an image or action to function symbolically namely, an image, a referent and an interpreter (Koester, 2003:7). Erwin R. Goodenough in his analysis of Jewish symbols and their functions in a community on the same idea, highlights that the reader acts as an interpreter and can not remain neutral and unaffected by a symbol. Furthermore, by registering and identifying the symbol, the reader has the choice to either love or hate the symbol but in either of the choices, the interpreter feels the power of the symbol and its demands on the reader (Goodenough, 1954:33). The choice to love the symbol by the reader has a greater demand of change in some or all aspects of the life of the reader. On this point, Jones adds that a symbol not only calls for a response from the reader but also invites them to participate in it. Therefore, a symbol has the ability to arouse emotions of either accepting the symbol or rejecting it but in certain ways never leaves the reader unaffected and calls for a decision from the part of the reader; consequently, “symbols evoke thought, emotion and action” and involve the person as a whole (Jones, 1997:18).

Having looked at the definition of a symbol as a literary device in general terms, I will now go on to look at how symbolism is used and defined in Johannine terms, with some examples of the use of symbolism by the evangelist. Though this may not be an extensively detailed survey of the use symbolism in Johannine symbolism, the section that follows aims at giving a sense of how the evangelist in the fourth gospel uses symbolism in order to reveal certain truths about Jesus to his community.

1.5.2 Theory of Word-Power and metonymic reference by J. Miles Foley

According to the theory of Foley, words cannot occur without a context and their recurrence always points back to the prior occurrences and prior contexts. In other words, it is the relationship between the ‘enabling event’ (which Foley looks at in terms of performance) and the ‘enabling referent’ (tradition) that meaning is given to word-power (Foley, 1995:1). In understanding ‘performance as an enabling event’ Foley builds the concept of ‘interpretive frame’ by Richard Bauman within which performance is to be understood in terms of which he prefers to refer to as the ‘performance arena’. In both the analysis Bauman and that of Foley the terms refer to “a locus in which specialized form of communication is uniquely licensed to take place” (Foley, 1995:8). In other words, this is the arena within which the uttered words are not only to be taken literally but are meant to convey implicit meaning to that which is only discovered by those familiar with the context.

The performance arena acknowledges that the use of these linguistic forms can identify a range of meanings. Even so, it is when a form is used in a context that the context eliminates possible meaning of any other context outside of the context which the linguistic form signals. In other words, context silences the main meaning of the words and opens up the metonymic reference to give more meaning to these linguistic forms (Foley, 1995:9). In metonymic referencing, one word stands for a whole world of meaning beyond itself: it is like the tip of an ice-berg. Only those keyed in to this world of meaning by their cultural community can fully understand its reference in an oral performance. The place where this transfer of meaning through metonymy takes place in an oral community is the “performance arena”, the place and occasion on which the performance takes place. Furthermore, it is a place where the recurrent performances are dedicated to take place at and where the audience is meant to experience those activities (Foley, 1995:47).

Foley further highlights that every society has a variety of ‘registers’ on which they draw to communicate in their every day life activities. Register in this context refers “to an idiomatic version of the language that qualifies as a more or less self-contained system of

signification specifically because it is the designated and sole vehicle for communication in the act of traditional oral performance” (Foley, 1995:15). The more this form of language is attached to a particular activity in the performance arena, the more efficiently it can communicate meaning (oral economy). In other words, a dedicated register is one that uses simple forms or words which have acquired density in meaning through their recurrence. Therefore, the performance arena becomes carefully mapped out and charged with a medium of communication that can economically convey the message (Foley, 1995:17).

In dealing with the relationship between reception and Word-Power, Foley highlights that oral performance assumes that the audience (or reader in the instance of written material) has implicit knowledge of the art forms of the linguistic form at play. Therefore, a competent audience is one that is able to have a network of implicit meaning which is activated by the already familiar language forms that are used in the performance and the encoded signals that are embedded in the words used (Foley, 1995:42). Furthermore, in the receptionist approach focus is mainly on the “potential activity of a text, the dynamic contribution of the reader, and the experience occasioned when text and reader interact” (Foley, 1995:42). Therefore, it is the ability for the text and reader to meet halfway, with the literary text opening up opportunities for the reader to re-create the world represented by the text and the product can be referred to as the ‘virtual dimension’ of the text. This virtual dimension is neither the actual text nor is it the imagination of the reader but rather can be referred to as “the coming together of text and imagination” (Foley, 1995:42). Therefore in this sense, one text may have an encoded message but the understanding of one reader will vary from the next reader’s.

Though there can be a plurality in interpretations, receptionist theory has what Hans-Robert Jauss refers to as ‘horizons of expectation.’ This refers to the “set of expressive and perceptual contexts brought into play by textual strategies of all sorts” (Foley, 1995:42). A text, as located in these horizons, calls for interpretations which are located within the same horizon as the text, although they may vary. In other words, the varying interpretations need to be appropriately located in the horizon of the text. It is through the

accumulation of these variations over time, as the text is experienced in different ages that a history of reception is formulated and the metonymic reference of the meaning of the words is extended (Foley, 1995:42). Therefore, a new work is not entirely new as it does not exist in a vacuum but rather finds its shape and meaning within certain horizons of expectation (Foley, 1995:43). This further asserts that performers and the audience enter in the same arena where the language used is dedicated to the arena and, it is the way the words are presented that the signals can be decoded. Furthermore, each metonymic point functions as an activation node of the untextualized network of meaning which is attached to the traditional use of the particular words (Foley, 1995:53-54). It is through this activation of these different points of meaning that there is a dependence on the associated institution or the performance arena in order to guide the understanding of the signals and the nodes of meaning. It is at this activation of meaning that, “the work issues forth with surpassing communicative economy, as the way of speaking becomes a way of meaning” (Foley, 1995:54).

This shows that symbols have a wide range of possible meaning and it is through their ability to be recognised or attached to a particular context and event that their meaning becomes stronger as a competent symbol. In the case of water as a symbol, there is a strong sense of the use of water in ritualistic events in the Bible such as cleansing and purification rights and therefore it is important to also analyse the appearance of symbols in terms of ritual symbolism.

1.5.3 Johannine symbolism in Ritual symbolism analysis

Since most of the symbols in the Gospel of John recur during feasts, it is plausible for one to analyze the symbols as ritual symbols which, like water and light at the feast of Tabernacles, are the centre of the ritual or the celebration as a whole. Therefore, symbols not only serve the role of showing transcendent truths about God, but also convey a dedicated meaning to the everyday life of the community. In his analysis of ritual symbols using the Ndembu Ritual as an example; Victor Turner points out that there are three important properties of ‘dominant’ ritual symbols. The first property is that of condensation, where many things and actions are put together in to a single formation for

meaning. The second property is that dominant a symbol “is a *unification of disparate significata*” (1967:28). This property acknowledges that the characteristics of a symbol can be different in kind but are unified by their possession of common analogous qualities whether by thought or fact. It is through the wide and general characterization of a symbol that many meanings can therefore be bracketed and unified together. The third and most important property, which is significant to my study, is the property of ‘*polarization in meaning*’ in ritual symbols. For Turner, dominant symbols possess two distinguishable poles of meaning; namely the ideological pole and the sensory pole. At the ideological pole, one finds a cluster of characteristics which refer to the moral and social orders of the society in question, which in the analysis is that of the Ndembu society. On the other pole, the sensory pole, one finds characteristics which “are usually natural and physiological phenomena and processes” (Turner, 1967:28).

For Turner, the ‘ideological pole’ constitutes arrangement of norms and values of the society in ways that guide and control the members of the society and in turn classifies them into a certain type of group. While on the other hand, the ‘sensory pole’ finds its meaning based on the outward and the physical appearance of the symbol itself. Moreover, this pole of meaning focuses on the characteristics which somehow are expected to arouse emotions in their audience (Turner, 1967:28).

Thus for Turner, the meaning of a symbol is imprecise and polyvalent in nature and it is this very characteristic that opens up the symbol to mean different things for a community but also for the individual.

It is with these theories in mind that the symbol of water will be analyzed in both texts and this will shed light on how this kind of reading can form a basis for reading John 7:37-39 in the context of the environment and promoting environmental justice and conservation.

1.6 Limitations of Study

The study focuses on the water and environmental crisis in South Africa, although there is a brief analysis on the global experiences with relation to the water and environmental

crisis as experienced in the world. My approach to the research is influenced by my upbringing in Soweto, a township south of Johannesburg in the Gauteng province being raised by a Zulu woman (my grandmother) who got married to a Tswana man. This research further focuses mainly on the absence of a written theology in the Methodist Church, and it is in this Methodist tradition that my interpretation of the text may be limited to and shaped around. My gender, as a female further plays a significant role in my interest on the subject. Having been exposed to the academic world, I have learnt to approach the text with a hermeneutic of suspicion looking for those areas in the text that promote injustice, gender biasness and sub-ordination or domination of the 'other' in the biblical text. In this endeavor, I have come to acknowledge that most of the adverse results in the current environmental state of the country are a result of poor management of resources by humanity and the unjust distribution of the available natural resources, such as clean water, has resulted in the poor experiencing the adversities of development more than the rich. Furthermore, in the attempt to hold dominion over the earth, humanity has neglected their responsibility to care and look after nature as the creation of God. It is with these complexities that I therefore approach the Bible and with these concerns that I will read John 7:37-39.

Chapter 2: Environmental analysis and Background of Study

2.1 Introduction

After a brief over-view of what the available research institutions in South Africa which deal with issues relating to water availability and scarcity in South Africa are, a recent article on research and water pollution ends by stating that:

There is a growing awareness in South Africa of the realities of water pollution and the problems it brings in its wake. This is evident from the nature and amount of research that is currently being undertaken and from the fact that a special body, the WRC¹, had to be established to coordinate all these research activities. Both industry and domestic consumers now realize that, in a land where the demand for water is likely to exceed the supply in 20years' time, the freedom to pollute is a luxury that simply can not be afforded (Gillie et.al, 1979:465).

This shows that South Africa, for the past decades, has identified water and the environment as issues of concern as the country is predicted to face critical scarcity in the near future regarding available natural resources. This chapter will look at the different aspects which contribute to environmental degradation. Furthermore, this chapter will look at how the environment, especially water as a resource, plays an important role in the life, ritual and symbolism of the Church² and also in African traditional religion.

2.2 Current environmental and water crisis

In trying to give a concise analysis of the South African situation of the environmental crisis, this analysis will begin by doing a brief analysis of the global view of the state of the environment and the factors that affect the environment in South Africa. It will from

¹ WRC stands for the World Research Council .

² In this research I only consider the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, my own church, but many of my observations will be true for other South African churches as well.

time to time also refer to global influences which have a contribution to the South African situation.

2.2.1 Global Deliberations on the Environmental situation

There has been an increased concern for the environment, globally, in the last couple of decades. The concern has been on how life on earth has been put under threat by the growing rate of pollution. This concern is linked to the way humans have come to use land, and the environment at large, in ways that are disruptive to the harmony in the ecosystems and have resulted in the loss of natural resources in abnormal ways and the extinction of species (Chandran, 1994:3-4). In this analysis, Chandran highlights that the concern for the environment is global because it is a matter of survival and it is integral to the survival of all humankind in the world. Moreover, the effects of deforestation, such as flooding and droughts, affect the livelihood of the poor who are then forced to migrate and leave their habitat and seek refuge in other parts of the world. This affects the rate of development and it is a growing concern that those in the poor rural areas are affected by the poisoning of water as consequence of the water resources being increasingly used for the management of industrial waste (Chandran, 1994:4). Understanding negative effects on the environment as an illness, Freda Rajotte and Elizabeth Breuilly highlight the disruption and harm to the food chains, the depletion of the Ozone layer and the disruption of the water cycle as symptoms of the illness of environmental destruction (Rajotte and Breuilly, 1992:1).

In analyzing the causes of the destruction of the environment, Rajotte and Breuilly attribute the problem as a result of the spread of the European and North American culture throughout the world in the past 500 years. The concern for the individual and those within the closed 'circle' has increased the level at which the earth has been neglected and used for self-gratification with little regard for the implications thereafter (Rajotte and Breuilly, 1992:6-7). Furthermore, in analyzing the causes of the destruction of the environment, Martin-Schramm and Stivers identify five kinds of adverse attitudes towards nature which have had a direct negative contribution to the destruction of the environment namely, anthropocentric attitudes, hierarchical attitudes, dualistic attitudes,

dominating attitudes, atomistic and individualistic attitudes (Martin-Schramm and Stivers, 2003:17-23). Martin-Schramm and Stivers point out that a collection of these attitudes towards nature is a result of a system of ideas which has become powerful as they have served the purpose for humanity well but have adversely resulted in the degradation of the environment. Furthermore, if nature is to be able to sustain life on earth for future generations, there needs to be a change in these attitudes.

Having done a brief overview of the global deliberations on the crisis facing the environment in the world and how different authors have analyzed the situation, I will shift now to the focus on the environmental and water crisis in South Africa and the other Southern region of the African continent.

2.2.2 State of the environmental and water crisis in South Africa

Ernst Conradie in his analysis of climate change as the current topic in the news highlights that climate change has been the on agenda of global news for many decades yet it has become a prominent topic only in the last five years. In contrast, there has been a significant increase in the news coverage on climate change in the world, including South Africa. Over the last two decades issues that affect South Africa have been changing the focus of media in the most rapid way with one issue coming after the other. In mapping the emergence of issues of climate change in South Africa, Conradie looks at the transition of the issues in the agenda of South Africa. The agenda of issues of concern in the 1980s was mainly the issues of the struggle against apartheid, for social security and the difficulties of the negotiations for a democratic constitution, followed by the 1994 elections and quality of life improvement programmes such as the RDP to improve the life of poor people and so forth (Conradie, 2008:1-2).

It is clear from the list of events which have been of importance to the progress of South Africa that the struggle became more focused on the livelihoods of those who were previously disadvantaged by the apartheid system and the areas which were often neglected during the time of apartheid and which have now become the subject of the development projects initiated by the post-apartheid system. Most of these areas still rely greatly on the environment to provide for their livelihood; especially families which are

headed by women rely on the food produced in their farm lands (Shackleton, et.al, 2002:131). For example, these communities rely on fertile land in order to plant vegetables either for their daily consumption or to sell in order to acquire money to improve their lives. Moreover, they rely therefore on the fertility of the earth and adequate rainfall; adequate in a sense that it is enough and not resulting in floods or too scarce resulting in droughts. I therefore argue that water in the environmental crisis plays an integral part in a healthy eco-system and therefore requires attention if one is to address issues of poverty alleviation and improving the quality of life for people. With this in mind, it seems then that South Africa is facing not only water and environmental crisis but a threat to a healthy quality of life which nature provides.

2.2.3 Water scarcity in South Africa and the Southern African region

Africa is known as a relatively arid place even though it receives 640mm of rainfall per year. This is due to the high temperatures experienced in the continent and the strong winds which accelerate the evaporation rate (Pimentel, et.al, 2004:10). This therefore makes the rate of the available water to be dependent on the rate of climate change and the patterns which may result in the increasing temperature in Africa.

A third of all the fresh water in Africa flows into the Congo River and in the Southern part of Africa, Mozambique is identified as being the greatest source of water but even in this situation South Africa is seriously under water stress and is facing the probability of running out of water in 2025 (de Gruchy, 2010:188-201). More specifically relating to the Vaal-Orange Catchment Area, which has the greatest water supply for South Africa, Herold³ states that the pressure on the river will probably outstrip the supply of water in 2013. Despite facing the threats of water scarcity in South Africa, it would be lethal in any way for the country to slow down the rate of development since there are still a lot of people who are desperate for a better quality of life and “economic emancipation” (Herold, 2009:2). The greatest challenge that South Africa faces is being able to manage water in the country in such a way that they can be able to keep the rate of economic

³ See paper presented by: Herold, C.E. *Des Midgley Memorial Lecture: 'The Water Crisis in South Africa'*. (14th Sanciahs Symposium, 21-23 September 2009).

growth steady in the country, while also seeking to provide descent sanitation systems to the rural areas, where most poor people live under lethal sanitation conditions and at the same time be able to keep the resource for future generations. Put better by Herold, he states that:

Provision has to be made to sustain essential economic growth both for present and future generations, while at the same time securing basic human need, meeting international obligations and protecting the resource and the fragile environment that it supports (Herold, 2009:2).

South Africa is therefore facing a crisis where their inability to provide sufficiently for their current water demand may lead to an increased stress on the resource and this will also defeat its goal of poverty alleviation in the country and the Southern region of Africa, affecting therefore what is referred to as the SADC region⁴.

What then are the causes of this negative state of water availability in South Africa? Following in this section, a number of contributions will be suggested as being integrally playing a role in the scarcity of water in South Africa.

2.2.4 Contributing factors to the rise of the water crisis in S.A

The issue of recycling has been advocated for, for years in South Africa where people have been encouraged to recycle, reduce and re-use, also known as the three R's of the environment. These R's are essential to the preservation of the natural resources globally and the effects of not heeding to this call can now be seen in the current state of our dams and rivers where too much water has been polluted and is not usable for human consumption due to the high level of contamination.

⁴ The South African Development Community (SADC) was formed in 1980. It is made up of 15 countries in Southern Africa namely, Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The main aim was to create a development community for ensuring economic well-being and the improvement on the standards of living, amongst other things that are anchored by the values and principles of the peoples of Southern Africa. See official website: www.sadc.int/index/browse/page/52.

The current concern in South Africa which contributes to the contamination of fresh water is the issue of sewage water management. In the analysis of the issue affecting sewage in the rural areas of South Africa, de Gruchy⁵ highlights that the post-apartheid ANC government committed itself to the eradication of the old “bucket toilets” system of collecting sewage. In explaining how the system works, de Gruchy states that it, “involved human waste being collected in open buckets, and then taken away by the municipal workers. It only occurs in poor communities and it is a powerful reminder of what it means to be a second class citizen” (de Gruchy,2007:1). Though this aim to eradicate the bucket system began as a good idea, in areas such as the rural settlements in Free State it went wrong due to a collapse of sanitation systems. Herold explains that in the Free State, the bucket system was replaced with a “sophisticated flush sewer system” which failed due to the fact that there were not enough water supplies to maintain the system for the flushing of the toilets. Consequently, this has led to the overflow of sewage systems and to the contamination of flowing rivers nearby (Herold, 2009:12). This failure may be blamed on poor planning but it is also linked to the increase in population. The environment has become strained as it needs to respond to an increase in demand both for water and food. This increase in population further calls for an increase in fruit production, therefore calling for an increase in the amount of water irrigation.

Water irrigation uses ground water which is left for future usage in the reserves in South Africa but the rate at which it is being used in some areas calls for serious attention. For example, Herold in assessing issues of concern with regard to the water use with the Vaal River as a case study highlights that there is an increasing and alarming level of water theft from the Vaal Dam through irrigation (Herold, 2009:7). Such activity further limits the amount of stored water which is used as water reserves for the country in time of drought and though the effects of the theft activity are not yet explicitly visible, it may be seen in the long run when South Africa needs to carry its water demands using its reserves.

⁵ de Gruchy, S. 2007. *Theological Reflections on Economics and Environment.* An address to the South African Council of Churches Triennial National Conference.

Having outlined the current state of the crisis South Africa is facing with regard to the environment and more specifically the availability of clean and fresh water to all, it is also important to note that much of the work that has been done in educating the South African nation about the preservation of the environment has been primarily the responsibility of the government through the Department of Water Affairs. Though it may be so, South Africa being rich in the culture, traditional and religious heritage seems to have a lot more resources and institutions available in order to promote environmental justice and the conservation of water. Therefore, it is with this diversity in mind that I will now look at the contributions African religions can make in giving an understanding of water that will promote greater care for the resource. Furthermore, I will also look at Christian responses to the water and environmental crisis. In doing so, the aim will be to try and map out the points of contact and of conflict between African and Christians practices with relation to the fertility of the earth and how these can be important in forming a basis of an African Christian theology of the environment.

2.3 African approaches to water and the environment

In sketching out how African traditional religions understand and relate to nature, Mbiti looks at three ethnic groups within Africa and maps out how they relate and understand nature. Mbiti states that,

The Ashanti people consider the earth to be a female divinity, second to God, and observe Thursday as her day; the Igbo regard the earth to be God's daughter who protects and helps with the crops. The Zulu are reported to have the so-called 'Queen of the heaven' who is said to be of great beauty. The rainbow, mist and rain are emanations of her glory, and she is surrounded by light (Mbiti,1990:76).

Firstly, it is important to understand that the earth is attributed in all these cases to be female. Furthermore, she plays the role of protecting people and providing food through helping with the crops. Moreover, her beauty is revealed through elements of a beautiful eco-system with rain, mist and a rainbow and it is surrounded by light. From this understanding of nature therefore, one can understand that nature is understood in terms of fertility, hence being attributed to the female who is understood in African terms as

having qualities of nurturing and integral to the aspect of pro-creation and ultimately responsible for giving life. Furthermore, the environment in this regard is understood as playing the role of a nurturing mother to humanity and protecting them and providing food and sustaining life on earth and revealing its presence through the rain and the rainbow and the light and revealing God to humanity in the process. This is important in a sense that it shows the way nature or the environment is understood to have divine powers and some spiritual significance.

African religions believe that there are nature spirits who are actively involved and consequently live in nature and these spirits are believed to live in the skies and control the rain.⁶ These nature spirits are believed to control the rivers, lakes and oceans and are good spirits in a sense that they provide essential resources, such as water and food to the people and also provide protection. The condition for this providence and loyalty of the spirits is through the performance of rituals and ceremonies that are aimed at honouring the spirits and consequently guarantee the goodwill of these spirits, hence the role of African rain makers.

African rain-makers are understood as diviners of a special kind who intervene when there are droughts and floods, which are understood as being a consequence of misfortunes from the spirits due to inappropriate behaviour. The role of the rain maker in this regard is to find the human cause of the misfortune, such as drought, and to come up with solutions for the drought. Since some parts of Africa are arid, and others semi-arid and suffer from droughts from time to time, farmers are dependant on the rain for survival and rain making is important in that regard.⁷

⁶ Information extracted from *'Exploring Africa: A Curriculum and Manual for Teachers and Students'*; a curriculum put together for students and teachers in matriculation doing African studies, put together by the *African Studies Center*. Access address: <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m14/activity2.php>. (accessed 06 September 2011).

⁷ See Exploring Africa: *'A Curriculum for Teachers and Students'* under the section titled: Rain Makers.

It seems from this practice of rain making that there is a sense of human responsibility in the part of the causation of droughts and unusual and adverse patterns of rainfall. This is an important ethic towards the preservation and conservation of water in a sense that it promotes a sense of responsibility with regard to the way water is used and a sense of accountability.

In the Ndebele culture⁸, an ethnic group originally from the Zululand, it was believed that “dry bones in the veld, nests of crows in trees, rotting carcasses and trees without their bark hinder rain from falling” (Bozongwana, 1990:50). A ritual would therefore have to be performed where the village men and women would gather with the kraal head, the headman or chief in order to go clean the bush. In preparation for this ceremony, the men and women would need to abstain from sexual intercourse the day before the ceremony. No calling of the spirit takes place during the ceremony but the abstinence from sexual intercourse, the washing of bodies after the ritual would serve as symbols of both the purity of the people and the land preparing for the rainfall to come and in most cases this ritual succeeded (Bozongwana, 1990:50). This act of going in to the forests, to clean out all that makes the forest to be dirty is important in the context where our forests are polluted by illegal dumping and deforestation. This shows a sense of understanding the inter-connectedness of each component of nature and how they all contribute to the availability of rain and ultimately of water.

2.3.1 South African approaches

In the analysis of social systems in the Zulu customs Eileen Krige highlights in the ancient social systems the king is the responsible person for the vegetation of the community and its growth. It is the duty of the King to procure land and this is done through making a request to the ancestors to pray to God in heaven for rain. Therefore,

⁸ It is a group of people who followed Mzilikazi, the king of amaNdebele, who fled from Shaka in Zululand and travelled north towards the Transvaal in the beginning of the 19th century. After a surprise attack from the Boer commandants, Potgieter and Maritz, Mzilikazi left the Transvaal and crossed over the Limpopo River and moved in to the land known as Matebeleland. All the tribes which were conquered by Mzilikazi from Natal became incorporated into the Ndebele tribe and the women became his wives and queens while the young men served in his army (Bozongwana, 1990:vii).

the king can not make a direct request directly to God in heaven and it is therefore only the ancestors who have direct access to the heavenly Lord (Krige, 1981:247). In times of drought the king would summon all people for an assembly, including the village heads, and a sacrifice of black oxen, sheep and black rams would be made. The emphasis on the colour of the animals is important as they are understood to resemble the black rain-clouds. Once the beasts have been slaughtered, they are placed in the huts of the old women over-night so that the spirits can have their share of the meat.

In order to be sure of rain, the kings had their own rain doctors who helped out when the prayers made to the ancestors did not help in their petitions. These doctors belonged to the royal house and Krige points out that, “so intimately bound up with the rain is the life of the king, which it is believed that there is a particular danger of drought in the period between the death of one king and the accession of another” (Krige, 1981:248). Although the rain-doctors were present in the royal house, the Zulu kings did not encourage their presence in their kingdom as they believed they, as kings, were able to control the heavens. Therefore, not only is the king the great rain-maker of the tribe, but the fertility of the land and its ability to produce depends on the king. Moreover, the king becomes central to the agricultural operations of the tribe and plays a strong leadership role by leading certain times of the agricultural year, such as the sowing of the seed time and the eating of the first fruits (Krige, 1981:248-249).

One of the ways to make rain for Zulu people is to go and look for a rain bird, the *insingizi* bird, which is believed not to be afraid of thunder and it would be killed and thrown in to a pool of water. This is believed to have the ability to soften the heavens and the heavens will wail for the bird by raining. Furthermore, the *insingizi* bird is closely lined with the heavens and rain as it is believed that if many of these *insingizi* birds walk around an open country and wail, it is a sign that it will rain. This also applies for the *iNgqungqulu* bird (a large reddish bird, the Burchell’s Coucal) which is believed to be another heaven bird and it ether killed for rain and its wailing also signals the coming of rain (Krige, 1981:320).

In Zulu understanding, the appearance of mists of spring at a valley is a sign of Nomkhubulwana also known as the *Inkosazana yase zulwini* (Princess of Heaven). She is believed to be a Zulu Ceres who presides over the growth of grain, teaches people how to make beer and has the power to bring rain. Nomkhubulwana is described as robed in light and comes from heaven to teach people how to plant, harvest and all the essential arts of the agricultural life of the tribes. She is thought to visit the earth every year, around October, and there are celebrations and a feast called *uNomdede*, celebrated in honour of Nomkhubulwana. These celebrations are one of the customs which have died out but Krige also acknowledges that they are celebrated in the outlying parts of Zululand (Krige, 1981:197). These celebrations varied in nature depending on the requests and the fears of the people. The visit of Nomkhubulwana was, among other things, an indication of a good harvest (Krige, 1981:200).

In his thesis on rain in Botswana, Gabriel Tsuaneng⁹ shows how the symbol of rain has become an important symbol for an arid place such as Botswana. Rain has also played a role in the naming of the currency of Botswana, namely the Pula, meaning rain in Setswana, and in the naming of children and even in the symbols used in the Botswana coat of arms (Tsuaneng, 2010:130-140). For the Batswana people, rain signifies blessings and it is important in agricultural sector; which also contributes to the prosperity of the country. There is also a rain queen in the Limpopo province known as Queen Modjadji who has also become well known through her involvement in the making of rain in a province with high temperatures and where drought is a fear for the highly agricultural community. In the analysis of rain making in the Tswana community Paul S. Landau highlights that rain makers respond to the ecological crises of their communities which also have political implications for the wellbeing of the community or tribe. Furthermore, rain making can be set within the scope of recent studies on indigenous ecological policies in Africa (Landau, 1993:3).

⁹ Tsuaneng, G. 2010. *Pula! The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and the Water Crisis in Botswana*. University of KwaZulu Natal, unpublished masters dissertation.

In analysing the Setswana perspective on the creating account, Moiseraele Dibeela points out that in the Tswana community rain is seen as a sign that the ancestors are pleased with the people and the moral fibre of the community. Furthermore, there are taboos in the culture that forbid certain behaviours as they may result in chasing away the rain and this includes veld fires and the destruction of certain trees as events which may chase away the rain. During drought, it is believed that the people have committed certain sins which may have angered the ancestors and this has resulted in famine and droughts. In such cases, *dingaka* (traditional doctors) perform rituals to “appease the Ancestors for the sins committed by the people” and cleanse the community of their sins in order for the rain to fall again (Dibeela, 2000:394). This shows that for the Batswana people, there is interconnectedness between people, animals and all of creation. Furthermore, there is no distinction between the sacred and secular as no part in creation is independent and it is through this interconnectedness that one can witness the creator in creation. Therefore humanity is simply a part of the created order. For Dibeela, this is the understanding that will promote environmental justice when interpreting texts such as the creation account. Contrary to the Western hermeneutics which have portrayed humanity as the centre of all creation with the power to dominate and rule over creation, a Tswana understanding of creation sees all things revolving around earth and human beings are care takers of creation and not exploiters (Dibeela, 2000:394-396). Central to this understanding therefore is that human beings have a responsibility of looking after creation and in African understanding, it is the conduct of the community that will ensure the coming of rain and traditional doctors serve the function of cleansing any sin which may have been caused by the members of the community in order to end the droughts which have resulted due to this misconduct.

2.4 The Methodist Church's response to the environmental and water crisis in South Africa

In trying to show why the church, more specifically the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), had been slow in responding to the environmental crisis, Dion Foster highlights that red issues have taken more precedence than green issues in the Methodist

Church. In explaining this, Foster highlights that economic concerns and issues relating to prosperity and personal well being have been of greatest for the Church in the past years and little focus has been given to the environmental issues (Foster, 2008:40-41).

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa, though briefly, has expressed its level of concern for the environment in the official policy of the MCSA. In this resolution, the MCSA commits itself to taking part in the environmental awareness campaigns in educating the world on the importance of environmental conservation.¹⁰ Though these resolutions have been made, serious deliberations on a written Methodist theology of the environment have not yet surfaced and the matter still remains undiscussed beyond appearing in the year book and the resolutions of the Church. It is my argument therefore, that if the Church is to have a role in the reducing of the environmental degradation, some form of written theology should be in process.

One ritual which the Church can begin dialogue on issues concerning the water crisis is the sacrament of baptism. In Methodist understanding, baptism is understood as representing the welcoming of one into the Christian community and the act of being purified and reborn, hence the water as a symbol in the performances of the sacrament.¹¹ Another starting point in the dialogue between the MCSA and environmental concerns is the liturgy constructed by John van de Laar¹² which looks at the way nature has been carefully constructed by God and how humanity has been given the task to therefore care for creation and exercise stewardship.

2.5 Points of contact and points of conflict in African and Christian practices

¹⁰ Cited by Foster, 2008:38. Foster further cites on the mention of the ecological concern of the MCSA, the minutes of the conference in 2006 also found in year book of 2007.

¹¹ Refer to the website on the United Methodist Church which gives a basic outline of the doctrines of the Methodist Church, accessed on this website: <http://www.bethany-umc.com/AboutUs/methodistbeliefs.htm>.

¹² John van de Laar is an ordained minister in the MCSA and has written extensively on issues relating to worship and worship resources, and has formulated a liturgy on 'Creation and Communion.' Accessible in his website: <http://sacredise.com>.

In African practices, the environment is looked upon as a source of life and healing, through the trees which are used for African medicinal purposes and have been understood to be the habitats of the nature spirits, mentioned above. Furthermore, rivers and lakes are understood to have healing powers and are often also referred to as the dwelling place for the nature spirits. On the other hand, Christianity also holds that God is actively involved in nature as he has created it, referring to the creation story in Genesis 1-3. Therefore a point of contact for both these practices is that they hold dear that nature mediates divine presence. The conflict arises in the differences of interpreting the way this divine presence is to be seen and understood since the Christian practices have come to discard the issue of spirits as intermediaries. But seeing how the African practices have come to embrace the environment as providing life, it is a good starting point for dialogue between the two practices.

Fertility of the earth is also of concern to both practices. This is seen in the Christian celebrations of harvest festivals and services dedicated to the celebration of the first crops in Christian communities where agriculture is central to the livelihoods of people, for example in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, these celebrations are still held each year. Moreover, African practices also see the fertility of the earth as calling for necessity to perform rituals of thanks-giving in thanking the spirits and God for the rainfall and fertile land. These celebrations of the fecundity of life and the response of God to the providence of life to humanity through nature can help form a basis for a Christian theology which is inherently African, by embracing the points of contact between the African practices and the Christian practices which celebrate the fertility of the earth.

Similar to the Zulu Spring celebrations of Nomkhulwana, the Jewish tradition has a spring festival known as the Feast of Tabernacles which is similar in nature to the Nomkhulwana celebrations. Central to both these celebrations is the concern for the fertility of the earth for the next agricultural year and the coming of enough rain. The next chapter will focus on the Feast of Tabernacles and how this feast forms a basis for the reading of John 7:37-39 in light of the ecological concerns in South Africa and the water crisis.

Chapter 3: Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)

3.1 Introduction

Sukkot forms part of the three Jewish harvest festivals which were also known as pilgrimages to the temple, and this includes Pesah and Shavuot. The Pesah festival involved a group of worshippers taking their Pesah sacrifice to the temple for a ritual, while the Shavuot festival was celebrated for one day which marked the wheat harvest. In this wheat harvest celebration, a ritual would be performed where two loaves of bread were presented at the altar (Rubenstein, 1995:2). Like these feasts, Sukkot, was a temple centred festival which took place at the conclusion of the autumnal harvest which marked the end of the long Jewish agricultural year. Having completed the hard labor of the harvesting of the grapes, the fruits and the other remaining grain, and the preparation of the wine and the remaining grains in the threshing floor; the peasants looked forward to a time of calm and rest. It is during this time that a celebration and thanksgiving for the fertility of the ground and the fruits produced would take place for a week in Jerusalem (Rubenstein, 1995:2). In this chapter, a focus will be on the feast of Sukkot, also known as the feast of Tabernacles and its history. A history of the feast will be based on biblical records and other sources from the rabbinic period and guides to the Jewish Culture in general. Then a brief analysis of the presentation of the feast in the prophetic texts will be made, mainly the text of Zechariah 14 and that in Ezekiel 47.

3.2 Origins and the history of Sukkot

Most scholars, in constructing the origins and the history of Sukkot, rely on the records in the Bible where the feast is mentioned and rabbinic literature in order to gather a concise account of the elements which make up the festival. This chapter will, therefore, focus on this kind of methodology in order to give a brief history of the events which take place on the week of the festival.

In the earlier records, the festival was not known as “the Festival of Sukkot”. For example, Jeffery Rubenstein highlights that the earliest mention of the feast in the biblical sources in Exodus 23:16 and 34:22 the autumnal festival was known as the “festival of ingathering (*hag ha’asif*)”; which is usually dated around the tenth century BCE (Rubenstein, 1995:13). According to the record in Exodus 23:16, the festival of ingathering is recorded as taking place, “at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor” (ESV)¹³. While in Exodus 34:22, the feast of ingathering is said to be observed “at the year’s end”. This therefore places the festival to have been taking place at the end of every harvest year, which according to the Jewish calendar was around autumn (September/October). This correlates with the Gezer calendar which marks the first months of the year to be the autumnal harvest months and the summer months follow at the end. Furthermore, this follows the climatical year cycle which marks the year to follow the autumn-autumn pattern where the autumn rains, around September/October, are a necessary mark of the beginning of the agricultural season (Ulfgard, 1998:39). The mentions made in the Exodus text do not give a precise or exact date as to which dates the festivals took place. Rubenstein states that it may have been as a result of the fluctuations in the climate which determined the date of the harvest when the peasants celebrated at the end of their work in the fields (1995:14). While in Leviticus 23:33-34¹⁴, it is stated that the people should meet on the “fifteenth day of this seventh month” and the legislation states that the festival is to last for seven days (verse 36). Some scholars have argued that the insistence of the fixed date in this text may be a reflection of a later era where the festivals became institutionalized while in the earlier sources, as already mentioned, the dating was open due to the variation of the completion of harvest from year to year. Rubenstein further highlights that though scholars have argued against the fact that the fixed dating may be a later result, it is also difficult to

¹³ All biblical references are from the English Standard version

¹⁴ Rubenstein indicates that it has become agreed upon that the Leviticus passage is a composite text where the first section, Leviticus 23:33-38, is from the priestly source and the second section is from the Holiness School. See the analysis by I. Knohl, 1987. *The Priestly Torah Verses the Holiness School: Sabbath and the Festivals*. HUCA. Pg 65-117.

argue based on the biblical evidence because while JE sources set no fixed date, D and P do set fixed dates to the festivals (Rubenstein, 1995:15).

In also attempting to date the festival, many scholars have also connected the two festival celebrations mentioned in Judges 9:27 and 21:19-21, to the festival of ingathering. In both instances the agricultural nature of the festival is alluded to in the celebrations. Furthermore, the feast is further called, the “feast of the Lord” which in some way indicates its importance and the fact that the festival was special and distinguishable from the other similar harvest festivals (Rubenstein, 1995:15). Deuteronomy 16:15 further instructs that the Israelites should “hold the festival of YHWH your God”, also showing the importance and the uniqueness of the feast. Deuteronomy 16: 13-15 is also the first connection made between the fall festival and to the festival of booths (Sukkot) stating that, “You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress” (v.13). Although there is no explanation given with regard to the title of the “festival of Booths (or Sukkot)” it may have been “derived from the booths the watchmen lived in, in the fields throughout the summer” (Rubenstein, 1995:15). But this is not been universally accepted as most believe it is derived from the fact that the pilgrims were expected to live in booths during the celebrations at the Jerusalem temple during the temple times (Rubenstein, 1995:15). According to the history of the Jewish culture, the dwelling in booths had a much more significant meaning during the festival which also served as a constant reminder of their heritage

Isidore Fishman in his e introduction to Judaism highlights that the *Succah* is a temporary and unstable booth which could not have regarded as a safe shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness and keep them from danger if it were not for the presence and protection of God (Fishman, 1978:73). It is therefore for this reason that, during the celebration of the feast, the pilgrims shared their meals and slept in the booth in order to express their “complete trust and confidence in God” (Fishman, 1978:73).

Israel Knohl, a professor in Hebrew literature, proposes in his analysis that in the Leviticus passage, the Priestly Torah (PT) did not see the dwelling in booths as

obligatory. In the analysis, Knohl highlights that if PT had regarded staying in booths as obligatory, the opening formula would have been expected to be something like, “a feast of Booths to the Lord; seven days you shall dwell in booths”, following the same formula used with regard to the unleavened bread in Lev 23:6 (Knohl, 1995:36). In this case, the term “feast of Booths”, may be a symbol signifying the popular custom of people staying in booths during the pilgrimages to the cultic sacrifices and the celebrations at the Jerusalem temple. This term may have gotten attached to this particular feast since its duration was long and the stay of those whose houses were far from the temple may have been in the booths for the whole duration of their stay (Knohl, 1995:37). But it has also been argued that the dwelling in the booths was a remembrance of the booths which the Israelites lived in during their wanderings in the desert, although some scholars see this as a late explanation of the festival dating it to the exilic period (Rubenstein, 1995:18; see also Dosick, 1995:147).

It is important to note that the feast was not originally a temple-based feast as it was celebrated before the period of the Davidic monarchy. In his account of the history of Judaism, Daniel J. Silver looks at the history of the invasion of Canaan by the Hebrews and asserts that the time of settlement for the Israelites was of great cultural shock (Silver, 1974:61). It seems there had not been any elaborate sacrificial cult in the early times of the Israelites and literary prophets of the seventh and eighth centuries insisted that there had not been none even in the times of Moses (Amos 5:25; Jeremiah 7:22). On the other hand it can also be seen that the Torah is full of elaborate sacrificial regulations for the people of Israel. Silver sees this as a result of Canaanite influence, particularly elevating the role of the priest in the cultic celebrations. Furthermore, Silver highlights that “the Hebrews had no priestly caste, whereas Canaan was Temple-oriented” (Silver, 1974:62). Priests and sacrifices were an integral part of every part in the city of Canaan and it is plausible that the Israelites enjoyed certain aspects of the daily activities of the Canaanites, leading to the adoption of the ritual life (Silver, 1974:62).

Having adopted the ritual life of the Canaanites, it is worth noting that Israelite rituals differ in one significant detail from the Canaanite model; the identity of the Priests.

Canaanite priests were “members of the ruling class and among a city’s major landholders” (Silver, 1974:62). While in Israel, priests were not allowed to own land but were supported by the rest of the population as stated in Deut 18:2.

As stated in the introduction, the feast of Tabernacles is one of the three pilgrimage holidays in Ancient Israel during which people went to a shrine, and later to the royal temple in Jerusalem, “to offer sacrifice, hymn and prayer to God” (Silver, 1974:62). Two of these holidays, namely *Shavout* and *Sukkot*, the Spring and fall harvest festivals, seem to have originally been Canaanite agricultural festivals which the harvest Israelites “appropriated and reshaped”, and therefore not changing seed time in Canaan under the new leadership of the Israelites (Silver, 1974:62).

3.2.1 The activities of the festival according to the Rabbinic traditions

Much of the detailed tradition of the festival of Sukkot is found in the rabbinic literature, which gives details of the temple rituals and the celebrations that take place during the duration of the festival. In the earliest Rabbinic document, the Mishna, three main rituals are depicted, namely; “the water libations, the willow procession (*‘arava*), and the *simhat beit hasho’eva* (rejoicing at the place of water-drawing; henceforth SBH), an all-night festivity celebrated in the temple courtyards” (Rubenstein, 1995:103). In the Mishnah, there is also a description of how the worshippers carried out their rituals, such as the lulav rituals and other cultic ceremonial rituals, and further providing a much more detailed sketch of the festival than the sources during the pre-rabbinic times. Although the rabbinic sources shed light on the festival, there are complications in the use of these sources as a source of the history of second temple period. For example, the dating of the redaction of the Mishnah, in about 200 CE, takes place a century and half after the destruction of the temple and this creates doubts on the accuracy of the information that has been preserved (Rubenstein, 1995:104)¹⁵.

¹⁵ For further arguments which have deemed the use of the rabbinic literature as a source, see Rubenstein, 1995:104ff.

On the other hand, David Goodblatt in his attempt to redeem the reliability of the use of rabbinic literature argues that the rabbinic literature shows some correlation with the sources from earlier periods, namely the Dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran. Furthermore, Goodblatt asserts that although the studies can not prove the rabbinic literature to be completely trustworthy, it is also worth noting that they are not completely untrustworthy (Goodblatt, 1980: 33-43). Because of the richness of the insight provided by the rabbinic resources, this chapter will look at the resources for the sake of gaining more insight on the information about how the festival was celebrated during the second temple times which is also necessary for understanding the chapters that follow which focus on the second temple use of the imagery used from the practices of the Sukkot festival and the rituals associated.

3.3 The rituals performed during the festival

The Mishnah Tractate *Sukkah* is divided in to five chapters. The first two chapters consist of the rules relating to how the sukkah should be constructed and the mode of dwelling in the booths. The third chapter defines the four species to be used in the ritual and the proper way to use these species. The fourth and the fifth chapters describe the observance of the rituals during temple times and mainly focus on the older form of observing the festival. Furthermore, these chapters show a record of the observance of the festival during the time of the temple (Rubenstein, 1995:106). In the beginning of chapter 4 of the Mishnah, a framework is set detailing the rituals performed during the festival, namely:

- 1) Six or seven days of the lulav and the willow ritual.
- 2) Eight days of the Hallel (recitation of psalms) and rejoicing.
- 3) Seven days of the sukkah and the water libation ritual.
- 4) Five or six days of the blowing of the flute.

(m. Suk. 4:1-3)

The following mishnayot look at each ritual and discuss the prescribed regulations of how each ritual is to be performed and the duration of each ritual.

3.3.1 *The willow and lulav ritual*

The procession of the willow branches and the encircling of the altar took place daily a week while on the seventh day of the festival; they encircled the altar seven times (*m. Suk.* 4:5G). The seventh day is therefore significant because it is also stated that if the seventh day falls on the Sabbath, the full observance of the ritual would take place (*m. Suk.* 4:3B), while if the Sabbath fell on any other day during the festival, a limited observance was advised (*m. Suk.* 4:6A-B).

During the processions, utterances of the Psalm 118:25, which is one of the Hallel psalms, are made during the encircling around the altar stating; “Save us, we pray, O Lord! O Lord, we pray, give us success!” It became to be believed that the liturgical phrases made during the procession were more likely to be “acclamations of praise for the altar and its powers of fecundity” (Rubenstein, 1995:114). Furthermore, the petition of salvation, “deliver us!” took place during a fertility rite and this suggests they served as ways of calling on a greater power to make the point of the ritual to take effect, which is the petition for fertility (Rubenstein, 1995:114).

The circling, including the waving of the lulav on the altar, and the willow procession itself was believed to be a ritual that was dedicated to the production of the rain and fertility of the earth. This can be further linked to the nature of the willow tree. The willow tree requires a lot of water to grow and it signifies the need for the rain, since they wither quickly when deprived of water in a time of drought. Moreover, the liturgical cry, “O Lord! deliver us!” further signifies a plea for the rain and the desperate need for “deliverance” (Rubenstein, 1995:115). According to *m. Suk.* 4:5, the rite of the willow branch on the seventh day after being in procession around the altar seven times the circling ends with a climatic expression of homage, ‘Homage to thee, O Altar! Homage to thee, O! Altar.’ In essence, this climatic expression is directed to God whose presence is believed to be dwelling at the altar. According to R. Eliezer, this expression says ‘To the Lord and to thee, O Altar! To the Lord and to thee, O Altar! This final climatic ending signals the total dependence on the divine power of God in the rituals for the

providence of rain and fertility of the earth, hence the invocation of the divine presence of God at the ritual.

This further can be seen in the Old Testament literature which highlights that God is the only source and provider of rain and it is through the keeping of the covenant that the Israelites are guaranteed abundant rains. For example, Jeremiah poses rhetorical questions to the Israelites asking them if any of their idols brought them any rain and in responding, Jeremiah asserts that it is only Yahweh who provided rain for them (Jer. 14:22). Furthermore, Moses warns the Israelites to be careful not to be deceived and turn away from God and worship other gods as this may anger God and result in God shutting the heavens so that no rain may not fall (Deut. 11:16-17). Moreover, it is seen in the prediction by Elijah that drought would befall the land of the Israelites because of their worshipping of the idols and the prophets of Baal who shared the table with Jezebel (1Kin. 17:1; 18:1-18). It is only after Elijah has defeated the prophets Baal and they have all been killed and a burnt offering is made to God that it finally rains (1Kin. 18:20-46). Therefore, it is as consequence of sin and idolatry, which are a breach to of the covenant, that God withholds rain and it is only after cleansing that there will be a renewal of the earth. The climatic expression therefore harks back, in some way, to this history of the Israelites and their desert wanderings and the feast is aimed at appeasing God for abundant rain.

3.3.2 Water libations (m. Suk. 4:9-10)

The water libations were drawn from the Siloam pool which was part of the construction of the first temple times. King Hezekiah built a famous tunnel which conveyed water from the spring of Gihon to the western wall of the city, and within the city walls during 700 BCE, fearing the Assyrian siege (2 Kin. 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:30). The channel that flowed from the Gihon became later to be referred to as the pool of Siloam stream and it was believed to possess some kind of miraculous powers and to be a source of the liberation of the Israelites from the Assyrians and a great source of water for Jerusalem in Jebusite and early Israelite times (Rubenstein, 1995:119). The ritual commenced with the priest drawing water into a golden vessel at dawn and went through a gate, known as the

Water Gate, which may have received the name through this ritual performance. The priest was likely accompanied by other “priests, trumpeters, and throngs of worshippers eagerly participating in the important ritual” (Rubenstein, 1995:120). Thus, it is plausible that there may have been some ritual procession conveying the water libation to the temple escorting the priest with the water vessel up the ramp leading to the altar. In their analysis of the Jewish people in the first century, S. Safrai and M. Stern highlight that the water libations were the central activity of the feast as it was to be performed throughout the festival nights in the temple courts by the priest and the high priest (1976:894).

The water libation during Sukkot, supplemented the daily wine libations which took place in the morning and in the evening throughout the year (Exod 29:40; Num 28:7ff; *m. Zev.* 6:2). If the water libation took was to take place on the Sabbath, water would be drawn on Friday and stored at the altar and there would be no procession on the Sabbath and the water would be poured on the altar only to celebrate the libation ritual (*m. Suk.* 4:10B).

Rubenstein acknowledges that there is no non rabbinic source which explicitly mentions the libation. Furthermore, although Zechariah 14 and John 7 see a connection between rain and Sukkot, there is no specific mention or relation to any ritual (1995:121). But there are cultic records of water libations and in other religions, water libations were understood as rain-making rituals, where libations are understood in terms of blessings where God responds to the people and their libations and blesses them with sufficient rain (Rubenstein, 1995:122). Therefore, the water libation is to be understood in cultic terms, in such a way that “the water libation worked through the power of the cult to influence the forces of nature and ensure the fertility of the earth (Rubenstein, 1995:123). This power is therefore, derived through the mythic functions of the temple and the cult; where the temple is understood as the epicentre of the whole earth and as “a link to heaven and the seat of divine government” (Rubenstein, 1995:123).

The temple, in biblical and rabbinic mythic worldview is seen as the epicentre from which streams of water flow from and irrigate the earth and acts as a foundational source of fertility (Ps 36:8-10; Ps 133; Isa 33:20-24). The rabbinic sources provide a much more

developed picture of this mythic worldview. It is believed that the centre of the earth is marked by the *'even shtia*, the “foundation cornerstone” believed to be under the temple or at the place of the altar.¹⁶ In *m. Yom 5:2*, the cornerstone is believed to be situated at the Holy of Holies in the second temple, which is also where the ark had stood in the first temple period. During the Yom Kippur ritual, “the priest placed the incense censer upon the stone”, and in this regard was at the centre of the temple, which was in the centre of Jerusalem and ultimately at the centre of the world. The cornerstone therefore serves the function of subduing the waters in the Deep from erupting, but also it is God who opens the water from the Deep to flow in to the earth (Rubenstein, 1995: 124-126). Therefore, the libations flow from the altar into the channels or the pipes down under the temple and into the Deep. According to R. Eliezer,

“When they pour the water libation on the Festival, the Deep says to its companion, “Let your waters spring forth. I hear the voice of the two friends,” as it says, *Deep calls to Deep in the roar of your ducts* (Ps 42:7).¹⁷

In this case, the libations serve the function of sending the signals to the deep that it is time for the Deep to irrigate the earth and the ‘two friends’ refers to the water libation at the Festival and the wine libation carried out throughout the year (Rubenstein, 1995:128). It is therefore clear that the water libations serve the role of communicating with the Deep, which then communicates with the clouds to fill up with water that will fall in the form of rain on the earth and promote fertility of the earth (Rubenstein, 1995:129).

3.3.3 *Blowing of the flute (m. Suk. 5:1ff).*

This ritual is also known as the *'Simhat Beit Hasho'eva (SBH)*, which also means ‘the rejoicing at the place of the water drawing’ (Rubenstein, 1995:230). Though much of the rabbinic detail of the ritual has been exaggerated, it can be basically concluded that this ritual took place in the temple courtyards where the worshippers danced, sang and did other forms of celebration which may have been offensive to others, especially the pious.

¹⁶ See Jeremias, Golgotha, 91-108.

¹⁷ See *b. Suk. 25b*.

During this celebration, liturgical recitations were done by the priests, including the fifteen 'Songs of Ascent', Ps 120-134 (Rubenstein, 1995:138).

The SBH signified the celebratory nature of the Festival of Sukkot, which was also believed to be a time of rejoicing and celebration and it was not exclusively conducted by the priests and the Levites. While in other rituals the Pharisees may have taken centre stage in the supervision of the priests if they are carrying out the rituals properly, in SBH it was the role of the rabbinic heroes to control the events of the ritual (*m. Yom* 1:1-8). SBH is argued to take place as a preparatory celebration which aimed at building up excitement at the all night festivities in preparation for the water drawing the next morning in Siloam (Rubenstein, 1995:144-145). The sacrifices of the festival, as stipulated in Num 29:12-34, seem to have more additional sacrifices as opposed to other festivals. Furthermore, it was only at the feast of Tabernacles that the singing of the Hallel took place throughout the duration of the festival while being accompanied by the flute (Safrai and Stern, 1976:894). According to Safrai and Stern, the distinctive feature of the feast was its feature of rejoicing. The waving of the palm branches was an expression of joy and it seemed that, to a certain extent, the role of the people in the Temple rites customs during the festival was somewhat as equally important as the role of the priests. Furthermore, it seemed this feast opened access for full participation of those attending and this is seen as all people were allowed to participate in the procession around the altar, and the altar was normally barred during the rest of the year (Safrai and Stern, 1976:894-895). This shows how the feast and its activities were not activities of the priests only but encouraged equal participation and maybe responsibility in order for all to be accountable to the end results of the festival which in essence is the availability of enough rains and fertility blessings that are to come in the following agricultural year.

For Israelites, cultic rituals and sacrifices, such as those that took place in the feast of Tabernacles were essentially important because they were a means of returning what belongs to God (1Chr 29:14). Furthermore, sacrifice allows humanity to give something of what they have to the powers they love and fear, as an acknowledgement of their dependence, and the bringing of the tribute by vassals to their king as a pledge of loyalty

and a gift of love (Silver, 1974:63). It is clear therefore that the sacrifices and the cultic rituals were essential in the maintenance of healthy ties between God and humanity. By acknowledging their dependence on God, humanity acknowledges that all the fertility of the earth and the essential elements, such as water, which ensure fertility are from God and therefore a request of rain and fertility of the earth for the following year is necessary for their well being and the economy of the city.

It is clear that the Sukkot festival was closely linked with water and the prayer for rain for the forthcoming agricultural year. Therefore, water played an essential role in the day to day happenings of the Festival. In the next section, a brief analysis of two prophetic texts which make reference to the rituals of the festival of Sukkot and the imagery used in the visions employ the imagery of the ritual of water libation during the festival. These two texts further shed light on the interpretation of the utterance made by Jesus in John 7:38-39, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.4 Old Testament Prophetic allusions of the Sukkot festival

In setting the tone for the reading of John 7:37-39, the feast of Tabernacles serves as its background and there are allusions to certain Old Testament scriptures. The image used in John 7:38 originally comes from the book of Ezekiel and the language used is likely to have been influenced by the wording in the image of the river in Zechariah and Joel (Manning, 2004:176-179). In this section I will look at mainly these two prophetic accounts where the imagery of the feast is used, and which are the closest in the allusions the evangelist makes to the 'living waters' in John 7:37-39.

3.4.1 Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14

The vision in Ezekiel 47:1-18 comes in the middle of the depiction of the restored Temple and the restored land, which in essence is in the middle of the restored Israel. In his return to the temple (Ezek 43:1-5) God returns to his holy place on a chariot, just as his chariot-throne departed from the Temple and city because of Judah's unfaithfulness in Ezekiel 6 and 10:18-22. Then there is a confirmation of the 'new covenant' by God to his people (Ezek 43:6-12), followed by a description of the affairs of the new Temple (Ezek

43-46). Garry T. Manning Jr. in his monograph on the use of Ezekiel in the fourth Gospel asserts that this placing of the vision is important in understanding the overall message of Ezekiel. The return of the people of God to their land comes only after the purification of the Temple and the return of God and his glory back to the Temple (Manning, 2004:179-180).

Ezekiel identifies the defilement of the Temple as one of the main causes of the exile (Ezek 8-9; 22:26; 43:7-12; 46:6-14). Impurity is incompatible with the holiness of God. So idolatry requires the removal of God's presence from his temple and the exile of the covenant people. The covenant can only be renewed when the pollution has been removed. After the removal of the presence of God in the Temple and the exile of God's idolatrous people, the defilement of the temple was removed and the way prepared for God's restoration. Furthermore, at the return of God to the Temple, "the priesthood and the Temple cult are restored to their correct practices" (Manning, 2004:180). As the presence of God has returned, the river of God starts to flow from the inner court of the Temple, extending throughout Jerusalem; and as the physical land is restored, the people of God also become restored. Hence the relocation of land being mentioned in Ezek 47:11-48:35, signifying the restored justice and further challenging the unjust dispossession of land from the land God gave them to his people (Manning, 2004:180).

As explained in the section on the ritual libation, the temple played a central role in the fertility of the earth and hence the water libation taking place in the temple was believed to be the centre of where the irrigation of the earth takes place. This is also seen in the vision by Ezekiel on the renewal and the transformation of the earth in chapters 47-48. The background of this passage is based "on the mythological motif of the river of God with its life-giving streams" (Stalker, 1968:309). In discussing this river, Genesis 2:10 alludes to a "river flowing out of Eden to water the garden and there it divided and became four rivers". Psalm 46:4 mentions, "The river whose streams make glad the city of God". Zechariah 14:8 says: "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea [the Dead Sea] and half of them to the western sea [the Mediterranean Sea]. For Joel, the water comes from the temple (3:18), while in

Revelations 22:1, the river issues from the throne of God and also of the lamb, linking it to John 4:14 and 7:37. For Ezekiel, the stream issues from “below the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east), [t]he water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar” (47: 1). According to Manning, the creation account is the central inspiration of the vision. By placing the texts in parallel, Manning shows that there are clear allusions of the creation account in Genesis 1:21; 2:9-10 in the vocabulary of Ezekiel 47:9-12. Furthermore, it is through these similarities that one can come to the understanding that “the renewing work of the river brings new life in the same fashion as God brought life to the world (Manning, 2004:180). These allusions to the creation account are further useful in allowing one to see the shared meaning between the vision in Ezek 47 and the oracle of the dry bones (Ezek 37:1-14). In both instances, the creation account imagery is used in order to show that all new life comes from God. Furthermore, the main essence of both the oracle of the dry bones and the vision of the Temple river is not primarily on the physical restoration but rather on the healing Spirit that God gives to his people (Manning, 2004:181).

In the vision by Ezekiel, the river flows to the east, which is towards the desert of Judah which was known for its drought (Eichrodt, 1970:583). The angel-guide further shows the prophet the growing trees at the shore after having seen the water rise as the prophet was guided further in to what was initially a stream, then was a brook and later became a river that needed swimmers to cross it (v.3-6). The water is portrayed to have a healing and restorative power which makes wherever it passes to have life and become fresh again (47:9). The flowing of the water is dispersed thoroughly into all the directions of the earth and trees which produce food will not wither, and the fruit will not fail because the water flows from the sanctuary (47:12). This renewal and transformation, according to Ezekiel, is made possible by the presence of God in the sanctuary. God’s glory in the temple gives his people a glimpse of what heaven is like, and this is seen through the vision by Ezekiel (Stalker, 1968:311).

According to Manning, the theme of healing and life in the vision is clear in a sense that for the stagnant waters to ‘be healed’ when the river reaches them means that they

become fresh (Ezek 47:8,9). Yet, the secondary meaning further becomes clear when ‘will be healed’ is juxtaposed with live in Ezek 47: 9 stating that, “The water will become fresh; so everything will live wherever the river goes.” There is further a constant play in the text between the uses of ‘heal’ and to ‘make fresh’ in the vision, which indicates it as a clear theme in the vision (Manning, 2004:181).

Water further acts as a purifier, as earlier in chapters 8-10, the temple was polluted but the vision of the new temple signals to the renewal of the people and the earth through the life giving water issuing from it. The vision provides an eschatological vision which reflects the hope that the prophet has for the people of Israel restored, but not to its former state but to a much more stable system where all are adequately provided for and justly treated. Hence the allotment of land by Ezekiel is slightly different from that in Num 33:50-56 in a sense that it does not make any explicit reference to the borders set up but the monarchy because, “the principal role for the prince in Ezekiel is cultic rather than political” (Vawter and Hoppe, 1991:208). Moreover, the image of the river from cleansing all that which it comes across has close affinities with Ezek 36:25-27, ‘I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean ... I will give you a new heart and a new spirit ...I will put my spirit within you ...’ According to Manning, in this image, Ezekiel describes restoration of Israel using ritual purification images and as a cleansing ceremony seeing Israel as being like ‘a woman in her uncleanness’ (Ezek 36:17) looking at the passage of rules relating to the uncleanness of a woman and all regulations relating to it (see Lev. 15:19-33). Thus, for Manning, Ezekiel has a consistent use of the symbol of water in his prophecy which understands water as being used in the Temple cult as a symbolizing “moral and spiritual cleansing, and thus God’s promise to give his Spirit” (Manning, 2004:182). The Temple river further highlights that water was also seen as a symbol of the ability that God has to recreate and heal and to abundantly provide for his people. Therefore, the Temple river image seems to combine the ideas and in this case, “water comes from God’s presence, purifying, healing, and bringing life to the land as well as spiritual transformation of the people (Manning, 2004:182).

In Zechariah 14, the passage gives an account of imminent things which are to befall the Jerusalem community. From verse 1-7, the prophet gives an account of the calamities that will befall the Zechariah community and how God will wage war against this community. On this day, there will be a reversal of the order of the day and the day will be unique to the Lord, where at evening time there shall be light (14:7). Living waters shall flow out Jerusalem and there shall be water throughout the year extending to make the surroundings a plain and extending its territory, therefore making the land fertile throughout winter and summer (Conrad, 1999:194). God will inflict the plague on those who wage war against Jerusalem, like he sent a plague of defence for the Israelites in Egypt (Exod. 7-11). Zechariah 14: 16-20 concerns those who survive the previous devastation, and they shall worship their king, the Lord, and pay homage to the Lord every year at the festival of booths. The reference to the festival of booths is closely linked with the idea of the temple as a site of fertility and it is necessary to pay homage and give thanks in order to receive rain for the fertility of the land in the next agricultural year (Conrad, 1999:196). A link is made to the rain that all those who do not go up to celebrate the festival will not receive rain (14:17). Therefore, a blessing that comes as a result of the celebration of the festival is rain and fertility, and centrality of the temple guarantees the fecundity of all the surrounding areas.

Water in these two texts and in the other prophetic books becomes a central ritual symbol in the visions, with a dual reference to fertility and purification. It has strong metonymic links to the cultural stories of creation and recreation of the earth by Yahweh. Ng highlights that it is in the prophetic books that the symbol of water “takes on an eschatological reference to the Spirit” (Ng, 2001:172), in other words it stands for recreation and restoration through God’s act. William Farmer, in a review of the geography of the river in Ezekiel 47, highlights that words associated with water such as ‘sea’ and ‘river’ have become rich in meaning due to their frequent use in the Bible. At times there is a reference to the chaotic waters which are believed to have surrounded the world and although they were controlled at creation, they still remain a threat. At other times, there is a reference to the waters from the “cosmic deep” which Farmer believes are the source of the river that flows in Ezekiel 47 (Farmer, 1956:18). For Farmer, these

waters that flow in Ezekiel 47 are a symbol of what he refers to as “comic salvation” as they bring abundance in the form of fertility and healing where ever they pass. Therefore, Farmer believes that with this kind of symbolism, the Temple not only becomes a source of salvation but also a place of healing for all people and the whole of the cosmos (Farmer, 1956:19). Moreover, as we have seen, the Feast of Tabernacles is the focal ritual which encapsulates and activates this set of symbols. There is a further a link of water as a symbol of the Spirit in the prophetic books (Isa. 44:3-4) which further hark back to the creation account and create a relationship where “the Spirit hovers over the waters, as the creator over the land and the people” (Ng, 2001:175). It is this kind of symbolism in the prophetic books which undergirds the way ‘water’ is employed in Johannine symbolism. Beyond this reference to creation, Ezekiel draws on the second aspect at the ideological pole of the symbol of water in the Old Testament, namely purification. This can be seen especially in the prophecies of Ezekiel. This symbolism will further be discussed in the section on water symbolism in the Fourth Gospel in the next chapter.

3.5 Feast of Tabernacles and eschatological speculation

In explaining eschatology, Richard Platinga and his fellow authors in the *Introduction to Christian Theology* (2010) argue that eschatology is a form of theology that places hope on the things to come, ‘the last things’. Furthermore, this hope is for good things one longs for and the longing for them to be realized in the future which may not be necessarily near. In other words, when one hopes, “something good and realizable is seen, but not yet possessed; it is therefore sought with longing expectation” (Platinga and et.al, 2010: 387). Platinga et al. cite the work of Abraham Heschel (1951), a Jewish theologian.¹⁸ According to Heschel, the Jewish religion was unique among the ancient near-eastern religions because their hopes were focused on time and this would be seen through their consecration of special calendar times such as the Sabbath and historical festivals (Platinga, 2010:391). By therefore making human history the drama of time and placing meaning on the promises God makes for the future and the expectation of their

¹⁸ Heschel, A.J. 1951. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. rev.ed. New York: Farrar and Straus. p3-10.

fulfilment, the hope of the Old Testament was expressed on the stage of the good earth. The hope that ‘things at last’ will be made right by God and his promise of providence is what propels the expectation of this goodness on the earth being fulfilled (Platinga, 2010:391).

Based on this analysis of eschatology in the Old Testament by Heschel, one can come to a speculation that the feast of Tabernacles is a reflection of the premium of time used by the Jews in understanding the fulfilment of their future hopes. The feast reflects a hope that God will provide unending fertility of the earth and abundant rain for every year and the lack of these is a reflection of their disobedience. Therefore, the promise of God’s providence for his nation is what the feast aims at reflecting and it is through the benevolent power of God that all these hopes are to be realized. For a highly agricultural community, hope for adequate rainfall and fertile land was essential for a good year and looking at the Old Testament history of God providing for his people, the Israelites, in the wilderness and their living in hope that God will deliver them to the land of milk and honey promised to them through Moses (Exod. 3:13-17); it is plausible that this hope would be reflected through historical feasts marking each need of God’s deliverance and providence.

3.6 Summary

The Sukkot festival played an important role in the prosperity of every agricultural year in the Jewish community. Furthermore, an integral element of the festival and the symbol central to the festival was water as it signified rain and fertility of the earth which God is the source of. Furthermore, it is clear in the Old Testament that it is human sin and greed which results in drought and barrenness of the land. It is in the prophetic texts that one can see that it is only after human repentance and purification of the land that God returns to the land to renew the creation and provide abundant rains and fertility of the whole earth. Water thus plays a role not only in the fertility of the land but also in the purification of the land from the effects of human sinfulness. The positioning of the Temple and the libations at the altar also play a significant role in the way water is irrigated into the earth and crops grow in every agricultural year. Therefore, the utterance

made by Jesus at the festival of booths alludes in all likelihood that Jesus was aware of this tradition and the strong cultic mythological worldview which was attached to the temple and the positioning of the temple at the centre of Jerusalem and Jerusalem at the centre of the earth. This background will therefore set the tone for the way in which an interpretation of the water symbolism in John does not only signify the eschatological water but also refers to the actual water that is necessary for survival and production of food.

Chapter 4: Exegesis of John 7:37-39

4.1 Introduction

The feast of Tabernacles, discussed in the previous chapter appears in the seventh chapter of the Fourth Gospel, as the narrative background of the events taking place in the passage. This chapter will focus on my reading of John 7:37-38, looking at the literary details of the passage and how these contribute to the meaning of the passage and the utterances made by Jesus in 7:37. In doing so, I will start with a brief definition of how symbolism functions as a literary device in general and in the Gospel of John. From there, I will do a reading of the passage linking the information surveyed on water symbolism in order to understand how water functions in revealing the identity and ministry of Jesus.

4.2 Johannine symbolism

The evangelist of the fourth gospel uses symbolism as one of his favourite literary devices used in order to explain the identity of Jesus to his readers. Therefore, before one can understand how water functions as symbol in the Fourth Gospel, one needs to understand how Johannine symbolism functions in the gospel as a whole.

4.2.1 Broader survey of Johannine symbolism

According to Jones, most scholars when studying symbolism in the fourth gospel use the work by C.H Dodd who was one of the first scholars to identify symbolism as a clearly visible characteristic of this gospel (Jones, 1997:20). Furthermore, Dodd believes that most discourses that take place in various narratives are to be interpreted symbolically in order to make sense (Dodd, 1953:133-43). Dodd points out that the evangelist uses everyday life images and actions that already have symbolic meaning from the Old Testament and apocalyptic literature. Furthermore, the identity of the symbols fused deeply into what it represents and in some cases, images like bread and water are fused in such a way that their meaning is entrenched in the school of thought where they previously served symbolically (Dodd, 1953:137). Moreover, for Dodd, there is a noticeable relationship between the symbol and the reality it is representing and this

connection of the symbols in the fourth gospel shows “a world in which phenomena—things and events—are a living and moving image of the eternal, and not a veil of illusion to hide it, a world in which the Word is made flesh” (Dodd, 1953:143).

From this analysis by Dodd, it seems that prior knowledge of the world in which the narrator of the gospel lived in is needed in understanding how symbolism is to be understood in the gospel. Furthermore, Jones notes that in the analysis by Dodd, “the physical and perceivable characteristics of the vehicle of the symbol have less to offer in discerning its tenor than the religious images already associated with it” (Jones, 1997:20). Therefore, much of the emphasis in establishing the meaning of the symbols is placed on the religious usages of the symbols which limits how far readers outside of the community within which the narrator is writing from can interpret and understand these symbols. Therefore Jones suggests that both the ordinary and common features of the symbolic vehicle that are perceivable and the context of the narrative are essential in understanding the text and in coming to offer a reading of the text (Jones, 1997:21).

For Koester, a symbol in Johannine terms can be understood to be inclusive of images perceivable by senses and both miraculous and non-miraculous actions performed by Jesus; images “such as light and darkness, water, bread, a door, a shepherd, and a vine” and actions such as turning water into wine and driving out merchants out of the temple (2003:4). All these forms of symbols, according to Koester, serve the same function, which is to show the unique role of Jesus and ultimately revealing God. John Painter also sees the symbols to be Christological, and also occurring in significant sections of the narrative where there is a conflict between the identity of Jesus and his opponents of the Judaea culture (1979:21-22). Furthermore, the general purpose of the use of symbols in the narrative, according to Painter, is to correct the false notions and understandings of God and to offer a correct understanding (Painter, 1979:24). Ultimately, each of these symbols serves the primary role of a symbol, which is to convey “something of transcendent significance through something accessible to the senses” (Koester, 2003:4-5). In other words, the symbols are used to convey that which is beyond human grasp and is divine in nature.

Due to this wide range of symbolic elements, scholars find it useful to make a distinction between core and supportive symbols in the fourth gospel. Core symbols are those symbols which occur most frequently in significant sections of the narrative and contribute to the overall message of the gospel (Koester, 2003:5). For example, the repeated use of statements identifying Jesus as ‘the light of the world’ (1:9; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46) helps establish light as a core symbol. Occurrences of symbols such as day and night, sight and blindness play the role of supporting symbols of light, with darkness as its counterpart. The recurring use of this cluster of core and supporting symbols helps create a motif.

Some core symbols are expressed in a form of a metaphor and this kind of usage of a metaphor is explained by Wai-Yee Ng as metaphorical symbolism (2001:5). Three core symbols, identified in the analysis of the fourth gospel by R.A Culpepper, are classified as metaphorical symbols; namely water, light and bread (1983:190-98). These symbols appear mostly in the “*ego eimi*” formula representing Christological claims made by Jesus such as; “I am the bread of life” (6:35), “I am the light of the world” (8:12) and so on (Ng, 2001:6). These forms of symbols are easy to recognize because if taken literally, they initially do not make much sense and seem absurd and it is this kind of reaction which then forces a reader to make sense of these statements in non-literal ways (Koester, 2003:8). Images do not have to appear in the same episode with the core symbol in order to function symbolically. For example, bread appears to function symbolically in the breaking of five loaves (6:11-13) and as it recurs, the meaning of bread as a symbol deepens and becomes clearer to define (Ng, 2001:7; Koester, 2003:9). Moreover, Jones highlights that as a symbol recurs, “[it] typically expands in meaning” and the reality to which it points becomes easier for the interpreter to fit it together into a coherent account in the narrative (Jones, 1997:14-15).

Another form of symbolism found in the gospel is narrative symbolism, which is found in the accounts of the miracles which the narrator calls ‘*semeia*’ ‘signs’. Literary scholars have come to agree that the modern use of the word ‘sign’ can be rather misleading in this case of the narratives. This is so because, “signs may stand arbitrarily for something

other than themselves”, while symbols have an analogical relationship with that which is symbolized (Ng, 2005:8). Symbols are therefore open to meaning and can, to a community, evoke meaning and understanding; while signs are limited to the understanding of those who have come to learn and understand their meaning and only call for recognition (Ng, 2005:8). Even though John prefers to use the word ‘*semeia*’ scholars have come to the agreement that the use of these terms interchangeably is rather confusing since signs and symbols are rather different and Culpepper highlights that, “the use of symbols as signs diminishes their revelatory power” (Culpepper, 1953:182). In her dissertation on symbolic narratives in the fourth gospel, Dorothy A. Lee points out that symbol and narrative are intrinsically linked in the gospel of John and one needs to understand that “the narrative gives rise to the symbol, just as the symbol creates the narrative” (Lee, 1991:21).

Another type of symbolism, which is important in understanding the importance of the feast of Tabernacles in John 7:37-39 is the symbolism identified by Wai-Yee Ng as Scriptural symbolism (2001:21). This kind of symbolism is based on the use the evangelist makes of Old Testament imagery as the main component of Johannine symbolism. Unlike the synoptic gospels, the Gospel of John uses Old Testament images, such as the shepherd (10:1-16) and the vine (15:1-8) to establish the identity of Jesus as the Messiah while the Synoptic Gospels make citations of the Old Testament scriptures to establish the fulfilment of Jesus as the Messiah. Furthermore, the feasts in the Gospel of John also play symbolic roles in revealing the identity and mission of Jesus. For example, the symbol of water, which recurs in the gospel and its use in the gospel during certain feasts in the narratives, may also point to the Old Testament writings and its various significant appearances in that context. Therefore, Ng identifies a twofold relationship with Johannine symbolism, as “pointing to Christ and church on the one hand, referring back to the Old Testament on the other hand” and this relationship is important to remember when interpreting Johannine symbolism (Ng, 2001:21-22). It is this twofold relationship that further opens a symbol to various meanings which are informed by the Old Testament context from which they were initially used. Therefore, the context

creates a field of meaning for the symbol and J. Miles Foley (1995) in his analysis of word-power calls this field of meaning-Metonymic reference.¹⁹

In using the theory by Foley on word-power, when looking at symbolism in the fourth Gospel, a number of points can be made. Firstly, Foley's theory highlights that the place within which the idiomatic or dedicated language takes place influences the range of interpretations of meaning. Furthermore, this idiomatic language is imprecise and can not be univocal as it activates metonymic references of meaning which are untextualizable but are decodable by those who have prior knowledge and understanding of the horizons of meaning which the performance arena allows. It is the context within which the linguistic forms are employed that will limit the performance arena, opening space for only those meanings which are signalled by the immediate context. Therefore, prior performances and usages of the symbols in the Old Testament are an important source of the metonymic reference, and the power of the words used by the evangelist in the fourth Gospel is embedded in the prior appearance of these symbols in the Old Testament. Therefore, a meaning of a symbol can not be univocal and it is rather imprecise in nature.

This case can also be made in the way water is used in the gospel as a symbol. For example, using the theory by Turner in the conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus appeals to the physical meaning of water in order to start a conversation with the woman about the transcendent, which in this case is his identity as the giver of living waters (Jn. 4:1-42). Jesus requests for physical water after a long travel, and as the conversation proceeds he offers himself as the true giver of the water which whoever drinks from these waters will never thirst. The sight of water appeals to the senses as a thirst quencher, something that one can use for cooling down, use to cook and clean; and these are all characteristics of a symbol on the sensory pole. Yet, as the conversation proceeds between Jesus and the woman, it becomes apparent that Jesus also sees water as symbolizing eternal life (Jn. 4:14) and as the evangelist continues with the symbol in the gospel points out that water symbolizes the spirit (Jn. 7:39). Therefore, for Turner and this thesis, it is clear that one can not abstract water without looking at the sensory pole,

¹⁹ See above in Section 1.5, pages 14-19.

which in the case of this research it is the physical renewal of the earth. This is also true to the vision by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 47. In Ezekiel, the pouring out of the water from the centre of the temple is linked to the physical renewal of the earth, where every creature that swarms will live and there will be an increase in fish. This water will make the sea fresh, trees will grow and everything that lives where the rivers will go will live (Ezek. 47:7-12). Therefore, one can look at the ideological meaning of symbolism, like Ng, Koester and Jones do in their analysis of water symbolism in the fourth gospel, summarized in the following section, but Turner turns our attention to a pole that is equally important and it raises a question of whether the evangelist of the fourth gospel jumps to the 'ideological pole' of meaning when using water as a symbol or somehow appeals to the 'sensory pole' of meaning in order to strengthen his assertion of who Jesus is. This assessment can also be made for other symbols such as light and bread which the fourth evangelist uses in the gospel. Foley argues that even the 'ideological pole of meaning', if I am to use Turner's language, is imprecise and it is through the metonymic references that there is a wide range of meaning that can be attached to a symbol. The theories by Foley and Turner highlight that there is always a constant interplay between the two poles of meaning and it is the grossness of the symbol that the evangelist uses in order to give a spectrum of meaning in a symbol and it is the context within which the symbols appear that will limit the circumference of meaning.

Therefore, all symbols in the Fourth Gospel are to be studied with a prior knowledge of the context in which they have previously occurred in the Old Testament and look at the allusions the evangelist makes to the Old Testament, which are often signals of the context within which one is to understand the symbol when employed in the Fourth Gospel.

Having done a brief analysis on the overall scope of Johannine symbolism, I will now focus on one of the core symbols of the gospel; namely water symbolism. In John 7:37-39, water plays an important role in both the utterance made by Jesus at the feast and the role water plays as an important element at the feast of Tabernacles, as shown in chapter three of my thesis. In order to set the tone for my literary reading of John 7: 37-39, I will

look at the way in which water appears in the gospel as a symbol and the overall theological significance of the use of water symbolically and how the theories by Foley and Turner open ways of understanding the significance of the utterance by Jesus in John 7:37-39.

4.2.2 Water symbolism in the Fourth Gospel

Water, as an image in the fourth gospel, recurs frequently and expands with the progression of the gospel as a narrative whole. Although it recurs and develops into a dominant motif, it is worthy to note that “it is less unified and more variable than either light or bread” (Culpepper, 1953:193). Ng, in her analysis of the work by Koester, agrees with Koester on the point that not all appearances and uses of water in the gospel are symbolic and it is difficult to expect to find any form of rigid consistency on how water is represented in this gospel (Ng, 2001:57). In her analysis of water symbolism and its use in its appearance as a symbol, Ng begins firstly by classifying the uses of the image of water into four kinds; namely, the incidental reference to water (3:22; 4:46 and 10: 40), symbolic references that are uncertain (5:1-15; 6:35, 55; 9:1-12), its clearer use in the initial chapters (1:14-34; 3:1-11; 3:1-15), its double role in chapters 4 and 7 (4:1-42; 7:37-39) and finally, its subtle use in the later chapters (Ng, 2001: 59-84).

Water symbolism in the gospel develops in three essential stages, the first being from chapters 1-5, the second stage begins from chapter 4 lasting through the feasts till the approaching of the Passover and the last stage being in the latter parts of the gospel (Ng, 2001:85-86). The first stage comprises of ‘water’ passages: 1:14-34; 2:1-11; 3:1-15; 4:1-30; 5:1-15. In this stage there is a constant juxtaposition between the Jewish tradition and the Samaritan tradition on the one hand, which are understood as preparatory traditions whose role is somewhat inadequate, and Jesus and the gifts he offers which are powerful and transformative. The water image appears invariably as an image signifying the preparatory and inadequate, for example, the baptism of water by John, the stone jars at the wedding signifying the purity rituals, “water baptism as an initiation to the life above”, the well of Jacob and the water at Bethesda (Ng, 2001:85). There is a sense of consistency in the role which water plays in this phase of the gospel which is mainly

based on the theme of ‘anticipation’ but, in each episode the use of water appears differently, “sometimes [as] the object of an action, sometimes the subject of the discourse” (Ng, 2001:85).

In the second stage, Ng sees the use of water as a symbol as much more definitive. The narrative-discourse discussions which take place from chapters 5-12 provide the literary background of the way water is to be understood, while the feasts provide the historical background of each appearance and use of the image of water in this section of the gospel. In this section, Jesus uses water metaphorically and Christologically to make a revelation of his identity with “juxtaposition between anticipation and fulfilment” in the background and the feasts setting the context for the understanding of the “living water” Jesus offers (Ng, 2001:86). Appearing in two important passages in this phase, 4:1-30 and 7:37-44, Jesus as the one who evokes the image of water signifying the gifts of life he offers and the Holy Spirit which are essentially understood as eschatological blessings (Ng, 2001:86).

The symbol appears to be much more subtle in the “farewell discourse” which is the third stage of the appearance of the symbol, appearing in chapters 13-17 and in the passion narrative in chapters 18-19. But Ng, highlights that this subtle use of water begins in 9:1-12 with the scene at the pools of Siloam, making an overlap between the second and the third stage (2001:86). At this stage, though the main focus seems to be on the passion, the symbol of water appears in significant sections of this part of the narrative. Furthermore, at this stage, the juxtaposition of ‘anticipation’ and ‘fulfilment’ is absent, but is somehow linked at the scene of the flow of water and blood out of Jesus’ side on the cross; signifying the fulfilment of the eschatological blessing promised earlier. Therefore, the fulfilment of these blessings is found in the death of Christ (Ng, 2001:86). Noticeably, one can see that each stage ends up overlapping with the previous, as far as the stages outlined by Ng are concerned. But it is clear from this analysis that although each appearance of water as a symbol is not clearly unified with the previous, once one does a careful analysis, the image of water develops in such a way that each

appearance adds to the previous and sheds more light on the identity of Jesus as intended by the evangelist.

Primarily, water serves as a symbol of the Spirit, which according to the evangelist is issued by Jesus. Water as a symbol of washing at the sensory pole brings with it the concept of purification at the ideological pole. This is always a decision to choose to believe or refuse to believe in God through what is revealed about Jesus, which is parallel to inclusion in or exclusion from the people of God, the Johannine community. At times, it calls for a choice as clear as choosing between light and darkness. For example, in John 13: 8, it is clear that if Peter refuses the washing offered by Jesus he has no part in him. This therefore shows that a belief in Jesus is a requirement for those who are to be part of the Johannine community. At other times, the decision is not as clear cut as it is between light and darkness; as in the case of the steward at the wedding who does not know how the water was changed into wine. In this case there is an appeal to the sensory pole signifying the drinking of life sustaining water and therefore taking a share in the life-giving Spirit of God which is life sustaining. In this way, the evangelist shows the interplay between the sensory pole and the ideological pole of meaning of the symbol of water. According to Jones, the door of faith appears to still be open for the steward and the lame man is also given a chance, no matter how slim, of having nothing worse befalling him after being healed (Jones, 1997:230). Therefore, at some point everyone, like Peter, the lame man and Nicodemus, need to make a decision. Ng points out that eschatology remains the main emphasis of the message of water symbolism and therefore it is the theological significance of the symbol of water in Johannine theology (Ng, 2001:87-95).

Ng highlights that the later theological use of water as a symbol originates from the theological significance water has in the Pentateuch (Ng, 2001:166). Water when used in the Fourth Gospel echoes back to the creation account in Genesis 1:2. In the creation account, water is presented as the initial existence of the earth and the Spirit of God was hovering over the earth throughout the six days of the work of God in creation. The Gospel of John makes an allusion to the creation account as it begins with the words, “In

the beginning was the Word..." (Jn. 1:1); which further marks Jesus as present in the world from creation and "all things were made through him" (Jn. 1:3). Ng further highlights that the 'water-spirit' imagery, formed by the image of 'the Spirit of God hovering over the waters,' is what connects the creation account and the Fourth Gospel. Furthermore, it is worth noting that "the symbolic reference of "water" to "the Spirit" is well attested in the gospel" (Ng, 2001:166). There follows an extensive reference to the "waters" in the creation account as the work of God proceeds on the different days (Gen. 1:6- 10) which Ng sees as "a prelude to the extensive use of 'water' in biblical language" (Ng, 2001:166). This biblical language helps one to visualize the overall importance of water in the universe as the land was made to produce vegetation (Gen. 1:11-12), and was watered (Gen. 2:5-6). This was further carried through the water imagery in Eden, where the river watered the garden (Gen 2:8). Though there is no direct mention of the Garden of Eden in the Gospel of John, Ng proposes that the idea of fertility and abundance lies behind the use of 'water' images in the gospel (Ng, 2001:167). Furthermore, the water ritual at the Feast of Tabernacles, referred to in John 7:37-39, hint at this idea of fertility and abundance. For Ng, the water flowing out of the Temple can be compared to the water coming out of Eden and the image of the water flowing out of the Temple in Ezekiel 47:1-12. This is therefore the basis of the creation typology, as surveyed by Ng, in the Fourth Gospel (Ng, 2001:167). But there is an idea of 'new creation' brought upon by the Old Testament image Jesus alludes to in John 7:37-39. Important to note therefore, is that water and Spirit serve as the mediation of creation in the Genesis account of creation.

In the instance of John 7:37-39, using Foley's theory of metonymic reference, Ezekiel 47:1-12 has a metonymic reference to the imagery of new creation. This can be argued through the appearances and the usages of the 'water' image in the prophetic books. Ng highlights that the water symbol in the prophetic books is used as an eschatological reference to the Spirit. Moreover, the exile harks back to the wilderness experience since water represents the trial of the Israelites in the wilderness and the deliverance of God to his people and the gift of salvation. In the prophecies water represents the rebellion of the people before the exile, their afflictions as a result of their punishment from God (Isa.

3:1; Isa. 50:2; Jer. 9:15). Yet there is a sense that, “the prophets go beyond the Deuteronomist in understanding historical events as trials” (Ng, 2001:173). This is depicted through the theme of “thirst” which represents the ability of the people to see the discipline of God and have a positive view towards it by anticipating the salvation of God. This anticipation is also seen through their anticipation of the eschatological “day of the Lord” and the pouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29). Furthermore, in Joel 3:17-18 the eschatological Spirit appears alongside the ‘water’ image to depict the blessings that come on the eschatological day. This appearance of the spirit alongside water recalls back the creation activity in Genesis 1:2 (Ng, 2001:174-175).

Ng looks at the Temple motif in the prophetic writings and asserts that there is a composite symbol at work in Joel 3:17-18: “the fountain symbolizes salvation and the house, which is the temple, symbolizes the Lord” (Ng, 2001:177). For Ezekiel and Jeremiah, this temple motif became significant as they were written around a time when temple worship had been abolished. Therefore, “the water imagery is compounded with the temple theme, a liturgical element reflecting the hope of the nation for restoration” (Ng, 2001:177). Ng sees a symbolic relation between ‘water’ and ‘spirit’ in the Ezekiel 47:1-12 vision. Water appears as the main figure in this vision but it is at the same time tied to the centrality of the temple and the presence of the glory of God in the temple is the Spirit of God (Ng, 2001:178). The ‘water’ in Ezek 47:1-12 and the ‘living water’ in Zech 14: 6-11 come out of the temple to heal the land. For Zechariah, it is clear that the water extends throughout the earth and heals the whole earth. While in Ezekiel, water is extended to the whole of the holy land but no further than that. Ng, points out that according to the Hebrew understanding, the temple is at the centre of Jerusalem and Jerusalem is at the centre of the whole earth and the focus of both the prophecies is to convey that, “there will be restoration in the day of the Lord, beginning from the temple which symbolizes the Lord’s presence, and from there reaching out to all the earth” (Ng, 2001:179). Both these prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah hark back to accounts in Genesis with the water-temple imagery while on the other hand they symbolize the eschatological redemption of creation. Furthermore, like other prophecies, the end of the exile and the restoration of the earth can be seen in terms of signalling a new creation. Ng

further highlights that it is this relationship between creation and salvation that is characteristic of creation typology in the Fourth Gospel and this is the background from which water symbolism in the gospel should be explored.

Having looked briefly at the overall appearance of the image of water as a symbol in the fourth gospel, it has become clear that in each episode that water appears as a symbol, the historical and literary context are important to interpret the symbol responsibly. Furthermore, the meaning of the symbol of water has a metonymic reference to the creation account and the assertion that Jesus is from creation present in the world and offers restoration to the old afflicted creation and brings about new creation. In the next section I will do a literary reading of John 7:37-39, giving much attention to the details in the text and how this section of the gospel fits in to the narrative structure of the gospel as a whole.

4.3 My reading of John 7: 37-39

This section of the narrative belongs to a series of stories in which Jesus teaches about his identity during certain festivals. In chapter 5 the Sabbath day set the tone for the conversation and it is the coming of the Passover (6:4) that sets the tone for chapter 6 and the feast of Tabernacles setting the context for chapters 7-9. In chapter 6, Jesus feeds the five thousand (6:1-14) by multiplying five loaves of barley and two fish, then later he is seen walking on water and appearing to his disciples (6:15-21). Unlike the parallel accounts of the story in Mark 6:47-52 and Matthew 14:22-27, John clearly states that the disciples saw Jesus and they do not mistake him for a ghost. In their analysis of this section of the text, Gail O'Day and Susan Hylen highlight that water is traditionally of chaos which only God has power over. Therefore by Jesus water walking on the water demonstrates his power, like God, to calm the chaos of the sea (O'Day and Hylen, 2006:73). In 6:22-71 Jesus has crossed over with his disciples and the crowds they fed catch up with him and they begin to have a conversation which makes an explicit connection of the miracle Jesus performed to the manna provided in the wilderness. The conversation therefore becomes about food and Jesus sees "food as something more or other than that which satisfies physical hunger" (O'Day and Hylen, 2006:74). The

discourse on bread has echoes of the interchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (4:1-42). The offering of the bread that gives eternal life, like the living water in 4:14 does not refer to a future life but rather to the nourishment one receives by taking a step now to live in the presence of God and in turn believe in Jesus (O'Day and Hylan, 2006:74). This links chapter 6 and 7 as Jesus speaks of eating and drinking and Jesus being the one that provides them just as Jesus did in the wilderness (Exod. 16; Num. 20:9-13). Furthermore, in chapters 6, 7 and 8 Jesus employs metaphoric language to reveal his identity to people by using symbolic images of bread, water and light to assert his identity.

4.3.1 Before John 7:37-39

Before 7:37-39, Jesus is found wandering around Galilee (7:1) because the Jews were looking for him in Judea and were seeking to kill him (5:18; 7:1; 7:11). Verse 2 tells us that the Feast of Booths was at hand, informing us of the overall context of this section of the narrative. Jesus is urged by his brothers to go to the feast but Jesus, initially, refuses because it was not yet time and his hour had not come (2:4; 7:6; 13:1). Later, after the brothers had left for the feast, Jesus goes up to the feast but he conceals his presence for sometime because the Jews were looking for him (7:10-13). Jesus then decides to go up and begin teaching in the temple, in the middle of the feast, resulting in the Jews marvelling at the knowledge he displays and Jesus starts teaching them about his kind of teaching which he reveals as the teaching of God (v.14-18). The reason for the pursuit to kill Jesus, amongst other things, is that he had healed a man on the Sabbath. Furthermore, Jesus seeks to show how the laws were not life enhancing because they would rather let a man not be well yet they intensively argue it is right to circumcise people on the Sabbath in order to keep with the law of Moses (see mShabbat 18:3). Jesus creates a juxtaposition in this case, between his act of healing “a man’s whole body well” and the Jewish laws which prohibit any work being done except allowing those that served the Law of Moses (vv22-23).

Francis Moloney, in his commentary on the text, highlights that according to Jewish tradition, circumcision was understood as a sign of entry into the community of the

people of the covenant and it is a sign of the completion of one's wholeness in this community. Therefore, the point Jesus is making is that God made his ways known through the Law given to Moses and it comes to be fully seen through the gift of Jesus Christ to the world. Therefore, Jesus is the continuation of the revelation that God first made through Moses and hence Jesus sees it rather contradictory that healing a person and giving them their wholeness is seen to be wrong (Moloney, 1996:78-9). But the people would rather judge based on what they have seen or touched and they are not open to the possibility that the Son of God might be the one they are talking to and that acceptance would be the right judgment (Moloney, 1996:79).

In verses 25-31, the crowd begins to wonder about the identity of Jesus if he is the Christ or not and Jesus tells them that they do not know where he comes from and that he has not come on his own accord. Then the Pharisees hear the crowd discussing the possibility of Jesus being the Christ and they send the officers to arrest Jesus but they marvelled at his claim to be going somewhere and no one can go there. The Jews, in further trying to make sense of this, consider the fact that he might be going to the Greeks to teach them these things (vv32-36). Jesus does not respond to their confusion this time. Raymond E. Brown identifies the irony in the lack of response by Jesus to the Jews. This is because he believes that they were ironically correct in the sense that by the time the Gospel was written Jesus' teachings had already reached the Gentiles (1980:318). This further fits into the overall theme of inclusion in the community of believers in the Gospel of John. It becomes clear that the ministry of Jesus was not limited for the Jews only but it extended to the Samaritans (4:1-42) and the Greeks alike (12:20).

Significant for this squabble over the rejection of Jesus is the setting of the feast. During the feast, as indicated in the previous chapter, there were certain processions made on each day of the feast by the priests and by those attending the feast. Moloney identifies the irony of the rejection of Jesus as the son of God with the ritual that the Priests performed every morning during the feast, "turning their backs on the rising sun, looking toward the Tabernacle, and proclaiming their rejection of all false gods" (1996:80). The irony is that, in their rejection of the authority of Jesus, they reject the authority of the

one who has sent him, which is God (v16-17) and somehow contradict themselves due to their inability to accept and identify Jesus and the fulfilment of the Mosaic tradition.

The recurring theme is that of Jesus seeking to reveal something about his identity, and consequently the will of God since he has come from God and all he does is the will of the one who has sent him. But there is always a misunderstanding of his revelation and the Jews are confused because they do not understand the teaching of Jesus because they think they know where he comes from and it has been taught that Christ or the Messiah will come and no one will know where he has come from (v. 27). Their claim is incorrect because they are referring to the geographical origin and therefore do not fully have the understanding of what Jesus means by where he comes from.

Another theme, identified by Francis J. Moloney is that of the Jews and “other people” where the Jews already have answers to the questions the “other people” constantly raise about Jesus. Fitting in to the Johannine narrative, it is clear that the term “the Jews” does not refer to the Jewish people in ethnic terms but it is a reference the narrator makes about the group of people who have made a decision about Jesus and the Johannine community. Therefore, it is possible that the “the Jews” and the “the other people” are all Jewish but remain on the different sides of those who believe and those who do not believe (Moloney, 1996:74).

4.3.2 During John 7:37-39

Linking the section above and John 7:37-39 is that the context is still that of the Feast of Booths and the scene takes place in the temple and Jesus is continuing to teach.

Verse 37a: On the last day of the feast, the great day,

As discussed in my previous chapter on the feast, the feast lasted for eight days but it is not clear which phrase ‘the great day’ referred to by the narrator; if it is on the seventh or the eighth day of the feast. On the seventh day of the feast, the Priests would carry the water from the pool of Siloam to the temple and there would be processions around the altar seven times (Goodenough, 1954:150). According to Jones, no water was drawn from the pool or carried to the temple on the eighth day and this regulation is found in

the Mishna (mSuk 4:10ff). This meant that, if Jesus made this utterance on the seventh day, this would put Jesus at the centre or ‘climax’ of the temple procession, with Jesus “equating himself with the life-giving water celebrated and anticipated in the ritual” (Jones, 1997:152). Furthermore, it would mean that Jesus sees himself as the true fulfilment of the tradition he grew up in, which he knows clearly. Alternatively, if this utterance was made on the eighth day, then Jesus may have been echoing the symbolic waters that have been used in the previous days of the feast but also offering himself as the alternative, offering true living water and may also be seen as, “an attempt to replace those powerful symbols of Judaism” (Jones, 1997:152). On the other hand, Brown notes that the utterance by Jesus matches better with the events of the seventh day. Furthermore, the eighth day was a later addition of the tradition and was meant for resting and the phrase ‘the greatest day’ may too be a later addition meant to specify the significance and importance of the seventh day (1970:320).

Jones further points out that the narrator does not seem to be aware of the kind of confusion which may result from this, but though it is not possible to state precisely which day is meant, it is clear that the procession of the water being poured into the altar and flowing through to the streams is the central idea here (1997:152-153).

Verse 37b-38: *...Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”*

Moloney identifies that there are three major problems that arise from this section of the passage, namely; the question of punctuation, the question of meaning and the origin of the biblical text referred to in verse 38 (1996:85-6). The question of punctuation is on the placing of the full stop as in the first option the stop comes after “come to me and drink” as it appears in the RSV translation which uses the Nestle-Aland text, producing: *If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of water.* The second option is the break appearing later after “whoever believes in me” producing: *If anyone thirst, let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow*

rivers of living water (Moloney, 1996:85). The question of punctuation is linked to that of meaning because depending on where the punctuation is placed, the water flows out from Jesus or from the believer (Moloney, 1996:86).

The RSV translation leads to the conclusion that the living water flows from the heart of the believer while in the case of the NRSV and other translations they leave the question open to the interpretation of the reader. The other possibility is that the water flows from Jesus' heart or literally 'belly' (*koilia*) and identifies Jesus as the source of the living water and those who have gone to Jesus will subsequently flow the same living water (Moloney, 1996:86). Koester provides an alternative understanding by making an analysis on symbols having a primary and a secondary meaning and seeing that this case can also be made in this section of the passage. On the primary level, the text refers to Jesus as the source of the living water, as it was promised to the Samaritan woman earlier in the Gospel (4:10); the water will flow from his side as he hangs on the cross (19:34); and later on Easter, Jesus is the one who infuses the disciples with the Spirit which is signified by the water (20:22). On the secondary level, the believers, who are those who 'thirst' and go to Jesus will have the living water, or the Spirit, well-up in their hearts just as Jesus had promised to the Samaritan woman in 4:14 (Koester, 2003:14).

From the understanding of water symbolism in the whole Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as the source of the living water. It is in this sense that it is also possible to see the water as flowing from Jesus into the ones that believe in him and as disciples have the Spirit and are welling up with the living water.

The water in the feast flows from the altar, and as explained in the previous chapter, this is believed to consequently be at the centre of the world according to the Jewish tradition and its rabbis. By Jesus offering himself as the one from whose side the water will flow from, Jesus offers himself as the replacement of the temple and therefore being the centre of the world (Brown, 1970:326).

The feast seems also to be recalling the desert wanderings of Moses striking the rock and water coming out when the Israelites were thirsty (Ps. 78:16). The imagery of the water flowing from the rock can also be found in Isa 48:20; 44:21; Deut 8:15, to name a few. It

has been agreed upon that Jesus employs the Old Testament imagery in this sense and hence it is not possible to find the exact Scripture referral he talks about in verse 38. Gary Manning Jr, in his monograph on the use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John, further acknowledges that the main reason resulting in this difficulty in finding a particular text alluded to is because water in the Gospel of John is more of a symbol taken from the Old Testament rather than a direct allusion to particular passages in the Old Testament (Manning, 2004:172). Two scriptures form a strong background in reading John 7:38, which is the second part of Zechariah 14:8 and Ezekiel 47. These two apocalyptic passages have the theme of the flowing of the rivers of water from the Jerusalem temple and Zechariah 14 shows the temple as the place where all people come together after surviving from the war and all have to go there. While Ezekiel 47, shows an imagery of water flowing from the temple and extending in all the earth and resulting in the fertility of the whole earth and in this sense Jesus in John 7:38 offers himself as the 'rock' and the replacement of the temple (Brown, 1970:323). The language of the 'flowing stream of living water' used in John 7:37-39 further uses similar language to that found in Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18 and Zechariah 14:8 in the description of the way the Spirit flows to all believers (Manning, 2004:194-195).

In terms of the eschatological renewal of the earth, for example in the vision in Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 47 the flow of the Spirit is not only limited to the human beings or the 'believers' but rather to the whole of the earth. At the return of the presence of God's glory in the temple, the water flows out to renew the trees and the ecosystem at large and all that has been created is renewed. Therefore, the description of the flowing of the water from the side of Jesus, is not only limited to the believers when analysed from eschatological terms but rather extends to the renewal of the earth, the re-creation of habitat and the fertility of the earth. Moreover, this is a fulfilment of the promised renewal of the earth by Jesus coming so that all may have life and have it in abundance (Jn. 10:10). Although the evangelist may seem to have a dualistic view of the relationship between the believers and the world, he does not allow them to leave the world (Jn. 17:15) but rather prays that they may stay in the world but be kept away from the evil one. This is essential to understand that although the evangelist may be looking at

the Spirit flowing to the believers but this is not only limited to humanity but to the whole world, inclusive of the whole creation as those who belong to God (see also Ps. 24:1).

Verses 39 the narrator goes on to explain that Jesus was referring to the Spirit which those who believe in Jesus would receive when the hour for Jesus' glorification had come; which would be at the death of Jesus where the Spirit would only come once Jesus has departed signalling a sense of continuity in all Jesus had taught (John 14:15). The symbolic sign of the fulfilment is seen later at the flowing of water and blood out of the piercing made on Jesus' side (John 19:34). The association of the water with the promise of the Spirit seems to also echo the promises made in Isa. 44:3 and Ezekiel 36:25-27. Furthermore, this promise of the Spirit is also found in John 4 where the water wells up in those who believe and therefore the Spirit is for the 'new' people who have come to faith in Jesus, which signals "the fulfilment of the 'new covenant' promises of Isa. 44.3 and Ezek. 36.25-27" (Manning, 2004:195).

4.3.3 After the passage

After this section of the narrative, people marvelled at the teachings of Jesus and some identified him as a Prophet (7:40), while others believed him to be the Christ (7:41). But despite those who saw Jesus for who he was, some still argued that it can not be the Christ because he is from Galilee and they believed him not to be of the line of David. There was a division between people and again the identity of Jesus becomes of great concern and the officers were unable to arrest Jesus on the scene. Chapter 8, which is also part of the Tabernacle narrative links to chapter 7 because Jesus further stands to teach that he is the light of the world and whoever follows him will never walk in darkness (8:11-29). This section further follows the "*ego eimi*" formula used by Jesus in chapter 6 and later in 10:11 in order to reveal his identity. Chapter 8:12 picks up from the conversation in chapter 7 and further echoes the activities of the feast of Tabernacles at the celebration of lights and to the lamp stands that were lit at the temple to symbolize the light of God and the presence of God (O'Day and Hylan, 2006:90). It is significant therefore to note that as Jesus may have stood up during the time of water libations and made his utterance in 7:37-39, this utterance Jesus makes at 8:12 may have also taken

place at the time of the celebration of light during the feast. Bread, water and light are basic necessities for human life and Jesus uses everyday life needs in order to point out to his eternal providence of spiritual needs. These needs are eternal and free to the people who believe in Jesus just as God provided their physical needs in the wilderness by becoming their pillar of fire to give them light in darkness during their wanderings (Exod. 13:21), by providing bread from heaven daily according to their hunger (Exod. 16) and, gave them water from the rock to quench their thirst (Num. 20:2-9). Chapter 7 links to the whole narrative of the Gospel as it adds to the identity of Jesus and it becomes clear that the water that Jesus promises and is offering his people is a referral to the Spirit and only those who believe in him and want to be part of the Johannine community will share in the promised renewal of the earth.

4.4 Summary

This chapter looks at the literary dimension of the text, looking at the way symbolism is used in the Gospel of John to point to the transcendent realities which can not be perceived using human senses. Furthermore, the use by Jesus of these symbols is to enhance the manner in which he seeks to be revealed to people, and ultimately to reveal God to them. John 7:37-39 is an example where water is used to reveal Jesus as the true source of the renewed life filled with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, those who drink from Jesus will never thirst (4:10ff). By employing the imagery of the Feast of Booths, Jesus uses imagery of fertility as the agent of the fertility of the earth and this fertility is seen in the richness and wholeness of life which comes with the flowing of the Spirit in the life of the believers. Therefore, the Spirit is an active agent in the life of a Christian and in enhancing the quality of life. Employing the analysis by Turner, one can also see how the “sensory pole” of meaning can help intensify the imagery of Jesus flowing water out of his side to release the fertilizing and nourishing waters for the renewal of the earth as the new and true temple of Jerusalem and of the whole world, while at the “ideological pole” it points to the Spirit sent by Jesus to renew God’s creation and renew the earth. In the next and final chapter, I will look at how this kind of literary reading of the role of Jesus as the replacement of the temple, the role of the Spirit and the creation imagery used in

the Fourth Gospel can help then in creating the basis for a theology of the environment, promoting responsible use of the environment.

CHAPTER 5: JOHN 7:37-39 – TOWARDS CREATING DIALOGUE FOR A THEOLOGY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Introduction

In the Gospel of John, Jesus presents himself as the source of living water and the Spirit (John 1:23; 3:34-35; 4:13; 15:26; 16:7; 19:34; 20:22) and this is also suggested in the invitation he makes at the feast of tabernacles in John 7:37-39. With water as a well established symbol in the Old Testament imagery, the evangelist uses an image which can be easily accessible to the readers. Water in the gospel of John, as explained in the previous chapter, symbolizes the Spirit which promises satisfaction to those who receive it. The utterance is made by Jesus at the feast knowing the anticipation attached to the feast and the eschatological blessings that come with the flowing of the river as in the imagery the evangelist borrows from Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 13-14. Therefore, the evangelist relies on the metonymic reference to new creation in the Fourth Gospel. By replacing the temple as the source of the water, Jesus offers himself as the centre of the world, the presence of the glory of God in the world; whose water flows from the centre and extends out to the east and the west.

This flow not only renews the dead seas, but increases the functionality of the ecosystem with the trees growing, and the fish increasing in numbers on the banks; as seen in the imagery in Ezekiel 47-48. The fertility is restored by these purifying waters extending to all the boundaries. With this background therefore, through Jesus, the coming of the Spirit encompasses all the qualities of re-creation, renewal and providence as water does. As the source of the living water and the one who renews the earth, Jesus invites all who believe to come and drink (John 7:38) and the living water is satisfying to all those who drink from it as seen in his dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42). Therefore, all those who believe are filled with the Spirit of renewal, re-creation and sustainability as the spirit not only extends to the plants, trees and animals but also flows to its inhabitants. With this brief summary in mind, the question is then what does this kind of a reading contribute to the response to the current water shortage

in South Africa, the increasing concern for environmental sustainability and the concern of service delivery as far as water is concerned in impoverished communities.

In this chapter, an application of the reading of John 7:37-39 will be appropriated in the context of South Africa. This chapter will further look at how the concept of the Spirit, as the continued presence of Jesus on earth, can be applicable to this reading as the evangelist clarifies that Jesus was speaking of the Spirit in John 7:37-39. Therefore, the focus will be as to how this reading can positively contribute to the formation of a basis for a theology of environmental conservation and the responsible use of water by all those who are believers in Christ and all those the invitation is addressing.

5.2 Reading John 7:37-39 in South Africa

Using Ezekiel 47 imagery as the background of reading John 7:37-39 has brought about a number of themes which are of importance when reading this text in the context of South Africa. The first theme I would like to discuss is that of hope in the face of a situation which has been identified as hopeless and threatening due to the current patterns of water usage and environmental degradation in South Africa

5.2.1 Hope in the renewal, provision of water and fertility of the earth by Christ

In the instance of Ezekiel 47, the imagery of the water flowing out from the temple comes as a hope for the heavenly temple to come once the community has been restored. This vision, as identified by Manning, comes as the final display of the restoration that God promised to his people after having purified the Temple and the bringing back of the glory of God in the Temple (Manning 2004:180-182). Furthermore, it is the defilement of the temple that has brought about the exile (Ezekiel 8-9, 22-26; 43:7-12; 46:6-14), and it is the presence of God in the Temple that cleanses the Temple and puts the Temple cult back in order and the priesthood upholding the correct practices (Ezekiel 43:6-9; 46:6-14). Only once all this has happened, does the river flow from the Temple in the vision of Ezekiel and the picture of the restoration does not only happen with people but extends to the land through the reallocation of land in Ezekiel 48. The prophet does not see a need for the delineation of aliens in the allotment of land; hence the Canaanites are integrated

into the community of Israel through their right to owning land. Moreover, the prophet sees the holiness of Israel is derived from the land and those who live on the land are holy, whether Israelite or not (Vawter and Hoppe, 1991:208).

The prophetic accounts were not only centred on the restoration of humanity, but also on the assurance that the future would be best seen in the return and the presence of God's glory in the Temple with the renewal and re-creation of the earth as one of the blessings. Using an image of the feast of Tabernacle that was centred on hope and eschatological blessings of rain and ultimately the outpouring of the Spirit, Ezekiel uses the symbol of water as "a symbol of God's abundant provision, and especially of his ability to re-create and heal, as in the river from the Temple" (Manning, 2004:182). Therefore, water not only signifies the physical and outward restoration of the land but also the holistic transformation of the people, and some of these ideas are captured in the reference to the river of Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14. In the Gospel of John, Jesus therefore presents himself as the fulfilment of the promise God made to his people of a river that brings cleansing to the people of God, healing and a new creation. This promise would therefore find its accomplishment at the outpouring of the Spirit, which Jesus pictures as the river flowing from his side as the centre of the earth and extending to all the boundaries of the earth and spreading the renewing Spirit to all those who believe (Manning, 2004:183).

The hope therefore of a renewed community, a new creation and a new healed life, finds its accomplishment at the outpouring of the Spirit through Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is this renewed hope that even when having faced the destruction of the Temple, Ezekiel still hopes for a new community and for Jesus who is facing the destruction of the temple, provides a new replacement of the temple which through him provides hope for the renewal of the world and a renewed hope in a healed community.

This kind of reading therefore provides hope for a country that has faced much of the unjust distribution of resources due to the history of Apartheid which left most communities of under privileged people living in areas where access to proper sanitation still remains an issue of concern resulting in violent protests by the inhabitants. The invitation by Jesus therefore comes as a ready address to the community of believers that

just as God was able to provide for the community of Ezekiel and the Johannine community, so does he readily invite the current people in South Africa to receive the renewing Spirit which fosters re-creation. Central to the flowing of the river of 'living waters' in the vision of Ezekiel and Zechariah, and the utterance by Jesus is the idea that all those who receive the Spirit of God are given the strength to keep the commandments of God and reverse their acts of their sinful nature that caused them to go into exile (Manning, 2004:180). This is significant because part of the reason that the country is facing the threat of the depletion of natural resources and the increase in the shortage of clean water is that people have not actively taken part in the caring for the environment. Furthermore, responsible use of resources has been a topic which the government has been stressing but little action has been expected or has been forthcoming from the citizens of the country.

In this kind of reading of John 7:37-39, the out pouring of the Spirit to those who believe brings forth a new heart, just as it is seen in the oracles of Ezekiel and a new ability to obey God. It is this new heart, filled with the Spirit that has flowed from the side of Jesus, that a believer in Christ is encouraged to be actively involvement in the conservation of the environment and the responsible use of the natural resources for the sake of the future generations. This can be seen through the eschatological blessings that come with the presence of God's in the world and one can argue therefore that, personal renewal by the Spirit is linked inextricably with the renewal of the land in John's symbolic world. This is significant in the African understanding of the relationship between creation and humanity as there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. Furthermore, there is a holistic view of spirituality as all that is in the world is believed to reveal the presence of God's glory in the world and all of creation has the Spirit of God. Therefore, John's symbolic world further asserts that there is no dualistic view between humanity and all that is created but rather all that is in the world shares in the eschatological blessings of renewal and receive the life sustaining waters of life.

Therefore in light of this reading of John 7:37-39, South Africa can be seen as sharing in the hope of the coming of justice in the distribution and use of water in South Africa, the

responsible use of the of the eco-system and the active participation of all its inhabitants in the fertility of the earth. As a community of those who believe in Christ and in turn have received the invitation to drink from his fountain of living water, which is the Spirit received at his hour of glorification through his death and resurrection, Christians further receive the invitation to take part in the spreading of life in a life-less city.

As the springs of living water well up and the presence of the Spirit promised by Jesus permeates all on earth, hope of a restored and fertile South Africa becomes a responsibility of all who dwell in it and possess the Spirit. The active involvement of humanity in the fertility of the earth will then be seen in a vision of a South Africa where mines are allocated rivers which will not contaminate water that is allocated to provide drinkable water to the communities. Furthermore, visions where the water will help provide a healthy ecosystem where each component of the food chain is adequately supplied for and effectively used. In this reading therefore, poor communities can be able to have access to waters of the seas with enough fish on the banks, where trees can grow bearing fruits for food and leaves for healing, in a context where plants play an important role in the life of the traditional healers in South Africa. From reading John 7:37-39 in the previous chapter, there are themes which can assist the Church in starting discussions on written theological reflections of how to address the crisis which is facing South Africa and its future inhabitants. The next section will look at the themes briefly and propose means within which the Church can take an active role in promoting environmental justice. It is important to note that these propositions are made for dialogue purposes and are by no means decisive and limiting to other ways the text can be read.

Though there are a number of themes that can be identified from reading this passage in the context of the environment, for the sake of this thesis two major themes will be discussed namely the water-temple theme and the water-Spirit theme. Through the analysis of these themes I will argue that the Church can actively participate in promoting environmental justice and responsible use of the environment and water.

5.2.2 Water-Temple, Water-Spirit theme and Jesus as the True Temple

As shown in the previous literary reading of John 7:37-39, Jesus utters the words at a feast which has been associated with the Temple. Furthermore, the imagery that he uses also points to the significance of the Temple in the vision of Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14. In both these texts, the Temple acts as the 'performance arena' according to Foley's theory and it is the place where all the activities and the symbol of water are to be understood in. In other words, water when presented in the Temple context and the utterance by Jesus, conveys a metonymic reference to the fertility and the renewal of the earth and the re-creating waters that Ezekiel and Zechariah envisioned are to be recalled. The Temple of Jerusalem further represents the presence of God and his glory not only in the Temple but in the whole world, just as the Temple is understood as the centre of the whole earth. By Jesus offering himself as the one whose side shall flow rivers of living water, it is a signal that Jesus seeks to replace the physical Temple and offer himself as the new Temple (see Jn. 2:19-22)-. This replacement is significant in the creating environmental awareness in the Christian community. The role of Jesus in Christian faith is understood in terms of him being a Messiah who was sent by God for the redemption of humanity and he has come so that all who believe may have life in abundance (Jn. 10:10). As the Temple was central to the fertility rituals and in the vision by Ezekiel the Temple is the place where the powers of renewal of the earth and its restoration and, Jesus offers himself as the one who carries these qualities and the fulfilment of the promise of fertility by God comes through him. Therefore, all those who believe in him are to receive these powers of renewal and restoration of the earth and the continued responsibility to keep the earth fertile. This is significant in a context where a theology of nature and environmental justice is being formulated. This theme of the issuing out of water from Jesus creates a fertile ground for the formulation of a Christian theology of the environment. As Christians profess to be followers and imitators of Christ, one of the essential roles that Christians have is to look after is the fertility of the earth and this can be done through caring for the environment and the responsible use of natural resources. Since the eschatological blessing of fertility and abundance was attached to the earth, the indwelling presence of Jesus on earth brings hope that it is never too late to save the earth from total destruction.

As seen in the previous chapter, the flowing of the water signifies the outpouring of the Spirit on all creation. This harks back to the creation account in Genesis 1. The allusion to the creation account when relating to Jesus is significant as it makes the creation narrative to not only be a past occurrence but it recurs in the indwelling presence of the Spirit in the world. Leonardo Boff in the analysis on ecology and spirituality highlights that the Spirit dwells in creation just as the divine presence dwells in the humanity of Jesus. Furthermore, Boff sees the Spirit as ‘creator par excellence’ acting in everything that moves and expands life and intrinsically linked with all on earth (Boff, 1993:109).

The earthkeeping network has identified the theme of the Spirit as a good starting point for an ecological theology. In analyzing the role of the Holy Spirit in the African Initiated Churches (AIC), M.L Daneel highlights that the prophets understand the Holy Spirit as the indwelling presence of God over which they cannot have control over but receive the power to heal from. Furthermore, God is understood to be in the world and the world in God and there is a “holistic interpretation of God, people and things, where the fountain of life [the Spirit] is manifest...” and therefore nothing exists in a vacuum (Daneel, 1999:211). The AIC earthkeepers therefore emphasize the role of the Spirit in creation and believe just as the Holy Spirit was present in the original creation of life, the Spirit acts as the ongoing initiator of the earthkeeping movement (Daneel, 1999:212). This is an important aspect to South Africa as there is a rise in AIC churches and these are the positive contributions that can be used in creating environmental awareness and forming a basis for dialogue on Christian theology that is essentially African.

The utterance by Jesus in John therefore shows how creation in the New Testament can be viewed Christologically. It is through the person of Jesus Christ that new creation is envisaged and the out pouring of the Spirit at his hour of glorification is the continued presence of God in creation. With this understanding in mind, one can argue that the vision by Ezekiel is alluded to by the evangelist of the Fourth Gospel in order to make Christological implications about Jesus. As Ng has acknowledged, creation typology in the Fourth Gospel is centred on the water symbol and its metonymic reference to the creation account and the salvation and eschatological implications attached to it. It is on

this basis that one can plausibly find a basis for formulating a theology of the environment based on the New Testament.

5.2.3 Potential Dialogue between African Religious Experience and the Christian Faith

In both the African and the Jewish understanding of rain, God is seen as the source and therefore fertility of the earth and a healthy ecosystem are a blessing from God. But it is the human sinfulness, the breaking of the covenant and decay in the moral character of the community that God shuts off rain. It is only at the repentance and cleansing of the people of God that the rain falls again. This is significant in formulating a theology of the environment that is essentially African because this form of reading promotes communal responsibility towards the environment. Moreover, as Dibeela suggested in his reading of the creation story from the Setswana worldview, Western hermeneutics have placed more emphasis on humanity as the important element in creation. This has resulted in humanity dominating and exploiting nature instead of nurturing and appreciating God's creation (Dibeela, 2000:396). This is also seen in the current way that humans see nature as their own right to live and given by God to dominate, resulting in the adverse implications of possible depletion of natural resources in the near future.

Using the Johannine symbolic worldview on creation and people one can see that there is interconnectedness between humanity and the whole of creation. This offers a rich resource for reflection on the environmental challenges faced by Africa. Possible ways forward have already been suggested by the observations, often made almost casually, by three Methodist theologians, Kwesi Dickson, Gabriel Setiloane and Itumaleng Mosala. Their work can provide starting point for reflection on the environment in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Our thesis has highlighted the importance of taking these suggestions forward. Kwesi Dickson, a Ghanaian Methodist theologian and exegete, on the topic of theology in Africa highlights the point that African people see themselves as having a relationship with nature, similar to that of members coming from the same family. Furthermore, he argues that various elements in nature are important as, "they point to something beyond themselves" (Dickson, 1984:161). It is from the starting point of this sense of interconnectedness, also captured by the Johannine theology on creation,

that one can begin conversation on such points of agreement between the Christian faith and the African religious experience. Furthermore, eschatological blessings which come at the glorification of Jesus (Jn. 19) are not only meant for the believers of Jesus in the world but the whole of creation. Dickson argues that it became difficult for Israelite thinkers to imagine a restored reign of Yahweh without the natural order experiencing the transformative power of God as the creator of the earth (Dickson, 1984:166). Therefore, the blessedness of the world by God reigning will also be experienced in the perfectness of nature and believers will share in this blessing together with nature.

Gabrile Setiloane, a South African Methodist, asserts that it is clear that all creatures, whether humans, animals and other forms of life, have a 'right-to-be' since they come from the same source, which is God. Therefore, no species has to be treated as an object of domination or exploitation (Setiloane, 1986:40). This further shows that the African Christian community needs to engage in actively educating their members on the interconnectedness of the whole created order and how humanity is has a special responsibility with respect to the exploitation of natural resources because all created beings depend on each other to safeguard God's creation and the continuing work of God in the world.

Another South African Methodist biblical scholar, Itumeleng Mosala has made a great contribution to African theology in highlighting the importance of the context of class and economic relations both for the authors and the readers of the Bible when doing theology, often insisting on reading "against the grain" of the text if its oppressive tendencies are to be neutralized in the service of interpretation for liberation. Liberation at the time was more focused on humanity, reading the Bible from the perspective of the black working class living under apartheid (see Mosala, 1989:67-85). This resulted in ignoring other important aspects in African theology, such as the importance of nature and its liberation from human domination. This was not surprising or without justification at the time, but can no longer be overlooked in today's South Africa. Yet, Mosala's emphasis on justice needs to be taken up into the quest for a sustainable use and preservation of the environment, because without justice the pressing needs of

impoverished people will undermine any attempts to address environmental questions. Moreover it cannot be assumed that every text in the Bible will be environmentally friendly, e.g. Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” could be regarded as a toxic text in the context of the earth’s population explosion, the driving out of many species from their natural habitat, and the belief that humans have a right to “subdue” everything without reserve Mosala’s insistence that economic questions are primary needs to be taken seriously also in the terms of the environment.

Mosala points to the need for repentance in the use and abuse of human resources and human communities. But there is a need also for repentance as a community of believers in how humanity treats creation and the detachment from creation that has come as a result of humanity understanding their role as that of domination and rule. There is a further need for repentance in the negative behavioural patterns of humanity which have resulted in fresh water being depleted for the sake of development while there are communities which struggle for access to clean water. Both the government and faith communities need to be intentional in exposing these behavioural patterns which have robbed humanity of their blessing of fertile land and life sustaining waters. Moreover, these eschatological blessings equally come with a shared responsibility by all to safeguard the natural resources for future generations. In an African understanding of *botho* (humanity) a person does not exist in a vacuum but rather exists because they belong to a community. From this traditional African point of view, disruptions to the pattern of humane or ethical living and solidarity in community lead to environmental disturbance and destruction of the environment. For instance, in the Setswana culture if one person behaves contrary to the moral norms of the community it is believed to affect the outcome of the harvest. Therefore, if people are to take an active part in the community, then they need to share in the norms and values of the community or they will bring misfortune. This will help in a theology of the environment and water conservation as more faith communities read the Bible with an intention to promote environmental conservation.

5.3 Summary

Africans have a holistic view on nature and humanity and creatures are linked into one cosmological order. In this chapter we have seen that this holistic view is what makes the Spirit the unifying force of all creation. Furthermore, through Jesus, everyone who believes will receive the Spirit, flowing like water from the side of Jesus, mediating renewal of creation and linking believers with all plants and creatures in the life-giving power of the Spirit which hovered over the waters. As the Spirit dwells in us and we share in the creation of God, we have a responsibility towards the earth and each other. Furthermore, the gap between those with good living conditions and access to clean water and sanitation, and those who do not can be bridged through education and having a shared responsibility of earthkeeping. Furthermore, human beings have a shared responsibility in keeping the covenant with God in order to receive abundant rains and ensure the fertility of the land. Part of keeping the covenant is to corporately look after the earth and its resources and promote communal responsibility in keeping the earth clean through educating one another on environmentally friendly and sustainable behavioural patterns. It is through understanding that their participation in God's ongoing activity of creation is continuous and present here and now that humanity can come to the realisation that central to our Christian faith is our relation to creation and our commitment to looking after nature. This is one of the fundamental Christian beliefs that can anchor a theology of the environment.

This thesis has highlighted the importance of a theology that is essentially African in order to appeal to the greater community. In a continent that is highly spiritual (Africa), and a religious country such as South Africa, such a theology becomes urgent and necessary in order to create consciousness on issues of the environment. In the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, it has become clear that much of its theological work in the past century focused on liberation theology and black consciousness in fighting apartheid in the country and promoting unity and equality. At the time, liberation of humanity was urgent and its prioritization was appropriate, but it is important that African Methodists, along with other African Christian theologians, now attend urgently to the development of a theology of the environment that is essentially African in the current crisis. The crisis has been brought on particularly by the development of the new economic giants, China

and India, with their voracious appetite for both mineral and agricultural resources. In this they are competing with the older economies of the West, and Africa has become the economic battleground of a new “scramble for Africa”. It is by reading the Bible through an environmental lens that this thesis has suggested that the Christian community can contribute positively to the responsible use of natural resources in Africa and keeping natural resources for future generations.

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