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The Woman Taken in Adultery: A Literary Perspective on Christ's Writing in John 8:1-12

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Abstract
Jesus' writing in John 8:2-12 is a silence that has raised scholarly discussion from the very beginnings of the Early Church. Jesus has just forgiven the sins of an adulteress, and wittily dispersed her prosecutors. Then, he "stoop[s] down, and [writes] on the ground" (John 8:8). What did Jesus put down, and to what end? Why is there a double emphasis on the scholarly act, while no other passage in the New Testament even mentions that Jesus is able to write? We propose that the striking gesture serves both the characterisation and authorisation of Jesus. Considering his writing in the light of (1) historical criticism (i.e. Roman criminal law) and (2) theological criticism (i.e. as a demonstration of Jesus' messianic claim), it will be shown that the act of writing reinforces John's High Christology: it expresses Jesus' divine nature, connecting his own literary undertaking to other instances of writing in the Old and New Testament that carry the same connotations of creative power and authority. Without Jesus' writing, the pericope would be out of place in the chapter; including the mysterious action, however, it prepares readers for the theoretical superstructure that follows immediately after: "For I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me" (John 8:16).

Editors' Note

Alan Rudrum, one of the founding members of the editorial board of *Connotations*, sent us an earlier version of this article several years ago. The editors were intrigued but reluctant—the latter because *Connotations* is not a

journal of biblical studies but of literature in English. Still, our reluctance was tempered by the fact that the topic of the article, "one of the most memorable" stories "in the Christian scriptures" has had an inspiring influence on English literature, Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* being a prominent example. Moreover, the article—and the biblical passage discussed in it—raises issues of general interest to literary scholars. The question of textuality, for example: to what end was the story of the woman taken in adultery added to John? And questions of (divine) authorship: what is the effect of Jesus being portrayed as a silent writer in the sand? Does the passage figure within itself the zeal and need for interpretation even where texts are silent? Last but not least, Rudrum addressed the topic with verve and engaged with some of the imaginative responses it has prompted. With Zane C. Hodges, for example, he wondered about the adulterer. "'What then,' he asks, 'had happened to the man? Where was he? Had he escaped? Had they let him go? Was he, indeed, a friend of theirs—a scribe or Pharisee like they were?' In response to this rather breathless series of questions, almost onomatopoeic of pouncing scribe and disappearing adulterer, my wife suggested that he might simply have been 'nippier on his pins,' or less colloquially, 'faster off the mark.'" Our consulting reviewers shared our interest and fascination but demanded an update of the theological literature quoted, which would also entail a refocusing of the paper. This is where Julia Schatz comes in, doctoral student in the Tübingen research group on the "De/Sacralization of Texts". With critical care and acumen, she has devoted herself to both tasks, and we are happy to see a collaborative outcome that will take the discussion of the story in John—we hope—right into the heart of literature in English.

Introduction

[1]Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.
[2]And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.
[3]And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,
[4]They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

[5]Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?
[6]This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.
[7]So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.
[8]And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.
[9]And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.
[10]When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?
[11]She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.
[12]Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

(*King James Bible*, John 8:1-12)

It can hardly be her fascinating personality that leads one to the woman taken in adultery. Nevertheless, her story is surely one of the most memorable in the Christian scriptures. This is not only due to Jesus' astonishing and poignant acquittal of the adulteress—"Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11)—but also because the short pericope is the only text in the Second Testament that presents Jesus as a man of letters: not once, but twice in 12 verses does he "stoop down" and write "on the ground" (John 8:6,8). Yet, as is generally the case in narratives, whether religious or secular, this one too foregrounds certain elements and is silent or ambiguous about others; particularly, in this case, what it is exactly that Jesus writes, or why. The extraordinary number of textual interpolations in the passage attests to the desire of copyists to explain those places where the text is silent,[1] and modern interpretation is largely a continuation of that process. In this paper, we wish to consider the silence surrounding Jesus' writing in the passage, and we argue that the gesture conveys a soteriological symbolism that authorises Jesus' actions and words as rightfully divine. To this end, the pericope's authority itself will be assessed by means of textual criticism and historical evidence. Once this frame is established, Jesus' writing will be considered against the background of historical criticism (i.e. Roman criminal law) and theological criticism, reading the

scholarly act as a demonstration of his messianic claim. By drawing on further examples of divine writing from the First and the Second Testament, it will be shown that Jesus indeed does not just "stoop down" (John 8:6,8) to stall for time[2] but that the action reinforces John's High Christology, instating Jesus as God Himself. It is exactly this message, reinforced by Jesus' writing, that explains the pericope's insertion in the book of John and its popular reception.

1. John 8:1-12: Apocryphal, Authoritative—or Both?

The narrative authority of the *Pericope Adulterae* is such that one is surprised to find that scholars are uncertain as to where it belongs in the canon. They have generally agreed that it does not belong in its traditional place (John 7:53 to 8:11), and in modern Bibles with scholarly pretensions it is relegated to an appendix.[3] Scholars appear to be ambivalent: on the one hand, the lack of a generally agreed place for the story seems to hint at doubt about whether it should have been given a place in the canon; on the other hand, it cannot be denied that the story must have been of some importance in order to be added to John. Thus, a consideration of its turbulent textual history is necessary to shed light on a possible symbolic meaning of Jesus' writing.

Considering the internal and external textual evidence, the pericope "cannot be genuine," as Lightfoot bluntly puts it (R. H. Lightfoot 168). According to the textual apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Nestle et al. 325), John 8:1-12 was not part of the papyri of the second and third century (Papyrus 66, c. 200 AD; Papyrus 75, 3rd ct. AD), and neither does it appear in the Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th ct. AD) nor the Codex Alexandrinus (5th ct. AD). While neither Tertullian nor Chysostomus mention the text (cf. J. B. Lightfoot, Witherington and Still 168), a first allusion to the pericope can be found in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, where the Greek historian recounts "the story of a woman with many flaws, who threw herself upon the Lord" (own translation; original: "ἱστορίαν περὶ γυναικὸς ἐπὶ πολλαῖς ἁμαρτίαις διαβληθείσης ἐπὶ τοῦ κυρίου," 3.39.17). Yet, it is at best speculative to consider this vague description as a reference to the

pericope; furthermore, the text is not a biblical manuscript. The text was first definitely used in the fifth century: in the Bezae Codex Cantabrigiensis, the familiar story is finally recounted in John, with Jesus "writing with his finger on the ground" (τῷ δακτύλῳ κατέγραφεν είς τὴν γῆν; Nestle 325). In this form, the text is also a constituent of Hieronymus' Vulgate, which makes it safe to say that, by the early fifth century, "Jesus' writing had become an established feature of Johannine versions of the pericope" (Knust and Wassermann 417).

The pericope's late addition to the Gospel of John, of course, undermines its textual authority; in the same vein, it has often been mentioned that the internal evidence of textual criticism, too, suggests rather obscure origins that are by no means characteristic of John's Gospel.[4] Considering the overwhelming evidence that the story is not part of the original material of John, it is even more remarkable that it has still become part of the canon.

It is, at this point, important to assess what the term "canonicity" implies. While it has been established that the *Pericope Adulterae* cannot have been part of the original Gospel's canon, "from a historical perspective, the events reported in the pericope are no less authentic than the rest of the deeds of Jesus described in the Fourth Gospel" (Baum 19). In this sense, Baum summarizes his line of argument: "the words of Jesus quoted in the pericope adulterae are fully orthodox" (Baum 19); other scholars go as far as to state that "the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity" (Metzger 220). Thus, the historical and theological probability of the text—its message does not conflict with Jesus' teachings elsewhere in the Second Testament—justify its inclusion in the biblical canon despite its obscure origins. The fact that it was indeed included points to the importance of John 8:1-12: it is not just another story about forgiveness. We suggest rather to pay attention to the whole discourse of Jesus which follows this passage, with its clear messianic claim. If we pay careful attention to that discourse after reading the passage of the adulteress as if its intention were Christological rather than pastoral, then the passage may well look integral rather than interpolated. And, further, one might suggest that, if we look carefully at the passage which it follows with this Christological reading in mind, then the pericope of the adulteress looks less like a clumsy insertion than

like a sardonically humorous comment upon the Pharisees—and a claim to the divinity of Jesus.

2. Why did Jesus Write? Roman and Rabbinic Law as Frames of Reference

Another factor for the popularity of the pericope—especially among theologians—is the sense of mystery that accompanies it: no matter how much research and scholarly discussion is undertaken, we can never know what Jesus wrote on the ground in John 8:6,8. This is why this article is not concerned with such speculation; rather, Jesus' writing is going to be considered in its social and historical context, with the hope of inferring meaning from the action that must have had an important, if not symbolic, message for the contemporaries of Jesus and those who deemed it worthy to become part of the biblical canon—a text, however fictional it may be, with as many links to historic actuality as this one has, calls for something akin to historical criticism.

a. Roman Law

The courtroom in first- and second-century AD Rome was significantly different from today. Starting in 149 BC, the *questio perpetua* was established in Rome, a "permanent jury-court" that gradually replaced moving courts and the *iudicium populi* that supplemented them (Deminion 29). This development is crucial for the understanding of John 8:1-12, because the new permanent courts served as a social meeting-point where moral and social questions were negotiated; the process of jurisdiction became "a public gathering containing strong elements of performance and spectacle" (Bablitz 1). Thus, the courtroom was not just a place of legal discussion, but "one of a relatively small number of public 'stages' where Romans of the elite class […] could promote and advertise themselves" (Bablitz 1).

The process of using a show-trial to stage authority is also prevalent in the pericope at hand. It takes place at the time of a high festival, "the Jew's feast of tabernacles" (John 7:2); Jerusalem would have been "crowded with

pilgrims" then, "strangers were thrown together at close quarters" (Hodges 48). Precisely at this time, Jesus goes "into the temple," the most prominent religious location in Jerusalem, "and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them" (John 8:2). He is, therefore, surrounded by a considerable audience when "the scribes and Pharisees [bring] unto him a woman taken in adultery" (John 8:3), and it is emphasised that they "set her in the midst" (John 8:3) of the temple, at the centre of the action. Their subsequent question, too, sounds rather like showcasing rhetoric than a genuine address at a rabbi: "Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" (John 8:5). The provoking opening "now," the omission of the object, merely denoting the woman with "such" (one can imagine the Pharisees theatrically pointing a finger at the woman), and the expositional "but," handing the stage over to Jesus, make the readers of the pericope participate in the courtroom spectacle. The Pharisees' words of provocation have set up a trap: if Jesus opts for the Mosaic law and upholds stoning, he can be denounced to the Roman authorities, who arrogated to themselves the right to impose death penalty. If he does not uphold the Mosaic law, he can be denounced to the Jewish people at large as a bad Jew. Yet, Jesus does not step into the trap. Instead, he makes the courtroom his own stage through the very action that has puzzled generations of Bible scholars: he "stoop[s] down, and with his finger [writes] on the ground" (John 8:6). By doing so, he raises suspense, adding a "retarding moment" to the scene (Baltensweiler 127). Thus, Jesus' writing shows that he, too, can use the courtroom stage to his own advantage. And he knows his role—as he writes, he mimics the "well-known practice in Roman criminal law, whereby the presiding judge first wrote down the sentence and then read it aloud from the written record" (Manson 256). Afterwards, he proclaims his sentence, condemning not the adulteress but her accusers—what a theatrical turn of events!—"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). Thus, it is precisely through a public spectacle that Jesus instates himself as the ultimate judging authority. In front of a crowd of people, he "defeats the plotters by going through the form of pronouncing sentence in the best Roman style" (Manson 256), rhetorically outwitting them. The second time Jesus writes on the ground also precedes judgment, this time pardoning the

adulteress (cf. John 8:9-10), which corroborates our hypothesis. This possible reference, in the writing of Jesus, to Roman legal custom is compatible with the high Christology of St. John's Gospel. As a sign, Jesus is here putting himself in the place of God, the ultimate judge—as, in terms of Jewish understanding, he had to do if he was to let the woman go free. The implications of Jesus' proclamation of judgment *in the temple* will be explored in the following.

b. Rabbinic Law

Jesus' writing prior to dispensing justice does not only raise associations with Roman law but also to rabbinic law and custom—after all, he is introduced as a rabbi at the beginning of the pericope ("and he sat down, and taught them," John 8:2). While Roman law was enforced in the first and second centuries AD, reserving the right to decide over matters of life and death, rabbinic teachings and the laws of the First Testament were still present in Jewish and early Christian communities.[5] The pericope itself yields evidence for this as the Pharisees still use the Mosaic law as a basis for their moral judgment (cf. John 8.5: "Now Moses in the law commanded us"). Thus, Jesus' writing is not only connected to Roman practice, but, as he does so in the temple, he instates himself as a Jewish temple judge.

In the Second Temple period, the court of the Jewish people (*Sanhedrin*) was at the heart of the temple. The Mishnah Sanhedrin describes the "Courts of the Temple" (1:5) as consisting of one "greater Sanhedrin […] made up of seventy one [sic] and the little Sanhedrin of twenty three [sic]" judges (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 1:6). Note that, again, writing plays an important part in the judicial process:

> There were three [scribes]: one wrote down the words of them that favored acquittal, and one wrote down the words of them that favored conviction, and the third wrote down the words of both of them that favored acquittal and them that favored conviction.

In John 8:1-12, however, there is no multitude of judges. Jesus is on his own, "in the midst" (John 8:3) of the temple with the adulteress. The roles are

being utterly reversed as "the scribes and the Pharisees" (John 8:3) do not, as usually, sit in the judges' rows, but play the part of the accusers. Jesus, by contrast, is instated as the only judge of the trial, fulfilling all its functions: listening, writing, and answering.[6] The pericope, therefore, depicts Jesus as the sole religious authority, a corporal religious law. This is in line with Matt. 5:17 ("Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil"): the act of writing creates a reference to the rabbinic temple court and thus reinforces Jesus' messianic claim.

Jewish custom, too, attributes notions of divine authority and salvation to writing, especially to writing "in the ground," as is emphasised in John 8:6,8. The Greek word "γῆ" literally means "earth," which establishes a connection to Jer. 17:13, the precedent of the phrase that is repeated two times in our short passage:

> O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me [i.e. God] shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

The implications of this verse for John 8:1-12 are twofold. Firstly, it is crucial to note that, in Jer. 17:13, God speaks Himself, with ultimate authority. Again, the action of His writing is connected to judgment: everyone who "departs from [Him] shall be written in the earth"; thus, the phrase both serves as a reminder for humankind's creation from earth, reinforcing God's sovereignty,[7] and as a contrast to heaven and salvation: the earth is opposed to "the fountain of living waters," which is God Himself. In this light, Jesus' writing in the dust in John 8:6,8 gains a new dimension of meaning. By physically enacting the phrase from Jer. 17:13, he expresses that it is the scribes and Pharisees who have "turned from" the Lord and "forsaken" Him (cf. Jer. 17:13)—note that, afterwards, they indeed turn from him and go "out one by one" (John 8:9). At the same time, he claims God's authority to write in the dust as his own.[8] Viewed on the background of Jer. 17:13, the pericope reveals itself as a theatrical enactment of Jesus' messianic claim, a fulfilment of the prophetic outlook given in the book of Jeremiah.

Of course, the reference only holds up if readers and believers can actually make the connection. The case of Jer. 17:13 is, in this respect, a lucky

one, as its reception in Jewish and early Christian faith is unprecedentedly well-documented. Every year at the Jewish Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the verse was recited at the final celebration after the ceremonial cleansing of the High Priest (cf. Zempelburg 253). It carried, therefore, all implications of soteriological power and authority as described above, and it was well known to every attendee of the *Yom Kippur* festival. It is docmented from manuscripts and polemics about the early Christian churches that many Christians still visited the spectacle of redemption,[9] so the verse was likely present in these communities, too. The association of Jer. 17:13 with Jesus' writing in John 8:6,8 is, through the twofold verbatim repetition of the phrase, evident. It gives a new meaning to the action, and it delivers a plausible reason why the pericope was canonised after all: as a sign, Jesus is here putting himself in the place of God. In an exemplary, almost theatrical manner, the pericope stages Jesus' soteriological authority that lies at the heart of the Book of Signs. And, as to confirm this, immediately after the episode we have been discussing, he proclaims: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

3. Writing: A Messianic Sign

The soteriological symbolism of Jesus writing has been noted above. It is worth recalling other instances in the First and Second Testament that draw on the same concept to reinforce that writing was not, as during the Renaissance, for example, directly linked to scholarliness. Contrarily, in rabbinic oral culture, "rabbis memorized both the text of Scripture and oral traditions […] books existed not so much to be read as to be heard" (Bauckham 280). The act of writing, therefore, was not associated with learning, but with the authority and notions of divine creation that precede it: God *makes* what others will use to learn in the future.

A popular instance of writing in the First Testament supports this line of argument: in Ex. 31:18, God gives "unto Moses […] tables of stone, written with the finger of God." The Ten Commandments are engraved by God's own hands, for the people to live by ("These are the words which the LORD hath commanded, that ye should do them," Ex. 35:1). Writing, in this case,

not only constitutes God's authority but also His all-encompassing creative power.[10] Considering the implications of this observation for John 8:1-12, it is noteworthy that, in the covenant narrative, God writes twice just as Jesus writes twice in the *Pericope Adulterae*. Even more so, the motif of forgiveness pervades God's second act of writing in Exodus just like Jesus's forgiving follows his writing in John 8:8: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew [sic] thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest" (Ex. 34:1). In John 8, Jesus forgives the adulteress just as God does with the Israelites, which puts him in the same authoritative position:

> Linking divine law as given through Moses, on stone and with the divine finger, with divine writing inscribed on the ground and revealed by Christ, this detail implies that Jesus is equal or even superior to Moses, who simply receives rather than writes divine law. (Knust and Wassermann 411)

The *pars pro toto* of the "finger" of God as the instrument of creation is a popular trope in the First Testament. Examination on the entries of finger and fingers in Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* yields a rich harvest of significance. In Exodus 8:19 we have the magicians saying to Pharaoh "This is the finger of God" as they describe the plagues befalling the Egyptians, and in Psalm 8:3, God is addressed: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained," again raising notions of providence ("ordinance") and authority in connection with the divine hand. The Second Testament, too, provides meaningful examples: in Luke 11:20, Jesus says "if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you." Here, too, the identification of Jesus' fingers with those of God establishes a frame of reference that bestows him with the same authority and dignity. Notably, Jesus uses the same rhetorical technique here as in John 8:1-12, but on a theoretical level: instead of acting it out, he verbalises the comparison.

The examples above outline the undertones of sovereignty and divine creation that are produced by references to writing and, by extension, the "work of […] fingers" (Ps 8:3) in the First and Second Testament. Jesus, by inserting himself into this tradition, enunciates his claim to divinity. It may prove beneficial to examine subsequent literary sources that draw on the

same rhetorical strategy to assess whether it is used with the same implications, and to find out how and to what end the concept of divine writing is evoked with reference to the biblical source material.

Conclusion

What all this amounts to is that, to read John 8:1-12 synchronically, with an eye to textual criticism, leads to an understanding of the passage of the adulteress as primarily pastoral and out of keeping with its context in John; to read it diachronically, with an ear for its echoes of contemporary legalisms and First Testament significances, results rather in an understanding of the passage as signifying a version of the messianic claim. What is central to this claim is the action of writing: it serves as a frame of reference for divine authority and ultimate creative power, a connotation that is established not only through the reference of Jesus' "writing in the dust" (John 8:6,8) to Roman and rabbinic law, but also to other popular instances in both the First and the Second Testament that reinforce God's creating finger as the source of power, justice, and authority.

Having established that the textual criticism of the pericope merely paints a blurred picture of the origins of the story, the reasons for its addition to the canon must remain uncertain. It is, however, likely that the story was deemed important for the very act that otherwise seems like a "detour […] interrupt[ing] the flow of the debate, unnecessarily separating answers from questions" (Minear 24): Jesus' writing. It is not "unnecessary"; quite the opposite: it symbolises Jesus' messianic claim. By staging a mock trial that not only follows Roman legal customs but also Judaeo-Christian biblical tradition, the twelve verses of the pericope display the divine nature of Jesus, both on a practical and on a theological level. Like this, the pericope is by no means out of place in the chapter, but it prepares readers for the theoretical superstructure that follows immediately after: "For I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me" (John 8:16).

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NOTES

[1]R. H. Lightfoot writes that "the various readings are more numerous than in any other part of the New Testament" (346).

[2]This has indeed been suggested by numerous theological scholars, very famously so by A. J. Wensink, who compares Jesus' doodling in the ground in John 8 to a Muslim hadith that recounts how the prophet Mohammad, too, stooped down and wrote in the dust to gain time to recollect his thoughts (see 300). The argument, however, is anachronistic and not very convincing, considering that the passage is otherwise sparse with details.

[3]E.g., the *New English Bible* and the *Revised English Bible*. Most others add the pericope but signify its special status by adding brackets or an explanatory footnote (e.g., *New Revised Standard Version, New Jerusalem Bible, New International Version, New American Standard Bible, English Standard Version*).

[4]The internal evidence for this claim is based on stylistic anomalies, e.g. the abundant usage of the particle δέ (11 times in 12 verses), which is unusual for the Gospel of John, who rather uses οὖν. Further indicators are speech introductions like "εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς" (John 8:11) that only appears in this instance in the whole Gospel (cf. Baum 7), and "individual expressions" like "πᾶς ὁ λαὸς, καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν αύτούς, οἱ γραμματεῖς καί etc. as well as many individual words, e.g. ἐπέμενον, ἀναμάρτητος, κατελείφθη etc." (J. B. Lightfoot, Witherington and Still 169).

[5]For an extensive exploration of the relationship of Roman jurisdiction with the Jewish Sanhedrin, see Müller 35-38.

[6]The reversal of roles also becomes apparent at the end of the story, as the accusers go "out one by one, beginning at the eldest" (John 8:9)—"[i]n non capital cases and those concerning uncleanness and cleanness [the judges declare their opinion] beginning from the eldest", the Mishnah states (*Mishnah Sanhedrin* 4:2). As the eldest are accredited the greatest wisdom, ironically, they are the first to acknowledge Jesus' ultimate authority and draw their consequences from it.

[7]Cf. Gen. 2:7: "And the LORD formed man of the dust of the ground."

[8]The reference to Jer. 17:13 is strengthened by the passage that directly precedes the *Pericope Adulterae*, where Jesus states that "rivers of living water" flow from his body (John 7:38). Here, too, he proclaims himself as the Messiah, as a personified cleansing bath, a characteristic that is inherently God's, according to Jer. 17:13.

[9]See, for example, Stökl Ben Ezra: "[D]as Tempelritual an Jom Kippur [zog] schon früh eine Großzahl von Schaulustigen an, wie wir im Schlusslied von Jesus Sirach und in der Mischnah lesen können. Die Massen wollten am exklusiven […] Opferritual teilhaben" (103). He also stresses that sources like Josephus, John Chrysostom, and the Barnabas letter indirectly yield evidence that many Christians attended, too (104-05), by asking them to refrain from the now-obsolete practice: "Some of these [Christians] are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now" (Chrysostom 1.5).

[10]In the same vein, 2 Cor. 3:3 states that Christians are themselves a product of divine writing: "You are a letter from Christ […] written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." The implications of this as well as its reception in Christian culture and literature should be explored in further research.

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