

A SAMARITAN JEW? HYBRIDIZATION IN THE JEWISH AND SAMARITAN IDENTIFICATION OF JESUS IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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Current scholarship argues that Early Christianity cannot be categorized exclusively under one ethnic group because it is multi-ethnic. This study acknowledges its reasonableness but adds an important perspective that characterizes the Johannine Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus is presented as someone who is not content with the stereotypical plural ethnic situation around him and, subsequently, challenged ethnic groups, particularly the Jews and the Samaritans, to redefine their identities. What puts him in this powerful position is his unique hybrid identification in the narrative. In hybridization, as popularized by Homi K. Bhabha, a hybrid can instigate a redefinition of ethnic identities that respects cultural differences and denounces any form of marginalization. This study observes a parallel phenomenon in Jn. 4:4–42 and Jn. 8:12–59 and proposes to understand the Johannine Jesus as consciously leading both the Jews and Samaritans into a redefinition of their ethnicities.

INTRODUCTION

A difficult question in New Testament studies is how to understand Early Christianity's relationship with contemporaneous ethnic¹ groups: Does it see itself as a part of one

¹ The word "ethnic," generally acknowledged as appearing in the English lexicon only in the early 20th century, has a wide range of meaning and scope. Studies in social sciences universally understand 'ethnic' as pertaining to a group of people with closed parameters of identification and membership. Scholars though are divided on the specifics of these parameters as they may refer to a race, to a nation, to a tribe, or to any conglomeration of people. This paper will not enter into the intricacies of the debate but will, for the greater part, understand the word 'ethnic' in its widest reference as defined by Ellis Cashmore, *Dictionary*

of them or not? The traditional response to this is that, initially, it was a part of the encompassing Jewish ethno-religious group. However, when doctrinal tensions intensified and political stability was threatened, the early followers of Jesus were either severed or voluntarily distanced themselves from Jewish society.² What followed is an open-for-all community that does not discriminate ethnic lineage and associations as what is echoed in Rom. 10:12a: “For there is no distinction between Jew or Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all.”³

However, this view raises more complications in relation to ethnic identity since the ambiguous phrase *ou gar estin diastolē* (“for there is no distinction”) can be construed differently. It can mean that the separate ethnic identities of members are: a) maintained-but-undermined, b) dissolved-but-supplanted, or c) acknowledged-but-transformed. Before attempting to solve this problem, it is mandatory to answer first this vital question on ethnicity: Can one’s ethnic identity really be altered?

of *Race Relations*, 4th ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 119: “a group possessing some degree of coherence and solidarity composed of people who are, at least latently, aware of having common origins and interests.” At the end of the paper, the more restrictive definition of Anthony D. Smith will be introduced (see below footnote 49).

² For discussions that challenge the traditional notion of a clear-cut separation of the Jews and Christians, see James D.G. Dunn, ed., *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135* (The Second Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium on Earliest Christianity and Judaism [Durham, September, 1989], new ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), esp. 367; Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); and James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians, Jewish Christians* (WUNT 251; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

³ This concept reverberates also in the Gospel of John since several passages therein purportedly contain a similar idea that Christianity offers a new societal order, as Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2005), 44, puts it: “[A]cceptance of Jesus’ revelation of God “gathers” people from all national and religious backgrounds Jew and Gentile to form a new Israel, a new people, and a new nation (1:31; 11:51–52; 12:11, 19, 32–33; 19:25–37).”

The popular notion of ethnic identity is that it cannot be removed nor changed, since it is something inherent to an individual from the moment of birth, defining him/her as a permanent member of a perennial ethnic group. Its lasting presence in corporate groups and their members substantiates its immutability in the passage of time. This view that a person has inborn qualities and characteristics that define his/her ethnic identity is better known as primordialism.⁴ However, a primordialist outlook fails to explain the rise of new ethnic groups, the disappearance of some, and the conglomeration of many. Accordingly, the advent of Christianity as a religious offshoot of Judaism, but ethnically demarcated from it, will be very difficult to comprehend under this model.

In response to describing better the phenomenon of alteration of ethnic identities, modern ethnic studies lean toward understanding ethnicity as something constructed and decided upon in the course of time, technically known as instrumentalism.⁵ This position promotes that one's ethnic identity is not boxed from the beginning but is adapted and defined with respect to the circumstances around him/her. This development allows some biblical commentators to redefine also their take on the ethnic association of Early Christians, exploring ideas that situate them within a plural ethnic society where ethnicity is something fluid. Among a few of them are Denise Buell (2005), Eric Barreto (2010), Paul Trebilco (2012), David Balch (2015), and David Horrell (2016).⁶

⁴ This stance, also known as the essentialist or perennialist view, is best capsulized in the six "cultural givens" introduced by Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 261-3, defining an ethnic group as having the following six commonalities among its members: (1) "assumed blood ties," (2) "race," (3) "language," (4) "region," (5) "religion," and (6) "custom."

⁵ In contrast to primordialism, instrumentalism or circumstantialism asserts that ethnic groups are formed out of the interests of influential players who "desire goods measured in terms of wealth, power, and status, and that joining ethnic or national communities help to secure these ends either by influencing the state or, in certain situations, through secession" (John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996], 8-9).

⁶ The works I refer here are: Denise Buell, *Why This New Race?: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Eric

It is good to enrich this discussion by taking a look also at the identity of the ethnic groups in the Gospel of John—a topic scarcely explored. How has the evangelist presented the Johannine Jesus in relation to other ethnic groups? Is Jesus presented in the Fourth Gospel as categorically identifiable to a particular ethnic group? How does the Johannine Jesus portray, behave, and relate with the ethnic identifications of his interlocutors? Interestingly, in the Johannine narrative, though Jesus was acknowledged as coming from Nazareth (Jn. 1:45–6; 19:19) and Galilee (Jn. 4:43–5), his ethnic identity was not easily identifiable. At one point, he was referred to as a “Jew”⁷ by the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:9); yet, at another, he was tagged as a “Samaritan” by the Jews (Jn. 8:48). What is surprising is that on both occasions Jesus did not negate nor accede to the appellations but challenged his interlocutors with a re-appropriation of the true meaning of their ethnic identities.

As a contribution to this academic inquiry, what this study proposes is a new way of understanding the ethnic dynamics of Early Christianity by digging into Jesus’ ethnic identification and relationships in the Fourth Gospel. Distinctive in this study is its interdisciplinary biblical reading that incorporates both exegetical and postcolonial approaches. In particular, it will focus on Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of hybridization since it observes a parallel phenomenon in Jn. 4:4–42 and Jn. 8:12–59.

Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations: The Function of Race and Ethnicity in Acts 16* (WUNT 294; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Paul Trebilco, *Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David L. Balch, *Contested Ethnicities and Images: Studies in Acts and Art* (WUNT 345; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); and David G. Horrell, “Ethnicisation, Marriage and Early Christian Identity: Critical Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3 and Modern New Testament Scholarship,” *New Testament Studies* 62, no. 3 (2016): 439–60.

⁷ This paper will use “Jew/Jews” to translate the Greek word *Ioudaios/Ioudaioi* without prejudice to the various debates on its rightful translation into English. In concrete, it will follow the global definition given by Adele Reinhartz, ““Jews” and Jews in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, eds. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 221: “a member of a national, religious, cultural, and political group.” The same reason goes with *Samaritai* and *Rhōmaioi* which will be translated as “Samaritans” and “Romans,” respectively.

In doing so, this study will proceed by initially looking at Early Christianity's ethnic dynamics. It will revisit the traditional view that the Early Christians were firstly Jews who were eventually separated from them. This will be juxtaposed with the developing idea that the ethnic environment of the Early Christians was something fluid, exploring particularly the suggestions of Balch and Horrell. Next, this study will analyze Jn. 4:4-42 and Jn. 8:12-59 with a special focus on Jn. 4:9 and Jn. 8:48. Subsequently, this will be examined vis-à-vis Bhabha's postcolonial concept of hybridization, tracing its function therein. Afterward, it will propose to construe the Johannine Jesus as consciously leading both the Jews and Samaritans into a liminal condition of open encounter and redefinition of their ethnicities. As a form of conclusion, this study will argue that Early Christianity is not categorically part of any of its contemporaneous ethnic groups nor is above them in any way.

ETHNIC IDENTITY OF EARLY CHRISTIANS

The Early Christians are normally adjudged as part of the Jewish ethnic group. In the gospels, Jesus and his first disciples are presented as Jews. The setting of the narratives is in Jewish lands with Jesus not even attempting to go outside these territories. Furthermore, the religious and cultural practices they were surrounded with are Jewish traditions handed on by their forefathers. It is convenient to say that Jesus and the first Christians are basically Jews.

As far as the Gospel of John is concerned, their fateful separation from the Jews cannot be easily determined. Aside from the fact that the date of this is arguable,⁸ the motive behind the split-up is also unclear. On the one hand, some see it as orchestrated by the Jews. The religious leaders at that time under

⁸ Most scholars date the separation almost immediately after the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. But some push the date even centuries later; for instance, Philip Alexander, "The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," in *Jews and Christians*, 21, sees it as happening in the 3rd century CE "with the triumph of Rabbinism within the Palestinian Jewish community and the virtual disappearance of Jewish Christianity" (*ibid.*, 24).

the helm of the High Priest figured out that it would be expedient for the Jewish nation to sentence Jesus to death lest they face the rage of the ruling Romans (Jn. 11:50). This fear of being destroyed hints us that the Jews were indeed trying to dissociate themselves from the alleged anti-imperial Jesus, and consequently, from his disciples. This is clearly corroborated in the Fourth Gospel with the indication that the followers of Jesus were actually threatened with *aposynagōgos*, i.e., being sent out from their synagogues (see Jn. 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), as popularized by J. Louis Martyn in 1968.⁹ On the other hand, there is also a possibility that the Christians were the ones who voluntarily cut their ties from Jewish society after realizing that their doctrine was irreconcilable with the traditional Jewish beliefs. This, in effect, negates Martyn's theory of *aposynagōgos*, undermining its historicity and downsizing the influential control of Rabbinic Jews to the citizens after the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.¹⁰

⁹ See J. Louis Martyn, *History & Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd rev. and enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979). His initial ideas are expounded recently in J. Louis Martyn, "The Johannine Community among Jewish and Other Early Christian Communities," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 183–190. This act of sending Jesus-followers out of the synagogue is identified by some commentators as the beginning of the separation of the Jews and Christians. Scholars were divided whether to accept Martyn's view or not. The well-respected Johannine commentator Raymond Brown was among those who supported this view, who even went to the point of mapping out in detail the rise of the Johannine community with the *aposynagōgos* as the starting point; see Raymond Brown, *Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed., upd., introduced, and concluded by F. Moloney (New York and London: Doubleday, 2003), 75–7. However, a growing number of scholars today has abandoned this thesis, asserting either that the claim is fictitious or that the separation did not happen instantaneously in history; see Jonathan Bernier, *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 13.

¹⁰ Aside from the fact that the historicity of the Council of Jamnia held in Javneh is put into question, there is also a strong argument that the religious leaders led by the Pharisees—the only remaining religious group after the Fall—had no longer any political control over the Jews; see Raimo Hakola, "The Johannine Community as Jewish Christians? Some Problems in Current Scholarly Consensus," in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts*, ed. Matt Jackson-McCabe (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 197. This explains

Regardless of who initiated the split, observable in both opinions is the fact that ethnic identity is something malleable. When the Jews and Christians were still in one group, their ethnic tie with one another was dependent on their solid religious belief that they have one God, one father of faith in Abraham, one lawgiver in Moses, and are the one Chosen People sealed with God's covenant— with “sons of Abraham” (Jn. 8:33, 37, 39, 53, 56) and “keepers of the Mosaic law” (Jn. 5:45, 46; 7:19, 22–3; 9:28) as the foremost Jewry qualifications in the Fourth Gospel. However, this ascription was not perpetually self-determined since the religious power players in the Gospel tended to act as its main arbiters. It is noticeably manifested in John 8 where, though the Jews/Pharisees had initially identified Jesus as a Jewish teacher (v. 4), they easily turned hostile to him a few verses later as soon as they perceived that he had failed to meet their created Jewry criteria (vv. 48, 52, 53, 59). The same goes with their defining verdict to the blind man healed by Jesus in Jn. 9:28, saying: “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.” This remark is tantamount to saying that in joining the Jesus movement, one's inherent Jewish affiliation is dissolved. Under the same circumstances, the *aposynagōgos*, whether taken as an excommunication or a self-imposition, points out that one's ethnic identity could be removed or altered. Having been separated from the Jewish ethnic group, the Johannine Christians were identified as having a new set of doctrines, paving the way to being categorized as a new religion, and, subsequently, as a new ethnic group.¹¹

This flexible character of ethnicity in the Fourth Gospel, hence, supports the model of instrumentalism in comprehending

why the Jewish rebellion was still strongly alive beyond that time, ending only in the early 2nd century.

¹¹ For the Greek historian Herodotus, known as the father of ethnology, common religion is one of the four markers on the oneness of the Greek people, viz., one blood, one tongue, one worship, and one custom (see Herodotus, *The Histories*, A new translation by Robin Waterfield, reissued [Oxford World's Classics; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008], 539 §8.144). In their separation from the Jewish religion, the Johannine Christians would have been viewed by the opposing Jews as belonging to a new ethnic group that now possesses the ethnic parameters of Herodotus.

the ethnic groups, i.e., one's ethnic identity is decided on, mitigated, or adapted to contemporaneous circumstances.¹² This way of thinking has influenced some modern biblical scholars to propose, too, that ethnicity in Early Christianity is something fluid. One recent proponent of this thought is Balch who posits that during the first century Greco-Roman context, ethnic membership was something fluid particularly evident in the Roman military's indiscriminate policy¹³ of giving citizenship to foreigners. In effect, anybody, even an outsider to the Roman territories, could be a Roman as long as proper Roman citizenship would be licitly awarded to him/her. Balch suggests that the same dynamics were also present in Early Christianity since the entire empire had to acculturate anyway to this contested phenomenon of multiple ethnicities. This analysis is corroborated in the writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and even in Luke-Acts.¹⁴ Concretely, Peter's act of baptizing Cornelius (Acts 10:48) was Luke's proclamation that the Christians were multi-ethnically composed in the same way as the Romans they were contemporaneous with were. Thus, for Balch "[b]oth Dionysius and Luke are selectively acculturating by urging their Greek-speaking readers toward the acceptance of 'foreigners' (*allophyloi*), and each must claim that this is an ancient, Athenian or Mosaic value and practice."¹⁵

Another scholar who thinks in the same direction is Horrell. In his study of mixed-marriages and ethnicisation in 1 Cor. 7 and 1 Pet. 3, he observes that though Paul endorsed endogamy, he also legitimately allowed mixed-marriages (between a pagan and a Christian) by virtue of the possibility of sanctifying the unbeliever on account of the status of holiness of the believing partner and their children. Paul saw that "such marriages are an opportunity for

¹² See Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 7-9.

¹³ I call this policy "indiscriminate" because it goes against the ethnocentric attitude of citizens of antiquity, who were supposedly observant of the parameters of ethnicity introduced by Herodotus. Conversely, the Romans did not seem to follow it "offering asylum and citizenship to those foreigners who would serve in their army" (Balch, *Contested Ethnicities*, 24).

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 30. Balch specifies that Acts 10-15 are the main biblical passages central in his study.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

mission and conversion (1 Cor. 7:16; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).¹⁶ What is also underscored by Horrell is that the ethnic identity of a newborn child was independent from the bloodline of his/her parents of mixed marriage since one's identity is "intrinsically and contingently bound up with the adoption and practice of a way of life."¹⁷ What happened is that Christianity was opening its doors to other ethnic groups since it was not bound by the classifications of ethnicity in the first place; its primary concern was spiritual in nature. Nonetheless, with this porous situation, it was realistically difficult to assess the ethnicity of a Christian. Accordingly, Horrell concludes: "We should not, however, hastily and simplistically conclude that early Christian identity 'is' therefore 'ethnic'... it is much more likely that the categories are fuzzy and overlapping: ethnic, religious, cultural and social facets or group-identity intersect in complex ways."¹⁸

Despite some slight differences, both Balch and Horrell claim that ethnic identity during the time of the first Christians is something fluid. This means that a member of this new group did not necessarily give up his/her initial ethnic identity, nor was it dissolved when he/she had affiliated himself/herself to Christianity. In other words, when the Christians were still one with the Jews they may be labeled together as one ethnic group. But on their separation, the ethnic bond between them may have been either continued or severed, depending on whose perspective it is. Thus, an individual Christian may claim that he/she was still part of the Jewish ethnic group or not. It is because ethnic identification was so porous, yet for them, it was such a trivial matter since the more essential aspect of life is one's spiritual union with Christ.

The only limitation of this viewpoint is that it appears that the early Christians were unconcerned with the rightful ethnic determination and expression of their members. It seems that they were out of touch with the socio-political disorder and were content with the fluid nature of ethnicity even if some ethnic identities were misrepresented and/or marginalized by the majority group.

¹⁶ Horrell, "Ethnicisation," 243.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 458.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Henceforth, there is a need to look anew at the complicated situation of the first Christians and to check if an active involvement to societal transformation was at work in some Christian communities. The analysis of Mark Brett on this regard suitably echoes this challenge: “The more general point here is that there are many ethnic groups who refuse, for good reasons, to be subsumed under homogenizing visions of national (or international) culture. Whatever their geographical or social location, I would argue biblical critics have an ethical responsibility to address this complex web of issues.”¹⁹

Succinctly, what Brett confronts exegetes to do is to recover the muted voices of the marginalized sectors in the Bible and bring them to the fore of academic discussion. This study follows this ideology as it assumes that the Gospel of John contains such materials, particularly exposed in the interethnic relations of the Jews and Samaritans. Positively, an approach under this model can help unveil a new paradigm of ethnic relations in Early Christianity that retrieve marginalized perspectives and promote a better understanding of ethnic identities.

ETHNICITY AS PRESENTED BY THE JOHANNINE JESUS

There are two episodes in the Gospel of John that clearly present a serious discussion on the ethnic relations of social groups. The first is Jn. 4:4-42, where Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman by the well in the town of Sychar (v. 5). At the beginning of the story, it is pointed out by the evangelist that there was an existing social divide between the Jews and the Samaritans (v. 9b). This explains why the woman was hesitant to offer Jesus a drink, whom she identified as a “Jew.” From this remark, we can say that the woman was following the stereotypical belief that the Jews were their enemies (and vice-versa) which had been based on the complicated history of the Samaritan people as codified in the

¹⁹ Mark G. Brett, “Interpreting Ethnicity,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Biblical Interpretation Series 19; New York: Brill, 1996), 5.

Hebrew Bible.²⁰ However, Jesus appeared to downplay the appellation given him. Instead of acceding or dissenting, he ignored the myopic way of thinking of the Samaritan woman on what defines ethnicity. He led the discussion to more religious topics beginning with spiritual satisfaction (the dispensation of the “living water” in v. 14),²¹ to sexual morality (the civil status of the woman in v. 18),²² to forms of worship (the rightful mountain to honor God in v. 21),²³ unto eschatological salvation (true messianic

²⁰ The long feud between the Jews and the Samaritans is presented in the biblical texts as founded on the following: (1) interracial marriages and resettlements in Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:24-41; 18:9-12), (2) Samaritans’ opposition to the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem (Ezr. 4:1-5), (3) Samaritans’ canonization of the Pentateuch as the only Scriptures, and (4) Samaritans’ military support to the Gentiles against Judas Maccabeus and Israel (1 Mac. 3:10). Highlighted in these events is the alleged moral impurity of the Samaritans, particularly because of their mixed marriages, pagan practices, and misinterpretation of the Mosaic laws in their customs from the perspective of the Jews.

²¹ Jacob’s well is important for the Samaritans because they regarded themselves as descendants of their patriarch Jacob (Jn. 4:12). Described as inhabitants of the portion of land allocated to Ephraim and Manasseh (sons of Joseph who were blessed by Jacob in Gen. 48:1-22; see Josh. 13 and 17), the Samaritans have sustained this special connection to Jacob as they continue to dwell in these tribal regions; see Robert Anderson, “The Samaritans,” *ABD* 5 (1992), 940b.

²² The traditional interpretation of the phrase “five husbands” is that it parallels the pagan gods of the nations that were resettled into Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:30-1). This is corroborated in the word play of “husband” (*ba’al* in Hebrew) as a reference to the Assyrian gods they had purportedly worshipped, thus their association to idolatry; see Joachim Jeremias, “*Samareia, Samaritēs, Samaritis*,” *TDNT*, vol. 7 (1971), 90-1; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 142; and C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, repr. (London: SPCK, 1978), 235. However, more recent scholarship works denounce such simplistic allegory and opens the doors for other interpretations that do not misread the Samaritans’ history nor sensationalize the alleged immorality of the Samaritan woman; see Sandra M. Schneiders, “A Case Study: A Feminist Interpretation of John 4:1-42,” in *The Interpretation of John*, ed. John Ashton, repr. (Studies in New Testament Interpretation; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 247.

²³ Mt. Gerizim is the Samaritan’s version of the holy mountain where true worship to God should be performed. This is in reference to the Treaty of Shechem and the renewal of God’s covenant that were forged in Mt. Gerizim

witnessing in v. 26).²⁴ Herein, Jesus was leading her to transcend her narrow view of ethnicity to a more extensive one that includes an openness to other social groupings (Jesus as “Savior of the world” in v. 42).²⁵

Though Jesus qualified himself among the Jews with his use of the *hēmeis* (“we”) statements while marking his separation from the Samaritans with his *hymeis* (“you” [plural]) pronouncements (v. 22), it remains unclear if the evangelist believed that the Jews and Samaritans were really socially in conflict with each other since Jesus was talking here about worship and salvation. If they were, how come that the Samaritan woman exchanged long discourses with a Jewish Jesus with whom she should not culturally communicate in the first place? Furthermore, if a social taboo existed between them, it remains a puzzle as to why

(Deut 27:12; Josh 8:33)—much earlier than David’s sanctification of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:5; 7:5–8; 15:8; 1 Chron 6:32). It was also believed by the Samaritans that the most sacred vessels were hidden in this mountain along with the rod of Moses and the container of the manna; see James Purvis, “The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans,” *Novum Testamentum* 17 (1975): 182. Finally, and most importantly, the eschatological moment will take place on this mountain as enshrined in their Samaritanism’s doctrine of faith; see Anderson, “The Samaritans,” 946b. Meanwhile, Jesus’ words that God will be worshipped in “spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23–24) is quite vague when construed immediately as his attempt to demolish outright both cults in Jerusalem and Gerizim. For a substantial discussion on this theme, see Benny Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth: An Exegetical Study of John 4:19–26 and a Theological Investigation of the Replacement Theme in the Fourth Gospel* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 46; Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007).

²⁴ This argument is in response to the statement of the Samaritan woman in v. 25 that the Messiah is coming, which is commonly understood as Samaritanism’s expectation for the return of Moses when God’s glory will be restored—popularly identified with the *Taheb*; see Purvis, “The Fourth Gospel,” 182.

²⁵ This title is generally perceived as an appreciation of the inclusive benefaction and mission of the Johannine Jesus who removes borders between social groups. Appropriately, Jerome Neyrey, *The Gospel of John* (The New Cambridge Bible Commentary; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 99, says, “When the Samaritans acclaim Jesus as ‘Savior of the world’, this picks up the erasure of ethnic boundaries illustrated in the story (4:9), as well as the negation of Mount Gerizim and Jerusalem as fixed sacred spaces (4:23–24).” However, this generalization needs to be critically evaluated.

the Samaritan villagers approached and invited Jesus over to their place to which he readily agreed staying there for two days (v. 40). In addition, at the beginning of the story the disciples of Jesus were described as going to the [Samaritan] city to buy some provisions (v. 8; see also vv. 27, 31); in doing so they would necessarily transact business with Samaritan traders. In sum, though v. 9b provides us with the authorial parenthetical comment to situate the readers to the ethnic rift between the Jews and Samaritans, it creates at the same time a riddle as to why all the characters in the episode appear to violate the existing social mores. Is it an example of Johannine literary irony? Or is it because the parameters of being a Samaritan and a Jew are quite fuzzy in the perspective of the evangelist?²⁶

The second episode is Jn. 8:12–59, where we have a lengthy argument between Jesus and the Jews after he introduced himself as the “light of the world” (v. 12)²⁷ and as sent by the Father (vv. 16, 18, 26, 29, 42). Conversely, the Jews, ascribing themselves as the authentic children of the one Father (Jn. 8:41), took fault at Jesus for his blasphemous declaration, accusing him of not behaving like a true son of Abraham (vv. 33, 39). Later, after Jesus’ rejoinders, they would mock him sternly, calling him a “Samaritan” and

²⁶ The ethnic status of the Samaritans is indeed contestable. On the one hand, Flavius Josephus describes the Samaritans as ethnically non-Jews having originated from the region of Cuthah in Persia, properly calling them Cutheans; see *Judean Antiquities* 9.290–1 in *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. Steve Mason, vol. 5 (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2005), 203, and *Judean Antiquities* 11.340–1 in *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. Steve Mason, vol. 6a (Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2017), 124–125. On the other hand, several Samaritan scholars consider the Samaritans as genealogically of the same origin as the Jews, separating only later as a sect of Judaism. Worth mentioning as influential to this way of understanding are the article of James Alan Montgomery, *The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect, Their History, Theology and Literature*, repr. (New York: KTAV, 1968) and the monograph of James Purvis, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 2; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

²⁷ This claim irritated the Jews because it has many scriptural overtones that describe Jesus as possessing messianic and salvific attributes as explicated in Isa. 42:6, 49:6; Zech. 14:17; Exod. 13:21, etc.; see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 739. For the Jews, this self-appellation of Jesus as the “light” is inappropriate since “only God or his Wisdom/Torah would publicly make the claim for himself” (ibid., 740).

“possessed by the devil” (v. 48). Jesus continued to answer back, yet what is noteworthy is that he ignored the Samaritan identification attached to him. It appears that as the Jews comprehend ethnicity as being associated to a set of religious and traditional beliefs (the same rationale in separating themselves from the Samaritans), Jesus was pointing toward another kind of ethnicity that is not based on systems of beliefs and practices but on one’s personal relationship with God²⁸ and way of life (vv. 21, 24, 34, 39b–40, 42–47).²⁹

The “Samaritan” label is more commonly explained by exegetes as mere sarcastic tactics³⁰ of the Jews to destroy the growing reputation of Jesus; what they really meant is that Jesus acts or thinks *like* a Samaritan³¹ and not that Jesus is a *real* Samaritan. Nevertheless, even if the charge stands as a mere rhetorical device, what is evident is that the Jews clearly demarcated themselves from the Samaritans. They saw them as objects of disdain, to the point that they name-called their fiercest enemies using the “Samaritan” tag, which they even affixed right next to “diabolic possession.”³²

²⁸ Keener, *John* 1, 738, remarks, “Jesus speaks here in spiritual terms concerning the world, not in ethnic terms (see 8:37, 56; 1 Jn. 3:8; 5:19); but neither his interlocutors in the narrative nor some subsequent interpreters have heard the point of the conflict.”

²⁹ The strongest words of Jesus in this episode are found in Jn. 8:44 when he castigated the Jews: “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desire.” Unfortunately, this verse has been utilized in history to propel some Anti-Semitic movements claiming that the Jews are of an evil race; for a thorough discussion on the anti-Jewish potential of the Fourth Gospel, see Bieringer et al., eds., *Anti-Judaism*, esp. 4–14.

³⁰ Keener, *John* 1, 752–3 n. 480–6, cites several examples in Greco-Roman writings wherein a similar phenomenon of character-attacks was utilized, and concludes that the evangelist was also influenced by this ancient literary technique.

³¹ The Jews might have heard that Jesus was welcomed warmly by the Samaritans (Jn. 4:40) and their remark was their sweeping judgment that he had already changed allegiance. This purported Samaritan infiltration to his way of thinking echoes Brown’s theory on the rise of the Johannine Community; see Brown, *John*, 74; for a similar argument, see Edwin D. Freed, “Did John Write His Gospel Partly to Win Samaritan Converts?,” *Novum Testamentum* 12 (1970): 241–256, i.e., this new community at some point in time had accepted the Samaritans into their fold—an event which contributed to the formation of their so-called High Christology.

³² The connection of diabolic possession to the Samaritans may be again a biblical reference to the historical past of the Samaritans when they were allegedly

Henceforth, in calling Jesus a “Samaritan” the Jews were likely sealing their verdict that Jesus is a Jewish outsider, i.e., he does not belong to their Jewish ethnic group. Yet, in the narrative the Jews seemed to contradict themselves as some of them had acknowledged earlier that Jesus is one of them for “many believed in him” (v. 30)—they would not have believed him if he were not one of them. It is only later at the height of the debate that they recanted their positive identification on him, calling him a “Samaritan” instead, and attempting to throw stones at him (v. 59). What is clearly exposed here is that being labeled a true Jew is something circumstantial (i.e., instrumentalism); it depends on the approval of so-called “keepers of the Jewish traditions” and is not based on one’s inherent birthright. Does this then affirm that ethnic identification in the Johannine context is malleable?

HYBRIDIZATION IN ETHNIC RELATIONS

Homi K. Bhabha³³ is one of the pioneers in the development of postcolonial theories.³⁴ He is best known for his

contaminated with the occult practices of the pagans they were intermingling with (2 Kgs. 17:31). This negative stereotype on the Samaritans was even accorded with the story of Simon the Magician who attempted to appropriate the Holy Spirit to himself (Acts 8:18–22), and with the baptizing activities of a certain Dositheus who claimed to be a divinity himself (see Purvis, *The Fourth Gospel*, 192).

³³ David Huddard, *Homi K. Bhabha* (Routledge Critical Thinkers; London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 149–50, takes notice how important Bhabha is in the postcolonial discourse: “[A]lmost every text in post-colonial studies references Bhabha’s work at some point.” Celebrated socio-political thinkers who were influenced by Bhabha according to him include, *inter alia*: Robert J. C. Young, Aijaz Ahmad, Benita Parry, Neil Lazarus, Rasheed Araeen, Stuart Hall, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Peter Hallward (see *ibid.*, 150–68).

³⁴ The word *postcolonial* is understood and presented differently by various authors: some even putting a hyphen between *post* and *colonial*, while others omitting it. Still, some argue that it is not even referring to a specific theory as Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6–7, points out: “...not in fact a theory in the scientific sense...[i]t comprises instead a related set of perspectives, which are juxtaposed against one another, on occasion contradictory.” This paper will not dwell on the ramifications of the term, but for a large part, will employ the definition of *postcolonial* in Cashmore, *Dictionary of Race*, 285: “A term used to

theory of hybridization, a process of redefining cultural identities within the context of colonization. A key to understanding Bhabha is his delineation between the terms “cultural diversity” and “cultural difference.”³⁵ The former begins with a recognition that social groups are diversified or ramified, but they can be harmonized since all are just branches of the same tree, so to say. However, the latter negates this claim of uniformity. “Cultural difference” challenges the traditional definition of culture and ethnicity that attempts to box everything under the same rational framework. Bhabha sees this strongly at play in the colonial discourse where the colonizer imposes concepts of identity and fixes the facts of history to the colonized.³⁶ What Bhabha lobbies for sternly is that both colonial stakeholders enter into a liminal condition called the “Third Space,”³⁷ where cultural identity can begin to be defined, discontinuing any forms of marginalization and misrepresentation of the colonized.

describe theoretical and empirical work that centralize the issues emerging from colonial relations and their aftermath, colonial here meaning the implanting of settlements by imperial powers on distant territories.”

³⁵ One chapter of Bhabha’s book *The Location of Culture* is entitled “Articulating the Archaic: Cultural Difference and Colonial Nonsense” (see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* [London and New York: Routledge, 1994], 175–98), where extensive discussions on “cultural difference” are presented. Also, he explains the term in his articles “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation” (see Homi K. Bhabha, *Narration and Nation* [London and New York: Routledge, 1990], 312–15) and “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences” (see Homi K. Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences,” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], 206–9).

³⁶ Technically, Bhabha calls this mechanism the “colonial discourse” which he describes as “the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces the effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 95).

³⁷ The term “Third Space” is not a physical space but is more of a reference to a temporal condition “which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew” (Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity,” 208).

Bhabha asserts that this can only happen in “hybridization.” A hybrid³⁸ is somebody who is in the “in-between” or betwixt position, i.e., neither completely part of any of the binary camps in colonization. Usually, he/she is one of the colonized who relates to the hegemony by means of mimicry³⁹—imitating the colonizers’ ways but to the point that gives them discomfort. This mechanism tilts the balance of the hegemony, challenging the colonizers to rethink their identity and evaluate their relationship with the ruled people. Hybridization, henceforth, becomes a catalyst for change, a change that starts from a single hybrid but ends up at the hands of the colonizers who are confronted not only with what cultural identity is but also with their marginalizing political rule.⁴⁰ Furthermore, it similarly confronts the colonized to a definition of their identity that emancipates them from their designated colonial stereotypes or from being attached to a behavior that simply replicates the evils of colonization.⁴¹

³⁸ A “hybrid” is understood by Bhabha as person/s who choose to be in the betwixt position—with the ruling class on one side and the ruled class on the other—in order to challenge the existing hegemony. In the political discourse, this definition does not endorse the traditional dictionary entry that limits it only to: “a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions,” accessed January 17, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybrid>.

³⁹ The aim and mechanics of mimicry “is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I’ve described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial subject” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 126).

⁴⁰ In reference to the maintenance of boundary of national culture, hybridization means “incorporating new ‘people’ in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation” (Bhabha, *Narration and Nation*, 4).

⁴¹ Bhabha emphasizes that the liminal condition provided for by hybridization challenges both the colonizer and colonized to a new definition of cultural identity that does not marginalize. He says: “The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 5).

“Colonization” for most postcolonial theorists does not limit itself to the imperial political occupation of a powerful nation over another. It may also be present in other neo-colonial situations as long as there is a clear presence of marginalization and suppression of the weaker group.⁴² This may include dominant groups that try to manipulate politically the codification of texts and the retelling of history to gain some advantages over another. Bhabha is among these thinkers since his main concern is the representation of the subaltern voices, particularly in the literary field, which may include also the Bible.⁴³

Indeed, in the postcolonial discourse, the Bible has not been exempt from this colonizing accusation either.⁴⁴ The biblical texts appear to be written and edited in favor of a dominant group albeit not necessarily free from external domination by other

⁴² Young, *Postcolonialism*, 2, maps out the extensive coverage of the postcolonial discourse that may encompass varying situations at different times: “If you are someone who does not identify yourself as western, or as somehow not completely western even though you live in a western country, or someone who is part of a culture and yet excluded by its dominant voices, inside yet outside, then postcolonialism offers you a way of seeing things differently, a language and a politics in which your interests come first, not last” (my italics).

⁴³ In his article entitled “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817”—also published in *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 145–74)—Bhabha begins with a reminiscing of the story of the discovery of the English Bible and underscores its potential in the pedagogical instillation of the colonial thought unto the alien group. Referring also to the same incident, R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and Empire: Postcolonial Explorations* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2, affirms how the English Bible, particularly the King James Version, became instrumental to the legitimization of the British Empire.

⁴⁴ At the end of the 20th century, the postcolonial discourse began to creep into biblical studies. Ralph Broadbent, “Postcolonial Biblical Studies in Action: Origins and Trajectories,” in *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (West Sussex: Blackwell, 2012), 57–93, maps out the emergence of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism. He names the following as providing seminal contributions to the rise of this new field: R.S. Sugirtharajah (1996), Keith Whitelam (1996), Philip Chia (1997), Michael Prior (1997), Richard Horsley (1997), and the contributors of the journal *Semeia* 75 (1996); from 1998 onwards, related publications continue to peak especially with the works of Fernando Segovia, Steven Moore, Musa Dube, Roland Boer, and the contributors of the series *The Bible and Postcolonialism*.

imperial powers. Thus, even if the Jews were politically ruled over by foreign nations since after the Fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE, they were the ones primarily responsible for the initial writing of the Scriptures wherein an embellishment of their own people's history is widely traceable.⁴⁵ Several postcolonial biblical scholars already critically analyzed select episodes in the Bible and unveiled evidence of marginalization; most of them comment on the pedestalled status of the Chosen People at the expense of maligning/devaluing their pagan neighbors and other ethnic groups.⁴⁶

HYBRIDIZATION INITIATED BY THE JOHANNINE JESUS

In the Gospel of John, the same dynamics of ethnocentrism⁴⁷ are also traceable. At first glance, one can

⁴⁵ Jon L. Berquist, "Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization," *Semeia* 75 (1996): 15-35, writes against the binary simplification of the postcolonial discourse with the Persian imperial power on the one hand (colonizer), and the exiled *Yehud* on the other hand (colonized), especially in the canonization of biblical books. Detecting a replication of the colonization activity, he asserts that the returning *Yehud* began to repeat the colonizing hegemony they had experienced in Persia to the inhabitants of the land (see *ibid.*, 32). Succinctly, for him the colonized *Yehud* became the colonizers themselves when they wrote the biblical books.

⁴⁶ A case in point is the validation of the unjust military occupation by the Israelites of the so-called "Promised Land" that was being occupied that time by the poor Canaanites; see for example Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997). Surprisingly, instead of castigating the Israelites for staging wars with peaceful dwellers, the Bible justifies this dispossession of their enemies' land and explains it as God's punishment on the pagans for not believing on the one true God. For postcolonial biblical critics, hence, the Bible can be an imperializing text. Indeed, this only validates the old adage that history (or any recorded work) is written by the victors. Sandra M. Schneiders, *Written that You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 129, adapted this dictum to the Bible, saying: "The biblical text, like other historical documents, was written by the 'historical winners,' who virtually never write the story but their story."

⁴⁷ Ethnocentrism, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is "the attitude that one's own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others," accessed January 17, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethnocentrism>.

immediately notice its “Jewish” character, as well as its immense interest in the Jews even at the expense of other groups of people. Alan Culpepper qualifies this Jewish association to the Fourth Gospel appropriately: “we mean that the Gospel originated in a context that was shaped by Judaism; the Evangelist sees the world and thinks in Jewish categories.”⁴⁸ Additionally, the lexeme *Ioudaioi* is present 71 times in the Fourth Gospel while the other ethnic groups are only found 11 times, combined: *Samaritai* (6), *Hellēnes* (3), *Rhōmaioi* (1), and *Galilairoi* (1).⁴⁹ This frequency reveals the evangelist’s special attention to the *Ioudaioi*, magnified by the fact that they are presented as one of the main interlocutors of Jesus in the Gospel.

However, the Jews were at odds with Jesus even from the beginning of the Gospel (see Jn. 2:18, 20). The height of their controversy is seen in John 8 when the Jews identified the Jewish-born Jesus to be a Samaritan. As seen above, this does not mean a concrete reference to the ethnicity of Jesus since it may be used only as an *ad hominem* attack to tarnish his reputation. Regardless of the motive behind Jn. 8:48 the Jews did not like Jesus being associated with them. They even qualified him as belonging to an ethnic group that has an alleged history of infidelity, immorality, and pagan [even diabolic] worship, which for the great part is a result of their one-sided interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

The description in 2 Kings 17 that the people in Samaria were paganized may be true but is completely anachronistic to the first century CE. Stereotyping people to a specific ethnic trait on

⁴⁸ R. Alan Culpepper, “Anti-Judaism as a Theological Problem,” in *Anti-Judaism*, 69. Furthermore, he also underlines the “Jewishness of John’s theology” which “affirms the heritage of Israel as foundational to salvation, affirms that the Logos worked through Jews, and affirms a hope for the salvation of Jews along with all people” (*ibid.*, 75).

⁴⁹ I consider *Ioudaioi*, *Samaritai*, *Hellēnes*, *Rhōmaioi*, and *Galilairoi* as ethnic groups because they all meet the criteria of the *ethno-symbolic* approach of ethnicity that I adhere to. Popularized by Anthony D. Smith, it understands an ethnic group as having (1) “a common proper name,” (2) “a myth of common ancestry,” (3) “shared historical memories,” (4) “one or more elements of common culture,” (5) “a link with a homeland,” and (6) “a sense of solidarity” (see Hutchinson and Smith, *Ethnicity*, 6–7).

account of what occurred more than 700 years earlier is a manifestation of an ethnocentric attitude. Likewise, the Samaritans showed their dissociation from the Jews as insinuated in John 4. The Samaritan woman's initial antagonistic behavior and words against the Jewish Jesus underscore the ethnic dislike between the Jews and the Samaritans.

Indeed, between them is a long history of antagonism and the ethnic struggle for rightful representation. Both of them claim to be the true sons of Abraham, bearers of the Mosaic commandments, possessors of the Scriptures, and proprietors of the rightful mountain where Yahweh is to be properly worshipped.⁵⁰ Yet, since we present-day readers are reading this ethnic conflict in the Gospel of John, which is arguably the most Jewish text among the New Testament books in the Bible, it is safe to say that what we are reading is influenced by the Jews themselves more than the Samaritans.⁵¹ Nowhere in the Gospel of John can we find that the evangelist justifies the Samaritans' set of beliefs, practices, and rebuttals against the Jews. Meanwhile, though we find therein verses with anti-Jewish potential,⁵² present in the

⁵⁰ In contrast to the biblical stories that put the Samaritans in a negative light, the Samaritans perceived themselves as the original bearers of the true Israel title while the Jews as the real apostates. As a matter of fact, their name Samaritans may be derived from its literal meaning in Hebrew (*sāmēri'im*), i.e., "keepers [of the law]"; see Anderson, "The Samaritans," 941a. This claim is elucidated by the fact that it was the Jews who polluted pure Yahwism beginning with the digression of the sons of Eli (1 Sm. 2:11–36) when they put up a separate sanctuary in Shiloh while the Samaritans have maintained the cult established by Aaron; see Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans: A Profile* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2016), 17. Indeed, more and more scholars promote that the Samaritans hold to a more authentic form of Yahwism than the Jews, viz., Moses Gaster, John MacDonald, Bernd Jørg Diebner, Étienne Nodet, and Reinhard Pummer; see Alan D. Crown, "Redating the Schism between the Judaeans and the Samaritans," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 82, no. 1–2 (1991): 8–25.

⁵¹ This description, however, does not posit that the Fourth Gospel is written for the Jews. It is still debatable as to whether it is intended for the Jews, Christians, or Gentiles; see survey of discussions in Ruth B. Edwards, *Discovering John: Content, interpretation, reception*, repr. (London: SPCK, 2014), 45–58.

⁵² This was the consensus of the scholars who participated in the research program "The Gospel of John and Jewish-Christian Dialogue: An Interdisciplinary Investigation of the Theology of Jewish Christian Relations Taking John 8:31–59

Gospel are several verses that legitimize the status of the Jews as the Chosen People of God. One of the most utilized verses to support this claim is Jesus' statement in Jn. 4:22b that salvation is from the Jews.⁵³

Jesus in the Gospel of John, particularly in chapters 4 and 8, was torn between associating himself with the Jews, on the one hand, and with the Samaritans on the other. What is surprising is that on both occasions that he was ethnically identified (4:9 and 8:48), Jesus did not negate nor accede to the appellations. Also, instead of denying outright his interlocutors' self-appropriated ethnic identifications, he acknowledged that the Samaritans are Samaritans (he stayed two days in their Samaritan village in 4:40) and the Jews are Jews (he recognized them as true descendants of Abraham in 8:37, 56) in the first place. Yet, he challenged both of them to re-appropriate the true meaning of their ethnic lineage, as if to say: Yes, you are what you think you are, but will it be beneficial to all if you continue to think that way?

The Johannine Jesus then is presented as somebody conscious of his betwixt position. Instead of correcting this or realigning to the favored ethnic group, he remained in such a precarious but advantageous liminal location, being the best position to question the ethnic identities of his interlocutors. Traceable in this behavior of Jesus is the person of the "hybrid" as understood and proposed by Bhabha. As a hybrid mimics the traits of the colonizing people, Jesus affirmed *a priori* the historical role of the Jews in salvation and seemingly agreed with the Jewish label given to him by the Samaritan woman. As a hybrid is likewise associated with the colonized people, Jesus allowed himself to be called a "Samaritan" and even spent some days in their community. As a hybrid disturbs the hegemony of the ruling class, Jesus

as Starting Point" held in Leuven, Belgium on January 17-18, 2000 (see Bieringer et al., *Anti-Judaism*, 37).

⁵³ For an exploration of Jn. 4:22 with regards to its varied meanings and implications to Jewish-Christian relations, see Gilbert Van Belle, "Salvation is from the Jews': The Parenthesis in Jn. 4,22," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel: Papers from the Leuven Colloquium, January 2000*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Jewish and Christian Heritage Series; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 368-98.

questioned the very foundation of the Jewish religious leadership on the land. As hybrid rallies the ruled people to resist against the colonizers for their right of group-representation, Jesus empowered the Samaritan villagers by offering them equal salvation as metaphorically symbolized by the “living water.” As a hybrid unveils the existence of a “Third Space”—an unbiased position where a dialogue that redefines properly ethnic identities, respects cultural differences and denounces any form of marginalization can take place—Jesus consciously led both the Jews and Samaritans into a liminal condition of open encounter and redefinition of their ethnicities.

However, the process of hybridity is to be comprehended not as the end of the line; rather, it is a mere situation/moment, albeit the ideal one, in starting the continuous process of ethnic identification. Appropriately, the Johannine Jesus did not give ready answers to both the Jews and Samaritans on their ethnicities; he simply facilitated the beginning of their redefinition of identities that respects differences and does not marginalize ethnic outgroups.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this study, the primary question posed was “Does Early Christianity see itself as a part of one of its contemporaneous ethnic groups or not?” This study attempted to answer this question by discussing first the definition of ethnicity. Apparently, the trajectory of discourse in ethnic studies is a move away from primordialism toward instrumentalism. This study explicitly subscribes to the latter frame of mind, asserting consequently the fluidity of ethnic identification in Early Christianity, which both Balch and Horrell adhere to as corroborated in some Lukan texts and New Testament epistles, respectively.

Concretely, this study delved into the Fourth Gospel, focusing on Jn. 4:4–42 and Jn. 8:12–59. In both pericopæ, the Johannine Jesus is observably in a precarious position of being in the “in-between” position of being identified with either the Jews and the Samaritans. Conversely, he refused to be categorically

associated with neither ethnic group but consciously challenged both groups into a redefinition of their ethnic identities that respect differences, promote rightful representation, and avoid the marginalization of outgroups.

This study perceives that this emancipating activity of the Johannine Jesus is comparable to the mechanics of hybridization which the postcolonial thinker Bhabha has advocated. In hybridization, the so-called “hybrid” in the “in-between” position refuses to identify himself/herself to cultural stereotypes, but proactively leads all stakeholders (the colonizer and the colonized) into a liminal condition called the “Third Space” where they can begin to redefine openly their ethnicities. Accordingly, the hybrid Johannine Jesus, discontent with the concurrent ethnic dynamics and determination, consciously led both his Jewish and Samaritan interlocutors into a liminal condition (quite similar to a “Third Space”) of suspending their prejudices and stereotypes against each other where the rightful redefinition of their ethnicities would gradually embark.

Applying what we discovered in the Fourth Gospel to the greater picture of Early Christianity and complementing the positions of Balch and Horrell that ethnic identity in Early Christianity is something fluid, we can claim that this study contributes to the strengthening of the assumption that Early Christianity did not see itself as part of any of its concurrent ethnic groups since ethnicity is something that is malleable and its parameters are porous. Furthermore, it may be challenging its contemporaneous ethnic groups to redefine their identities as the Johannine Jesus exemplified. Still, there is a need for more specialized studies to arrive at more definitive conclusions on this matter. Nonetheless, this study has proved that the Gospel of John possesses rich materials for the ongoing discussion of ethnicity in Early Christianity.

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