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Some New Testament Invitations to Ethnic Reconciliation

Dr Keener, who teaches at Eastern Seminary in Pennsylvania, brings a consideration of some key New Testament passages (John 4:4-42; Luke 10:29-37; Romans; Ephesians 2:11-22) to bear on an important contemporary ethical issue.

Key words: Bible; Ephesians; ethnicity; John; Luke; reconciliation; Romans.

Most parts of the world currently experience some forms of ethnic conflict. Because prejudices from these conflicts inevitably affect Christians, they invite Christian theological reflection on ethnic reconciliation, which in turn invites an examination of biblical teaching on the subject.

Although the ethnic and national groups in competition in the first century largely differ from those in question today, the earliest Christian exhortations to ethnic reconciliation remain relevant for contemporary discussion. Jewish-Gentile and Jewish-Samaritan prejudices were deep-seated and often theologically justified, and we should not think that the early churches themselves always managed to surmount them (see e.g., Acts 11:3; 15:1, 5). Nevertheless, some widely held, central Christian convictions did challenge such intense prejudices today which can claim less salvation-historical justification.

This article samples the approach of several streams of New Testament thought that challenge such prejudices. Although one could also draw on much of the rest of the New Testament (such as the theme of Gentiles in Matthew or the Gentile mission's development in Acts), we will restrict our samples to two texts regarding the Samaritans (Jn 4:4-42; Lk 10:29-37); Jewish-Gentile relations in one of Paul's undisputed letters (Romans); and finally the teaching of a new temple in Ephesians 2:19-22 (which I also accept as Pauline).

1. Samaritans in John 4

In John 17 Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one, even as he

and the Father were one (17:21-22). But even a first-time reader of John's Gospel would already understand that the kind of unity Jesus demanded included unity between sheep of both Jesus' folds (10:16), which probably implies Jews and Gentiles.¹ Although Jesus' ministry apparently included only a few opportunities for contact with Gentiles (cf. 12:20-21; Matt 8:5; Mk 7:26), John is able to focus at greater length on Samaritans, who figure prominently in John 4:4-42. Shortly after the claim that Jesus' mission is for 'the world' (3:16), Jesus is recognized by the Samaritans as 'savior of the world' (4:42) – a world which therefore inevitably includes them.

Some scholars argue that John's audience or that of its traditions originally included Samaritans (cf. Acts 15:3).² If, as seems likely, John's ideal audience is a predominantly Jewish Christian community in Asia Minor rather than in Syria-Palestine,³ this proposal seems unlikely, at least on the level of the finished Gospel.⁴ A Samaritan Diaspora did exist, though in contrast to the Jewish Diaspora they probably would not constitute a large focus for early Christian mission.⁵ More likely, John writes for a Diaspora Jewish audience with much more experience in incorporating Gentiles than in incorporating Samaritans. They could nevertheless find in Jesus' ministry to the Samaritan woman appropriate models for their own ministry to outsiders of various kinds, including ethnic outsiders who might be open to their message.

In John's narrative, Jesus crossed at least three barriers to reach his first Samaritan contact. One was a directly cultural and ethnic barrier, but the other two also relate to it in terms of the complications

- 1 Other views include Samaritans (e.g., Edwin D. Freed, 'Samaritan Influence in the Gospel of John', *CBQ* 30 [4, October 1968]: 580-87) or Diaspora Jews (e.g., John A. T. Robinson, 'The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel', *NTS* 6 [2, January 1960], 127-28), but Gentiles is the most common view here.
- 2 Cf. Edwin D. Freed, 'Did John write his gospel partly to win Samaritan converts?' *NovT* 12 (3, July 1970), 241-56; idem, 'Influence'; James D. Purvis, 'The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans', *NovT* 17 (3, July 1975), 161-98; George Wesley Buchanan, 'The Samaritan Origin of the Gospel of John', 149-75 in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SHR, NumenSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1968).
- 3 In favor of the traditional Asian audience, see e.g., Stephen S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 148-49.
- 4 Cf. Margaret Pamment, 'Is There Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?' *ZNW* 73 (1982), 221-30.
- 5 On the Samaritan Diaspora, see e.g., *CPJ* 3:103, §513; 3:105, §514; Alf Thomas Kraabel, 'New Evidence of the Samaritan Diaspora has been Found on Delos', *BA* 47 (1984), 44-46; Pieter W. van der Horst, 'De Samaritaanse diaspora in de oudheid.' *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 42 (1988), 134-44; in Thessalonica, Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting*, vol. 5 in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 156.

they created: his dialogue partner's gender and her perceived moral status.⁶

The Gender Barrier. The gender barrier is explicit in the text: the disciples were shocked that Jesus was speaking with a 'woman' (4:27). Some modern interpreters object that cross-gender conversation must have occurred in various rural settings (cf. Ruth 2:8) despite the scruples of some more conservative pietists.⁷ But for a stranger to engage in private cross-gender conversation would have at least troubled many conservative observers: according to extant opinions of early Jewish sages, Jewish men were to avoid unnecessary conversation with women.⁸ Thus among six activities later listed as unbecoming for a scholar is conversing with a woman,⁹ and in theory the strict opined that a wife could be divorced without her marriage settlement if she spoke with a man in the street (m. Ket. 7:6).

The oldest tradition especially attributed this custom to the dangers of sexually ambiguous situations that could lead to further sin (Sir. 9:9; 42:12). In time, however, sages also worried about the interpretation of onlookers: if one talked with even one's sister or wife in public, someone who did not know that the woman was a relative might get the wrong impression.¹⁰ Many would suspect a wife of adultery if she were found in private with a man other than her husband.¹¹ Traditional Greek culture likewise normally viewed it as 'shameful' for a wife to be seen talking with a young man.¹² The most traditional Romans also regarded wives speaking publicly with others' husbands as a horrible matter reflecting possible flirtatious designs and subverting the moral order of the state.¹³ Even today in traditional Middle Eastern societies, 'Social intercourse between

6 I have abbreviated and adapted much of the material on John 4 from my forthcoming commentary on John with Hendrickson Publishers.

7 Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony is True: Women as Witnesses according to John*, JSNTS 125 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 132. His claim that Samaritans may have excluded women from the public sphere less than Jews (*ibid.*, 133-38), even if true, was probably not something John could have expected his audience to catch without him making it explicit.

8 E.g., m. Ab. 1:5; tos. Shab. 1:14; b. Erub. 53b.

9 B. Ber. 43b, bar.

10 E.g., b. Ber. 43b. See in more detail C. S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 161-62, although the balance there may be overly negative.

11 E.g., p. A.Z. 2:3, §1; Sot. 1:1, §7. This would apply even more so to a Jewish woman left alone with a Gentile (m. A.Z. 2:1); Samaritan women, though better than Gentiles, were presumably likewise suspect.

12 E.g., Eurip. *Electra* 343-44, though there are two men.

13 Livy 34.2.9, 18 (195 BCE). A more progressive speaker argues that this behavior is acceptable under some circumstances (34.5.7-10).

unrelated men and women is almost equivalent to sexual intercourse.¹⁴ Jesus thus crossed a barrier of culturally accepted gender roles to reach this Samaritan woman and her people.

The Moral Barrier. Because women often came to draw water together, that this woman came alone warrants attention.¹⁵ The time of day (4:6) may underline this point further. Everyone recognized that noon would be hot,¹⁶ explaining why Jesus needed to sit down and why he would be thirsty.¹⁷ Thus at midday one would temporarily break from most agricultural work;¹⁸ from hearing legal cases;¹⁹ from hunting;²⁰ from allowing animals to graze;²¹ and sometimes from battles.²² The time of day, hence intensity of heat, also probably remind John's audience that this was not the time when most of the women would come to draw – hence lead the reader to consider why this woman had to come alone at that time.²³

That she came alone probably implies that she was not welcome among the other women. Despite some Jewish polemic to the contrary, the Samaritans were intensely religious,²⁴ and like other ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean peoples, they took seriously a woman's immorality. Even Gentiles (whose standards for male sexual behavior diverged considerably from Judaism's) regarded women's sexual purity as essential, sometimes preferring death to defilement.²⁵ All ancient Mediterranean cultures disapproved of adultery,

- 14 Carol Delaney, 'Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame', 35-48 in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore, AAA 22 (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 43.
- 15 The sharing of common water supplies usually facilitates interaction among local Middle Eastern women (Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, 2d ed. [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989], 163).
- 16 E.g., Soph. *Antig.* 416; Ap. Rhod. 2.739; 4.1312-13; Ovid *Metam.* 1.591-92; Jos. & Asen. 3:2/3:3.
- 17 Cf. Philostratus *Heroikos* 11.7; 15.6; 16.3; also I. Howard Marshall, 'Historical Criticism', 126-38 in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 126.
- 18 Columella *Trees* 12.1; Longus 2.4.
- 19 Sus. 7 (=Dan 13:7 LXX); Aul. Gel. 17.2.10.
- 20 Ovid *Metam.* 3.143-54.
- 21 Virg. *Georg.* 3.331-34; Longus 1.8, 25.
- 22 Livy 44.35.20; 44.36.1-2.
- 23 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., Anchor Bible 29 and 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966-1970), 1:169.
- 24 See e.g., S. Dar, 'Three Menorot from Western Samaria.' *Israel Exploration Journal* 34 (2-3, 1984), 177-79, on the strictness of rural Samaria. Cf. further John Bowman, *Samaritan Documents Relating to Their History, Religion & Life*, POTTS 2 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1977), 299.
- 25 Among men, see Diod. Sic. 12.24.3-4; Livy 3.44.4-3.48.9; among women, see Diod. Sic. 15.54.3; Livy 1.58.12; in premarital situations, see e.g., Hom. *Od.* 6.287-88.

that is, the wife's unfaithfulness to her husband and a man's seduction of another's wife.²⁶

The text does not clearly indicate this woman's adultery, but most ancient readers would view her negatively. From their perspective, as many as five successive husbands had found some reason to divorce her (if they knew the Palestinian custom that normally only the husband could initiate divorce), and, most plainly, she was now living with a man to whom she was not married (4:17-18). In Sychar this story must have been widely known; the townspeople seem to know of her past (4:29).

Within the narrative world, the woman herself would be aware of what her coming alone at noon might indicate to Jesus, and how he might have viewed her. Thus she, like most of Jesus' dialogue partners in this Gospel, misunderstands him on a purely natural level (e.g., 3:4; 6:52; 8:33). The situation in which Jesus confronts the woman would have appeared morally ambiguous to his contemporaries; an uninformed reader's assumption – and that of the woman within the narrative world – could have been that Jesus intended to consort with her.

The conversation's location reinforces this ambiguity. That Jesus meets the woman at 'Jacob's well' (4:6) alludes to a different well in Mesopotamia where Jacob met the matriarch Rachel and provided water for her (Gen 29:10),²⁷ just as Jesus promises to provide living water (4:10). In Genesis, the Jacob scene also recalls the earlier well scene where Abraham's steward finds a wife for Isaac (Gen 24:11-49); John 4 provides numerous formal parallels with this passage.²⁸ Paralleling these patriarchs, Moses meets Zipporah at a well, and like Jesus in this passage, sits down there, exhausted from his travel (Ex 2:15; Jn 4:6).²⁹ It is possible that Josephus depends on a more widely known Jewish tradition when he indicates that the time at which Moses sat on the well was 'noon' (Jos. *Ant.* 2.257).

That dialogue at wells could lead to marriage in unrelated traditions suggests that even less biblically literate readers might have

26 E.g., Plut. *Bride* 42, 46, *Mor.* 144B-F; Dio Cass. 77.16.5; Apul. *Metam.* 6.22; Athen. *Deipn.* 4.167e. For more detail, see C. S. Keener, 'Adultery, Divorce', 6-16 in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

27 The two wells were conflated in tradition (Martin McNamara, *Targum and Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 145-46).

28 See Norman R. Bonneau, 'The Woman at the Well—John 4 and Genesis 24', *The Bible Today* 67 (October 1973), 1254; T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel*, SBT (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1963), 57.

29 Bonneau, 'Woman', 1255.

noticed the ambiguity.³⁰ Of course, not all such conversations invited suspicion of motives; thirsty people did not hesitate to ask strangers for water.³¹ Nevertheless, it was possible for men and women interacting at wells to understand their interaction in terms specified by Genesis 24.³² But if the Samaritan woman in our passage interprets the encounter in even partly conjugal or sexual terms, the narrative quickly indicates that this is not how Jesus intends it.

Given cultural constraints, the gender barrier described above would take on still more serious overtones in this morally ambiguous setting. Jewish teachers warned against social intercourse with those practicing overtly sinful lifestyles. Jewish tradition developed the biblical prohibition against social intercourse with those whose behavior was overtly sinful (e.g., Prov 13:20; 14:7; 28:7).³³ Some Greek moralists issued similar warnings.³⁴ Jesus thus crossed a perceived moral barrier to speak with this woman.

The ethnic barrier. Most significantly for this narrative, Jesus crossed an ethnic barrier, for 'Jews avoid dealing with Samaritans' (4:9). The opposition between the two peoples was proverbial: one widely circulated book of Jewish wisdom announced that God hated 'the foolish people' who lived in Samaria (Sir. 50:25-26).³⁵ Later rabbis rejected most kinds of testimony from Samaritans.³⁶ They also recounted theological conflict stories where Jewish teachers naturally triumphed.³⁷

Like many ethnic conflicts in today's world, these conflicts were

30 E.g., Arrian *Alex.* 2.3.4.

31 E.g., b. Kid. 9a; Ovid *Metam.* 5.446, 448-50; 6.340-41, 343-65; Eurip. *Cycl.* 96-98.

32 See the later account in Lam. Rab. 1:1, §19.

33 E.g., Sir 6:7-12; 12:13-18; Ep. Arist. 130; m. Ab. 1:6-7; 2:9; Sifre Deut. 286.11.4; Ps-Phocyl. 134.

34 E.g., *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 460 (in Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook*, LEC 4 [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 110); Crates *Ep.* 12; Socratics *Ep.* 24; Diod. Sic. 12.12.3; 12.14.1; Diog. Laert. 1.60.

35 The text specifies Shechem, the leading Samaritan city, and in the LXX replaces the Hebrew's 'Mount Seir' with 'Mountain of Samaria.' Cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 352-58, for a catalogue of examples of hatred between many Jews and Samaritans.

36 M. Git. 1:5; p. Git. 1:4, §2; as also from women (Jos. *Ant.* 4.219; Sifra VDDeho. pp. 7.45.1.1; cf. Justin. *Inst.* 2.10.6), slaves (Jos. *Ant.* 4.219; cf. Prop. *Eleg.* 3.6.20), and other groups. But on many such issues later rabbinic opinion as to the degree of Samaritans' Jewishness varied according to rabbi, period, and issue, though none of them viewed the Samaritans in a positive light.

37 E.g., Lam. Rab. 1.1.14-15; Koh. Rab. 10:8, §1. On Samaritan-Jewish relations, see generally James D. Purvis, 'The Samaritans and Judaism', 81-98 in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, SBLBMS 2 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986); Ferdinand Dexinger, 'Limits of Tolerance in Judaism: The Samaritan Example', 2:88-114 in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, 3 vols., ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980-1982).

deeply rooted in history, although in recent centuries the Jewish side of the conflict had often held the upper hand. These conflicts affected the way Jewish people viewed Samaritans: thus, for example, Samaria was founded by those who rejected Jeremiah's call to repentance (4 Bar. 8).

Conservative Palestinian Jews steeped in this history (as well as many of their Diaspora counterparts) may have regarded as offensive Jesus sending his disciples to buy food in a Samaritan city (4:8).³⁸ One prominent late first century teacher insisted that whoever eats bread from Samaritans is as if he eats pork.³⁹ Before this ruling, however, even Pharisees probably would have permitted buying Samaritan grain, provided one then tithed on it.⁴⁰ More certainly, however, Jesus' request for water from the 'unclean' woman's vessel would have disturbed them (4:7).⁴¹ Strict Jewish men would avoid drinking after any woman who *might* be unclean,⁴² and viewed Samaritan women as unclean from infancy.⁴³ Some went so far as to declare that if a Samaritan woman (or a Gentile) were in a town, one should regard all the spittle there as unclean (because it might derive from them).⁴⁴

What is most significant about the interaction, however, is that while Jesus' own people accuse him of being a 'Samaritan' (8:48) or a 'Galilean' (7:40-52), the Samaritan woman recognizes Jesus as a 'Jew' (4:9), and he agrees (4:22). Subsequent history no less than this narrative warns that hostile voices on both sides of ethnic barriers may regard one who crosses them as a traitor to their cause. John's teaching on the unity of Jesus' followers, however (10:16; 17:21-23),

38 So e.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul, Apostle of Liberty* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 141 n. 76, citing principles applicable to *am haaretz* in general.

39 M. Shebiith 8:10; according to p. A.Z. 5:11, §2, the sages accepted this opinion of R. Eliezer. Amoraim permitted some Samaritan food and drink, but prohibited much of it (p. A.Z. 5:4, §3).

40 Tos. Demai 5:24 (from R. Eliezer's generation); untithed food was obviously unclean whatever its source (e.g., m. Demai, passim; Gen. Rab. 60:8; Lam. Rab. 1:3, §28). But whatever the Samaritans imported from Judea is clean and may be bought from them (tos. Demai 1:11).

41 Many regarded Samaritan drinking vessels as unclean (m. Kelim, passim; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 232).

42 Cf. Jos. Ant. 3.261; m. Toh. 5:8; tos. Shab. 1:14; Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The Status of Women in the Mishnah* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 162-65. Some Jewish groups, however, including the Sadducees, appear to have rejected Pharisaic strictness on the issue (see Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996], 100-5, 227).

43 M. Nid. 4:1; tos. Nid. 5:1.

44 M. Toh. 5:8.

suggests that Jesus' act of crossing such barriers provides a model for Johannine Christians.

2. Samaritans in Luke 10

Luke seems to exhibit special interest in Samaritans. In Luke 9:51-56, Jesus condemns the disciples' desire to summon judgment on Samaritans, following the model of Elijah (9:54; 2 Kgs 1:10, 12). The model of Elijah and Elisha, emphasized in Luke's programmatic scene (Lk 4:25-27), may also be implicit in the account of the Samaritan leper in Luke 17:11-19, although this is less clear. Whereas God used Elisha to heal Naaman the Gentile leper (2 Kgs 5:9-15), a story Luke knows quite well (Lk 4:27), the lepers of Israelite Samaria were not cleansed (2 Kgs 7:3; Lk 4:27). In Luke 17:16-18, however, it is only the outsider Samaritan leper who returns to give Jesus thanks for cleansing him. Luke might portray this leper through the prism of Naaman's healing through Elisha (though Luke portrays Jesus as one greater than Elijah and Elisha – cf. Lk 1:17; 9:8, 19, 30). Most significantly, the first explicit expansion of the Way outside Judea in Acts includes (and focuses on) Philip's Samaritan mission (Acts 8:8-25; cf. 1:8; 9:31; 15:3).

For our present purposes, however, one Lukan sample will suffice. In Luke 10:30-37, Jesus teaches that relationships with Samaritans, proverbial enemies already introduced in the previous chapter (Lk 9:52-53), are relevant for soteriology (Lk 10:25-29). When a legal scholar confronted Jesus with a standard question, how to have eternal life,⁴⁵ Jesus responded with a good rabbinic counterquestion: How do you interpret the law?⁴⁶ He commends his interlocutor's reply (which appeals in part to Lev 19:18),⁴⁷ but the interlocutor is not satisfied: Who is the neighbor that he must love (Lk 10:29)?

The passage in Leviticus was not ambiguous concerning the proper object of love. The immediate context of Leviticus 19:18 refers to fellow Israelites; but the broader context of the same passage also

45 B. Ber. 28b, bar.; Tamid 32a; cf. Lk 3:10; Acts 2:37; 16:30. Helmut Flender, *St Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, tr. R. H. and Ilse Fuller (London: S.P.C.K., 1967), 10, rightly compares the exchange in Lk 18:18, which is preLukan.

46 Some view this interaction as hostile (see e.g., John J. Pilch, 'Lying and Deceit in the Letters to the Seven Churches', *BTB* 22 [1992], 129; Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, 'Honor & Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World', 25-65 in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991], 51), though this remains open to debate.

47 The language of Jesus' commendation was standard for correct answers (e.g., 4 Ezra 4:20).

requires one to love Gentiles in the land as oneself (Lev 19:34). Given the penchant of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries for linking together texts on the basis of a common key term or phrase, this command to love Gentiles in the same context would have been difficult to miss. Then as today, however, people often exercised strong prejudices that affected interpretation and application. So Jesus temporarily circumvents the exegetical question with a story that provides the same answer.

Subsequent interpreters often missed the specifically ethnic focus of the interaction, ignoring the literary context of the parable and focusing on more traditional theological questions. Most famous is Augustine's allegorization of the parable's details in light of the story of creation, fall, and redemption.⁴⁸ Some recent interpreters, however, have revived part of his interpretation, namely, the God-as-Samaritan view, by suggesting a different meaning in the parable's pre-Lukan context.⁴⁹ Like many of Luke's parables, however, no 'pre-Lukan context' for this story is available to us and, despite detractors,⁵⁰ the parable makes sense in its present context.⁵¹

Although Jülicher's insistence on interpreters finding only one point in a parable goes too far,⁵² this parable invites only limited points of comparison between its story world and that of Luke's audience. Both the setting of the story and its opening situation are realistic yet distinct from the primary action, suggesting that they support the more dramatic story line which follows. As is widely recognized today, the parable's 'descent' to Jericho (10:30) is part of the geographical setting, not a theological commentary. The steep road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends over three thousand feet over a span of seventeen miles, and may not have been in the best condition (the Roman road dates from after 70).⁵³ Robbers provided a frequent

48 Augustine *Quaestiones Evangeliorum* 2.19, reported in C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet & Company, 1936), 11-12.

49 See Douglas E. Oakman, 'Was Jesus a Peasant? Implications for Reading the Samaritan Story', *BTB* 22 (1992), 123.

50 Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2d ed., tr. John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968), 192.

51 See e.g., Kenneth E. Bailey, *Through Peasant Eyes: More Lucan Parables, Their Culture and Style* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 33. This is an 'example story' as opposed to a similitude (Robert M. Johnston, 'Parabolic Interpretations Attributed to Tannaim' [Ph.D. dissertation, Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1977], 636).

52 See C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 372-75, 381-84; Craig L. Blomberg *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990).

53 Edwin M. Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures: An Introduction to Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 104-5.

threat to travelers,⁵⁴ and this man by traveling alone and apparently on foot might have provided an easier target than many others (10:30).⁵⁵ This particular road was known for robberies throughout history and into modern times.⁵⁶ The robbers wounded and stripped the man, leaving him 'half-dead' (10:30), a phrase which (like its converse, 'half-alive') normally depicted a person on the verge of death.⁵⁷ That they beat him may suggest that he resisted;⁵⁸ but perhaps they were especially desperate in wishing to strip him.⁵⁹

At this juncture the points in the story begin to communicate more moral implications and surprises, at least for the legal teacher Jesus addresses in Luke's narrative world: those assumed to be the most obvious representatives of the wounded man's own group do not help him. Luke's own informed readers may be less surprised, given the aggression shown by some members of the priesthood toward Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel (Lk 9:22; 19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2-4; 22:52, 66; 23:10; 24:20; though see also Lk 1:5; 5:14; 17:14; Ac 6:7).

A priest, seeing the wounded man, avoids drawing near him, instead passing on the other side of the road (10:31). Jewish law required priests, Levites and other Israelites to help a dying person even if death was imminent.⁶⁰ Most people would have regarded rescuing a living person from robbers as morally appropriate, provided that this could be done with minimal risk to the rescuers.⁶¹ But because a 'half-dead' person was to all practical appearances dead, he might be dead for all they knew, and they may have judged the risk

54 E.g., Phaedrus *Fables* 4.23.16; 2 Cor. 11:26; m. Ber. 1:3; b. A.Z. 25b; Ber. 11a; B.K. 116b; Pes. Rab Kah. 27:6; Gen. Rab. 75:3; Ex. Rab. 30:24. See also sources in Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, 4 vols., tr. Leonard A. Magnus, J. H. Freese, and A. B. Gough (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1907, 1965; New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1908, 1913), 1:294-96

55 Though the poor may have been less frequent targets (Dio Chrys. 7th, *Euboean*, Disc. 9-10).

56 Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 41-42; Jeremias, *Parables*, 203.

57 E.g., Eurip. *Alcestis* 141-43; Livy 23.15.8; 40.4.15; Corn. Nep. *Generals* 4 (Pausanias) 5.4. Rabbis also used this category, which for them would imply unconsciousness (Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 42).

58 Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 42.

59 Robbers sometimes murdered their victims (*Greek Anth.* 7.310, 516, 581, 737; Gen. Rab. 80:2; 92:6).

60 Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 240, 269 n. 15; cf. I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 1st ser. (New York: KTAV, 1967; reprint of Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1917), 110.

61 Among Egyptians, see Diod. Sic. 1.77.3.

of ritual contamination too great.⁶² Jewish law, to be sure, did not forbid involvement with a corpse, but one would contract biblical impurity for seven days (Num 19:11).⁶³ An early second-century Jewish teacher noted that everyone who passes by a corpse on the highway covers one's nose and hurries off.⁶⁴

The preoccupation of at least some priests with ritual purity may be illustrated by the later Jewish story of a priest who found a knife in the body of his dying son and paused to declare the knife ritually pure.⁶⁵ According to stricter Jewish traditions, if so much as one's shadow touched a corpse, one contracted corpse-impurity;⁶⁶ one could also contract it by contact with graves.⁶⁷ But in any case, the priest is also 'descending' on that road, i.e., headed for Jericho where many wealthy priests lived;⁶⁸ whatever ritual duties he had to do in the temple, he had already fulfilled! This would not obviate the concern for ritual purity,⁶⁹ but it could diminish its priority.

A Levite, also expected to be pious, likewise passes on the other side (10:32). Some commentators argue that whereas Sadducean regulations forbade priests to defile themselves with a corpse on the road, Levites were under no such obligation.⁷⁰ Yet another factor may play a role: one could distinguish Jews from Samaritans by their clothes but not by physical features, and this man was 'stripped' (10:30). For all these religious professionals knew, he might not be a Jew anyway.⁷¹ On the Jericho road, however, a Jew would be much more likely. It is possible that the priest and the Levite, like most

62 Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 41-42; Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984), 104-5. For strictness in cases of doubt, see e.g., Sifra Taz. pq. 1.123.1.6; but positive duties should also normally take precedence over negative ones in Jewish tradition (p. B.M. 2:5, §1; for uncleanness, cf. p. Nazir 7:1, §7).

63 For necessary involvement with corpses, cf. Sanders, *Mishnah*, 34.

64 ARN 11A.

65 Cf. Young, *Parables*, 239-41.

66 Sanders, *Mishnah*, 232.

67 Cf. e.g., CD 12.15-17; Jos. *Ant.* 18.36-38; Sanders, *Mishnah*, 34.

68 For Jericho's wealthy priestly community, see J. Schwartz, 'On Priests and Jericho in the Second Temple Period', *JQR* 79 (1, 1988), 23-48.

69 He might prove unable to collect and eat from his tithes; see Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 44.

70 Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1972), 203. When both a priest and Levite are available, the Levite should defile himself; when a Levite and an Israelite, the Israelite should defile himself (p. Nazir 7:1, §15).

71 Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 42-43. One was not supposed to help a sinner (Sir 12:13).

analogies that modern preachers draw to them, simply refuse to risk danger (if robbers remain present) or serious inconvenience.

Many ancient Jewish parables make comparisons among priests, Levites, and Israelites, so some scholars suggest that Jesus' audience, including the legal scholar, may have expected the third and righteous character to be a common Israelite.⁷² Normally these parables emphasize the greater purity requirements for the priest, but some other Jewish groups criticized the corruption of Jerusalem's priesthood,⁷³ suggesting possible expectation of such a contrast in favor of the Israelite at least in its original life-setting. But the proposal that most peasants would have disliked priests and Levites as urban characters⁷⁴ does not accord well with the respect accorded priests in our diverse extant sources.⁷⁵ To be sure, Jerusalem aristocrats generated disdain among their enemies, but Jesus does not identify the priest as a Sadducee (Josephus even reports Sadducees oppressing poorer priests, although most in Jericho would not be poor).

Whatever Jesus' interlocutor's expectation of the third character, Luke's informed audience would expect him to be shocked to learn that the true hero of the story is a Samaritan (10:33). The idea of a 'good Samaritan' was as much an oxymoron to them as the idea of a 'friendly P.L.O. member' might be to an Israeli Christian (or 'Israeli police officer' to a Palestinian Christian), a 'benevolent advocate of sharia' to Christians in some parts of northern Nigeria, and so forth.⁷⁶ This Samaritan serves the same function in Jesus' parable that the benevolent, God-fearing centurions do in Luke 7:3-5, 9 and Acts 10:2-4: confronting a 'good' member of a group we have experienced or perceived as hostile challenges our prejudices.

Anointing wounds with oil was standard practice, and wine was probably used to disinfect the wound (10:34).⁷⁷ Strict Jewish piety

72 Jeremias, *Parables*, 203. See e.g., p. Taan. 4:2, §4; sometimes only two members of the triad appear (e.g., p. B.B. 6:1, §3). Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 200, suggests that the unexpected third character forces the hearer to identify with the victim instead of the hero.

73 See Sanders, *Mishnah*, 42, 91, citing Psalms of Solomon and the Damascus Covenant.

74 Scott, *Parable*, 79, 197.

75 E.g., Jos. *Apion* 2.186; Philo *Hypothetica* 7.13; 1QS 2.19-20; Diod. Sic. 40.3.5.

76 Cf. e.g., J. Ramsey Michaels, *Servant and Son: Jesus in Parable and Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 128. Some derive the notion of the 'good Samaritan' from 2 Chr 28:5-15 (F. S. Spencer, '2 Chronicles 28:5-15 and the Parable of the Good Samaritan', *WTJ* 46 [2, 1984], 317-49; Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993], 110 n. 40), but though parallels exist, the case is less than clear.

77 Jeremias, *Parables*, 203. On anointing wounds with oil, see e.g., Is 1:6; m. Shab. 14:4.

preferred to avoid Gentile oil,⁷⁸ and probably some felt that Samaritan oil would become susceptible to the same impurity; the wounded man's need, however, takes clear precedence over such concerns. Then the Samaritan laid the man on his donkey and himself accepted a servile position by leading the donkey.⁷⁹ Donkeys normally could fit two people if necessary,⁸⁰ but traders often had donkeys loaded with merchandise.⁸¹ Perhaps more to the point, the wounded man (presumably still unconscious) will not be sitting upright, and given his wounds the Samaritan may think it best to allow him more room. Yet the Samaritan risks not only comfort, but possibly also his own safety. By bringing the wounded man into a Jewish city, the Samaritan risks provoking hostile questions. 'An American cultural equivalent would be a Plains Indian in 1875 walking into Dodge City with a scalped cowboy on his horse, checking into a room over the local saloon, and staying the night to take care of him.'⁸²

Jesus makes this Samaritan not merely one who goes out of his way more than any Samaritan or most Jews his audience knew, but one who sacrifices to aid this person he did not even know. Two denarii (10:35) might cover the man's stay in the inn for over twenty days; 'I will repay' (10:35) was a legally binding formula in that period.⁸³ Because the wounded man no longer has any resources of his own, the Samaritan must provide for him or the man, on recovery, will risk the serious legal consequences that accrued to debtors in this period.⁸⁴ Jesus' point is that Jews and Samaritans who obey God's law must love one another as neighbors in God's land.⁸⁵ In the larger context of Luke-Acts, this helps pave the way for Philip's Samaritan mission (Acts 8:5-13) which in turn prepares the church for the Gentile mission.

78 Sanders, *Mishnah*, 274.

79 For this as the servile position, see e.g., Esther 6:11 (cited by Bailey); and the story in Gen. Rab. 32:10; 81:3; Deut. Rab. 3:6; Song Rab. 4:4, §5; for the low status of ass-drivers, Diog. Laert. 6.5.92.

80 Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 51. This may, however, assume that both persons are sitting upright, which would not be the position

81 Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 140; cf. the story in Abrahams, *Studies* 1, 110.

82 Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 52.

83 Jeremias, *Parables*, 204.

84 Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 53-54. Oakman, 'Peasant', 122, cites m. Yeb. 16:7 to criticize leaving a sick man at an inn; but despite the severe reputation of inns, that very text indicates that Levites could leave a companion at such a place. In any case, the promise to pay for the man affords him protection (*ibid.*, 123).

85 Cf. Bailey, *Peasant Eyes*, 54-55. For the emphasis here on loving one's enemy (as in Matt 5:43), see Brad H. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 168.

3. Jew and Gentile in Romans

In the first half of the twentieth century in most of the American South, law prohibited blacks and whites from eating together. Early Christians experienced some similar barriers based on custom: Jewish people were discouraged from eating with Gentiles, so for Jewish-Christians to do so would scandalize their contemporaries (Acts 10:28; 11:3). (Conservative Palestinian Jews considered questionable even entering Gentile homes,⁸⁶ though this custom primarily grew from the hatred of idolatry.)⁸⁷ But then, how could Christians from both groups participate in the Lord's supper as one body? Whether the divisions were according to class (1 Cor 11:19-22) or culture (Gal 2:11-14), Paul opposed them uncompromisingly. Although private reproof was normally considered appropriate both in Jewish tradition and in Jesus' teaching,⁸⁸ Paul publicly reproved Peter, regarding his accommodation of ethnic separatism as compromising the integrity of the gospel itself (Gal 2:11-21).

We see this principle most clearly when Paul addresses the church in Rome. Here he uses the universal theological principle that Christ is the only way of salvation to address a particular concrete situation: Jewish and Gentile Christians were divided from one another.⁸⁹ Paul first met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, after they left Rome in response to the emperor's edict commanding at least many Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:1-2).⁹⁰ By the time Paul writes to the Roman Christians, however, this couple has returned to Rome (Rom 16:3-4), indicating that Claudius' edict is no longer in effect (presumably because he is dead).⁹¹ Thus it seems likely that Paul wrote after a

86 Cf. m. Pes. 8:8; Ohol. 18:7; Jos. War 2.150; S. Safrai, 'Religion in Everyday Life,' 793-833 in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 829; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress; London: S.P.C.K., 1992), 239-40.

87 Cf. ARN 8A; b. Pes. 9a.

88 For the expectation of private reproof in Jewish tradition, see e.g., Jos. *Ant.* 3.67; IQS 6.26-7.9; 7.15-16; m. Ab. 3:11; b. Sanh. 101a; Shab. 119b; Tam. 28a; Arak. 16b; Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Courts, Testimony and the Penal Code*, Brown Judaic Studies 33 (Chico: Scholars, 1983), 97-98; in Jesus' teaching, see Matt 18:15-17.

89 I have also addressed this material from Romans and Ephesians in my, 'The Gospel & Racial Reconciliation', 117-30 in *The Gospel in Black & White: Theological Resources for Racial Reconciliation*, ed. Dennis Ockholm (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 118-23.

90 Also Suet. *Claudius* 25.4. Scholars currently debate the extent of Claudius' expulsion (cf. Dio Cassius 60.6); note the analogous expulsion under Tiberius in Suet. *Tiberius* 36, but also the relatively uninterrupted Jewish life in Rome (*CJJ* 1:1xxiii).

91 For various reconstructions of the situation behind Romans, see Karl P. Donfried, ed., *The Romans Debate*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

number of Jewish Christians had returned or emigrated to Rome and encountered Gentile Christians who had functioned for several years with minimal Jewish guidance.

That Paul addresses matters of food customs and holy days (Rom 14:1-6) in such a setting is not surprising. Following the dominant views of their own Roman culture,⁹² these Gentile Christians probably could not appreciate Jewish Christians' food laws and holy. Many of the Jewish Christians, conversely, probably questioned the orthodoxy of Gentile Christians who did not observe biblical teachings about foods (Lev 11). Thus Paul begins his letter (Rom 1-11) by establishing that all people must approach Israel's God on the same terms, on the basis of Jesus Christ.

First, Paul establishes that everyone is equally lost (cf. 3:9-20). He begins with the uncontroversial lostness of the Gentiles, focusing on the examples of idolatry and homosexual behavior (1:18-27). Jewish texts regularly denounce idolatry, and treat it as largely (though not exclusively) a Gentile sin;⁹³ they treat homosexual behavior as virtually exclusively a Gentile vice in this period.⁹⁴ Then, however, he adds a vice-list that includes sins such as envy, pride and slander which Jewish people also acknowledged as their own (1:28-32).⁹⁵ Like Amos (Amos 1:3 – 2:8) or Wisdom of Solomon, Paul denounces Gentile sins so that he may address Jewish sins.

Second, Paul shows that God has provided salvation for all people on the same terms. Jewish people commonly believed that they would be saved by virtue of their descent from Abraham, but Paul emphasizes that spiritual rather than merely physical descent from Abraham was what mattered (Rom 4). God had, after all, chosen Abraham when he was still a Gentile (4:10-12), as Paul's contemporaries also acknowledged.⁹⁶ But regardless of who was descended from Abraham, all of us have descended from Adam, and share Adam's sin and

92 Plut. *Table-Talk* 4.4.4, *Mor.* 669C; *Superst.* 8, *Mor.* 169C; Molly Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Roman Views* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), 73-80; J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World*, *NovTSup* 41 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 136-39.

93 E.g., Bel and Dragon; Ep. Jer.; Ep. Arist. 134-38; Sib. Or. 3.8-35; 4.4-23; Test. Sol. 26; tos. Bek. 3:12; Peah 1:2; Sanh. 13:8; Sifra VDDeho. par. 1.34.1.3; Sifre Num. 112.2.2; Sifre Deut. 43.4.1; 54.3.2.

94 E.g., Ep. Arist. 152; Sib. Or. 3.185-86, 596-600, 764; 4.34; 5.166, 387, 430; tos. Hor. 2:5-6.

95 Envy (e.g., Wisd. 6:23; Ep. Arist. 224; Jos. *Ant.* 2.13; *War* 1.77), pride (e.g., 1QS 4.9; Sir. 3:28; 10:7, 12-13; 13:1, 20; 22:22; 25:1; Philo *Post.* 52; m. Ab. 1:13), and slander (e.g., 1QS 7.15-16; Philo *Spec. Laws* 4.59-60; Sifre Deut. 1.8.2-3; 275.1.1).

96 For Abraham as a model proselyte, see e.g., *Mekilta Nezikin* 18:36ff; b. Suk. 49b; Gen. Rab. 39:8.

death (5:12-21). This argument should have recalled postbiblical Jewish discussions of Adam for the Roman Jewish Christians.⁹⁷ Paul acknowledged that the law was a special gift to Israel (3:2), and that it was good (7:12, 14). But whereas the law enabled one to know what was good, it could not transform the human heart to be good; identifying one's evil impulse was not the same as conquering it.

Third, Paul addresses the relationship between ethnic Israel and the Gentiles more directly in chapters 9 through 11. Jewish people believed that God had chosen them in Abraham, but Paul establishes that not all ethnic descendants of Abraham in the Bible qualified for the promise (Rom 9:6-13). He argues that God can sovereignly choose people on any basis he pleases—in this context, not simply on the basis of one's ethnicity, but rather on the basis of one's response to his Christ (Rom 9:24-33).

But while Jewishness could not guarantee salvation, neither should Gentile Christians disregard their Jewish siblings or their heritage. Gentiles were saved by being grafted into the people of God (probably understood as spiritual proselytes, as in Rom 2:29). But if God could break off unbelieving Jewish branches who fit into that heritage more naturally, he could certainly break off the foreign Gentile branches (Rom 11:17-22).⁹⁸

Finally, having established that God planned to justify both groups through Christ alone, Paul turns to moral exhortation based on this premise. Christians must serve one another like one body with many diverse members (Rom 12:3-16), recognize that the epitome of the law is love (Rom 13:8-10), respect one another's customs so long as they are used to glorify God (Rom 14:1 – 15:2), and embrace models of ethnic reconciliation like Christ (Rom 15:8-12) and Paul himself (15:25-27). Paul's closing exhortation is to beware of those who sow division (16:17). Paul grounds ethnic reconciliation in the gospel.

4. The new temple in Ephesians 2

Ephesians, like Romans, seems to address churches divided in part along Jewish-Gentile lines. Scholars regularly debate the authorship of Ephesians; here I can only mention in passing that I accept

97 Cf. e.g., Sirach 25:24; 1 En. 98:4; Life of Adam and Eve 44.3-4; Sifre Deut. 323.5.1; 339.1.2; and especially 4 Ezra 3:7, 20-22, 30; 7:118-26; 2 Bar. 17:2-3; 23:4; 48:42-45; 54:15, 19; 56:5-6.

98 Given the use of 'Israel' in the immediate context, I believe, *pace* many scholars, that Paul also expected an eventual turning of his people to faith in Christ; cf. Johannes Munck, *Christ & Israel: An Interpretation of Romans 9-11* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 136; George E. Ladd, 'Israel and the Church', *EQ* 36 (1964), 206-13.

Pauline authorship (with or without an amanuensis), believing that the general audience, the passage of time and Paul's continued adaptation of his message for philosophically literate audiences is sufficient to explain the limited stylistic divergences from Paul's earlier letters. Certainly a setting of Paul's imprisonment makes good sense of the passage at hand.

Ephesians opens with a blessing which applies to the entire church many Old Testament designations for Israel (Eph 1:3-14: e.g., choiceness; inheritance; possession). Before turning to the new Temple comprised of both Jew and Gentile in 2:20-22,⁹⁹ the letter declares both Jew and Gentile one in Christ (2:14). On the premise of Pauline authorship, this declaration is both situationally relevant and dramatic: not long after Paul dictated these words, riots broke out in Caesarea, the city of Paul's earlier imprisonment, with Jews and Syrians slaughtering one another.¹⁰⁰

Paul goes on in Ephesians 2:14 to announce that Christ has shattered the dividing wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. He writes as if his hearers will immediately understand the dividing wall to which Paul refers, and it does not take us long to imagine how Paul's hearers (either during his lifetime or shortly afterward) would have understood his point.

Paul's audience in the region around Ephesus must have known why Paul was writing to them from prison (3:1 – 'for the sake of you Gentiles'; 4:1; 6:20); they were aware of the charge that he had transgressed a 'dividing barrier' in the Temple (Acts 21:28). Because of stricter interpretations of biblical purity regulations, the 'outer court' that once welcomed Jews and Gentiles together (1 Kgs 8:41-43) now divided them. The Court of Israel allowed only Jewish men; the Court of Women, beyond which Jewish women could not pass, was on a lower level and further from the priestly sanctuary. Finally, still further from the sanctuary was the new outer court, beyond which Gentile seekers of Israel's God could not pass. Signs at entrances to the Court of Women warned Gentiles that proceeding further invited death.¹⁰¹

99 Some Jewish documents apply the image specifically to Israel's elect (e.g., 1QS 8.5-9; Bertril Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the NT* [Cambridge University, 1965], 16-46).

100 Jos. *War* 2.266-70, 457-58. For other massacres in reprisal, see *War* 2.458-68; *Life* 25.

101 Jos. *Ant.* 15.417; *War* 5.193-200; 6.124-26. For the extant inscription, see Efrat Carmon, ed., *Inscriptions Reveal: Documents from the Time of the Bible, the Mishna and the Talmud*, tr. R. Grafman (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1973), pp. 76, 167-68, §169; Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. Gaalya Cornfeld (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 354-56.

Paul entered the Temple to affirm his Jewish identity for those who thought that he had accommodated the Gentiles too much (Acts 21:21-26).¹⁰² Nevertheless, some Jews who knew of Paul's ministry among Gentiles in Ephesus recognized an Ephesian Gentile with Paul near Jerusalem's Temple, and inferred that he had taken the Gentile into the temple. Once this rumor spread, a riot quickly ensued (Acts 21:27-30), leading to Paul's detainment.

But Paul quickly displays his cultural versatility. When his interrogator hears his good Greek and learns that he is a citizen of a prominent city (21:37, 39),¹⁰³ he allows him to address the crowd – which Paul proceeds to address in his Semitic language (21:40; possibly Hebrew, probably Aramaic). Emphasizing particular aspects of one's account for a particular audience was standard rhetorical practice.¹⁰⁴ Paul's fluency in Aramaic invites the crowd's attention (22:2), and he emphasizes every possible point of identification with his hearers, including having been raised in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel and receiving ministry from a law-abiding Jewish Christian (22:3-5, 12).

But ultimately Paul alienated his audience, even though he was still expounding the *narratio*, the opening narration of his speech. Paul had earlier appealed to Stoic values with a different audience, finding common ground with his hearers through much of his speech (17:22-29). He had alienated many members of that audience, however, when he advanced an essential part of the gospel he could not accommodate to his hearers' worldview (17:30-32). Now Paul again alienates his audience with what he seems to accept as a non-negotiable part of his gospel – God's concern for other peoples (22:21). Reflecting the tensions known to exist in the period shortly before the Jewish war, his audience resumed their riot (22:22-23).

Given the likely return to Asia of both Paul's Gentile companion and his accusers (Acts 24:18-19), congregations there surely knew the story that had led to his current imprisonment. For Paul and for the Jewish and Gentile Christians of western Asia Minor, no greater symbol of the barrier between Jew and Gentile could exist than the dividing barrier in the Temple (Eph 2:14). Paul declares that in the new

102 Paul's activity, if understood, would have appeared virtuous within Judaism; cf. Acts 18:18; 21:24 with Jos. *Ant.* 19.293-94; *War* 2.313-14.

103 On civic pride or honor, see e.g., Isocrates *Panegyricus*; *Panathenaicus*; Diog. Laert. *Lives* 7.1.12; Heraclitus *Ep.* 9; Quint. *Inst. Or.* 3.7.26; *Rhet. ad Herenn.* 3.3.4; Gen. Rab. 34:15.

104 E.g., Callirhoe in Char. *Chaer.* 2.5.10-11 omits Chaereas' kick.

Temple of God's Spirit, the cross of Christ has abolished that barrier.¹⁰⁵ Paul appears to have followed Jesus' footsteps in proclaiming a new temple in which Jew, Samaritan and Gentile would worship together (Eph 2:14-22; cf. Jn 4:20-24).

Conclusion

Jewish-Gentile conflict was pervasive in the earliest church, inviting comment from various early Christian writers. The theme of the gospel's challenge for surmounting ethnic prejudices (generally to the extent of commitment to the Gentile mission, hence incorporation into the church) appears in more New Testament passages than we could survey in one article. We have merely sampled a passage in John, a passage in Luke, a brief summary of Romans and a passage in Ephesians (by way of Acts). John and Luke used Jesus' ministry to or comments about Samaritans in ways that likely summoned their audiences to consider and surmount ethnic prejudices in their own day. Paul demands ethnic unity in Christ as an integral part of the gospel he preaches (presumably as part of his mission to the Gentiles). Modern interpreters can explore ways to apply such passages in countering ethnic divisions which continue to plague much of the church today.

Abstract

The pervasive Jewish-Gentile conflict in the earliest church invited comment. The theme of the gospel's challenge for surmounting ethnic prejudices (generally to the extent of commitment to the Gentile mission, hence incorporation into the church) appears widely in the New Testament; the present article surveys some samples of its treatment. John and Luke used Jesus' ministry to Samaritans or comments about them in ways that likely summoned their audiences to consider and surmount ethnic prejudices in their own day. Paul demanded ethnic unity in Christ as an integral part of the gospel he preached (presumably as part of his mission to the Gentiles). Modern interpreters can explore ways to apply such passages in countering ethnic divisions which continue to plague much of the church today.

105 Mk 11:17 suggests (given the temple context of both Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11) that at least some early Christians understood Jesus' act in the temple as directed partly against its segregation; see further my *Commentary on Matthew*, 499-501.