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**The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans:  
What can be Said?**

Books on the historical Jesus regularly treat Jesus’ relationship to various Jewish groups and movements of the time, especially the Pharisees[1](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#1). Relatively rare, though, in books on the historical Jesus is a detailed consideration of the relationship of the *historical Jesus* to the *historical* Samaritans. I stress the adjective *historical* in each case because in this qualifier lie the rub and the problem. If treatments of the historical Jesus even advert to the question of the Samaritans, the Samaritans are often described in uncritical fashion, with the narrative of 2 Kgs 17 and later polemics being taken more or less uncritically as sober history[2](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#2). In contrast, those studies of the Samaritans which sift

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in critical fashion the evidence about this group tend, when they come to the question of Jesus, either to take the Gospel material at face value or to list in catalogue-style the various statements of each Gospel[3](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#3). Rarely is an attempt made to separate Christian theology from material that may go back to the historical Jesus.

        The present essay seeks to remedy this situation by asking (1) what can be said with fair probability about the historical Samaritans up to the 1st century A.D. and then (2) what can be said with fair probability about the historical Jesus’ relationship to or interaction with these Samaritans. Even if the results of this investigation are largely negative, we shall be left in a better scholarly position than those who rely upon vague or uncritical generalizations. I begin, therefore, with an attempt to define what is meant or should be meant by ‘Samaritans’.

I. Samaritans: Problems of Terminology and Definition

        One point must be made clear from the start: our goal in this essay is not a general and all-encompassing treatment of the Samaritans[4](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#4).

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Our focus is instead a narrow one: Jesus *in relation to* the Samaritans. Granted this restriction, what do we mean when we speak about the *Samaritans* who might have interacted with Jesus? The label *Samaritan* is a slippery one:

        (1) One might define Samaritans in terms of *geography*: Samaritans were the inhabitants of the region called Samaria, located in 1st-century Palestine to the north of Judea and to the south of Galilee on the western side of the Jordan River. Its capital city was also originally called Samaria, though in the 1st century B.C. Herod the Great had rebuilt it and renamed it Sebaste in honor of Augustus Caesar (the Greek equivalent of *Augustus* being *Sebastos* [5](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#5)). As we shall see, the population group defined in these geographical terms might better be called ‘Samarians’[6](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#6).

        (2) One might also define the Samaritans in terms of *physical descent* or *ethnic makeup*: Samaritans were the presumed descendants of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (main components of

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the northern kingdom of Israel), with some admixture over the centuries of non-Israelite groups from the Assyrian and Hellenistic empires. As a matter of fact, by the 1st century A.D., the region of Samaria was inhabited by a number of different ethnic groups, the exact percentages of which are not known[7](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#7). They probably included Samaritans (in the third sense defined below), Jews, other indigenous Semitic populations of the Syrian-Palestinian region that had been Hellenized, descendants of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian ruling classes, and descendants of the Greek conquerors from the time of Alexander the Great.

        (3) One might also define the Samaritans in terms of their *religion*: Samaritans were those Semites (a) who worshiped the God YHWH, (b) but who, in distinction from mainstream Jews, revered Mt. Gerizim (near ancient Shechem in Samaria) instead of Mt. Zion in Jerusalem as the one valid place to build an altar or temple for the public worship of Yahweh, (c) who maintained that their line of Levitical priests functioning on Mt. Gerizim were the legitimate priests of the Mosaic dispensation, as opposed to the priests functioning in the Jerusalem temple, and (d) who accepted only the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) as authoritative Scripture, to the exclusion of the still fluid corpus of the Prophets and the Writings developing alongside the Pentateuch in mainstream Judaism. Part of the problem here is that these three ways of defining Samaritans partially overlap while not perfectly coinciding with one another.

        Since the Gospels naturally tend to view the Samaritans from a religious point of view, and since some elements of the religious definition of Samaritans peek through the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 (the longest single treatment of Samaritans in the Gospels), in what follows I will use the religious definition as best suited to the purposes of our quest. Another reason for using the religious definition is that it avoids the pitfall of imagining that everyone who lived in the region of Samaria was a Samaritan in the religious sense of the term. By the 1st century A.D., as I have indicated above, there were notable pockets of Hellenized pagans in Samaria, especially in its capital city of Sebaste (the OT city of Samaria). Such pagans were ‘Samarians’ geographically but not ‘Samaritans’ religiously.

        Beyond the minimal definition of Samaritan religion sketched above, it is difficult to be precise about the details of Samaritan religion

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in the 1st century A.D. Religious writings by Samaritans themselves date from centuries later, the earliest compositions coming from the 3rd or 4th century A.D. Our major sources from the 1st century A.D. are Josephus and (secondarily) Luke-Acts and the Gospel of John. None of these gives us a disinterested picture of the Samaritans. In particular, Josephus’ account, in the estimation of most critics, is hostile to the Samaritans, though it is unclear whether we should place the hostility at the door of the author or of his sources[8](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#8). Paradoxically, then, we might almost count it a blessing that so few passages in the NT mention the Samaritans in relation to Jesus, since our ignorance of 1st-century Samaritanism would leave us ill-equipped to exegete a large body of Gospel material on the subject.

II. Samaritans: The Problem of Their Historical Origins

        If we define Samaritans in the religious terms sketched above (i.e., the third definition), any attempt to determine when and how the Samaritans emerged as a distinct group is fraught with difficulty. In the ancient period, both Samaritans and Jews created narratives describing the Samaritans’ origins, but neither narrative tradition is historically reliable. In a glorious anachronism, traditional Samaritan theology places the basic split between Samaritanism and Judaism as far back as the 11th century B.C., at the time of the priest Eli (active toward the end of the period of the Judges according to 1 Sam 1,9–4,18)[9](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#9). The wicked Eli is said to have moved the sanctuary from its true locus, Mt. Gerizim near Shechem, to Shiloh. Eli thus created both an illegitimate place of worship and an illegitimate priesthood. All future antagonism between Samaritans and Jews is traced to this

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primordial break with authentic Israelite religion, centered on Mt. Gerizim and preserved by the Samaritans, the direct descendants of the Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

        The Jewish version of events is not so wildly anachronistic, but neither is it historically accurate. Strictly speaking, the OT never applies the term ‘Samaritans’ to the special religious group centered around the cult place located on Mt. Gerizim. In the OT, the Hebrew term commonly translated by modern scholars as ‘Samaritans’ (*has$s$o4mero4n|<m*) occurs only at 2 Kgs 17,29, within a highly polemical passage. In v. 29, the noun *has$s$o4mero4n|<m* simply means ‘the inhabitants of Samaria’, who are said to have created ‘high places’ for false worship in the northern kingdom of Israel[10](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#10).

        This text in turn is part of a larger tendentious narrative, 2 Kgs 17,2-41, which has gone through a number of stages of tradition and redaction[11](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#11). In its present state, the text tells a clear though inaccurate story. According to this narrative, the northern kingdom of Israel, because of its terrible sin of idolatry, was destroyed by Yahweh. (Samaria [*s$o4mero=n*], the capital city, was in fact captured by the Assyrians in 722/721 B.C.) The Assyrians sent Israel (presumably most or all of the northern kingdom’s population is meant) into exile, an exile apparently viewed as permanent. The Assyrians then brought into

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the former northern kingdom various foreign populations to settle ‘the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel’ (2 Kgs 17,24). When, out of ignorance, these new groups did not worship YHWH, ‘the God of the land’, YHWH sent lions to kill some of them. The king of Assyria remedied the situation by sending back one of the deported Israelite priests to teach the new settlers ‘the proper way to worship the God of the land’ (2 Kgs 17,27). In v. 28, the priest is said to settle at Bethel (not Shechem or Mt. Gerizim), the cult site that the OT regularly regards as the center of the idolatrous worship of the northern kingdom (cf. 1 Kgs 12–13; Amos 7,10-17; Jer 48,13). The result — at least according to the OT narrative — was that the new settlers adopted a syncretistic polytheism that offered sacrifice to YHWH alongside the various national gods brought in by the mixed population. Perhaps with a side glance and swipe at the religious group we call the Samaritans, the final redactor of 2 Kgs 17 concludes his narrative with the following summation: ‘And these nations worship [literally, ‘fear’] YHWH, but they [also] serve their idols — [as do] also their sons and the sons of their sons. As did their fathers, [so] do they until this very day’ (2 Kgs 17,41).

        Josephus backs ups and elaborates upon this polemical narrative in *Ant.* 9.277-291. Indeed, his retelling of the story is the first unambiguous use of 2 Kgs 17 as anti-Samaritan propaganda. Josephus makes a point of describing the newly installed immigrants in the northern kingdom as coming from Chouthos (= OT Kuthah), which Josephus claims is in Persia. Hence he refers to them as ‘Chutheans’ or ‘Chuthites’ (Xouqai=oiin 9.288), a name he then applies to the Samaritans (9.290). Josephus makes this identification in a context in which he highlights the syncretistic rites that he claims have continued among the Chutheans-alias-Samaritans down to his own day. Thus does Josephus create a clear link between the Samaritans of his own time and the descendants of the pagans settled by the Assyrians in the former northern kingdom. Understandably, Josephus’ statements in the *Antiquities*, traditionally understood as hostile references, had a great impact on all subsequent understanding of the Samaritans, since, taken as a whole, his narratives about the Samaritans constitute the largest single written source from around the turn of the era[12](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#12).

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        While good propaganda, this version of events is bad history. Sifting through the literary sources and the archaeological remains, many present-day historians hold that only a small part of the population of the northern kingdom of Israel was actually exiled by the Assyrians[13](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#13). Primary targets of the Assyrian policy would have been the upper classes, especially in the capital city of Samaria. Correspondingly, those foreigners who were then brought into the former northern kingdom were probably settled in a few urban areas, the most notable being the capital city, where a new ruling class was installed. In subsequent Palestinian history, it was often this ruling class in Samaria (best called ‘Samarians’) that came into conflict with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Most of the population in the rural areas and small towns of the former northern kingdom would have probably remained native Israelite. In sum, then, 2 Kgs 17 gives us no direct information about the cultic community centered on Mt. Gerizim that the NT calls ‘Samaritans’.

        Consequently, how a historian is supposed to get from 2 Kgs 17 and its tendentious description of Israelite history after the destruction of the northern kingdom to the emergence of the Samaritans as a distinct religious group a few centuries before Jesus is hard to say. Our sources give us little hard data about the state of things in the former northern kingdom during most of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian rule of Palestine (i.e., from the 8th to the 4th century B.C.). What can be said is that there are no positive indications of a cultic group identifiable with the Samaritans or of any ‘schism’ between such a group and Jerusalem. While the precise historical details of the religious reform of King Josiah of Judah (reigned 640-609 B.C.) are still debated among scholars, it seems clear that his attempts to win northern Israelites back to the Jerusalem temple did not collide with any rival cult at Shechem or with any cultic group we could equate with the Samaritans of the NT period. Indeed, the Book of Deuteronomy or some part thereof apparently played an important role in Josiah’s reforms; that same book wound up as part of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Moreover, within the Masoretic Text of Deuteronomy, Mt. Gerizim is mentioned (11,29; 27,12) without any censure or slur. In fact, in both passages, Mt. Gerizim is associated with the positive cultic ritual of pronouncing

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blessings, while Mt. Ebal opposite it is connected with the ritual of pronouncing curses. Clearly, the supposed ‘schism’ between Samaritans and worshipers of Yahweh in the kingdom of Judah had not yet taken place (if it ever did). Likewise telling is the consistent attitude of the southern prophets before, during, and after the Babylonian exile (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah). In the writings attributed to them, hope is expressed for the restoration and union of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This hope contravenes any idea that the northern tribes had been permanently and irrevocably contaminated by some polytheistic or syncretistic pagan religion. Neither do we find in these prophetic writings any idea of the ‘ten lost tribes’ of northern Israel, exiled from their land by the Assyrians (contrast the presence of this idea in 4 Ezra 13,40, written at the end of the 1st century A.D.).

        After the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the leaders of the southern kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians (587/586 B.C.), and after some Judeans (i.e., ‘Jews’) were allowed to return to Jerusalem under subsequent Persian rule (Cyrus began his rule in Babylon in 539/538 B.C.), we hear of the efforts of Nehemiah and Ezra to rebuild the walls and temple of Jerusalem as well as to dissolve mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews[14](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#14). In this endeavor, they meet opposition from various adversaries, including the political officials ruling in Samaria. The narrative in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah is muddled, and the chronological problems it raises are intractable. Suffice it to say that there is no clear evidence that the opposition Nehemiah and Ezra faced at various times in the 5th and the 4th centuries B.C. came mainly from a distinct religious group centered around Mt. Gerizim and known as the Samaritans[15](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#15). To be sure, that Samaritans were the main source of opposition is how Jews and Christians of a later date came to read and

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tell the story (so, e.g., Josephus in *Ant*. 11.19-30 and 11.84-119). But from Third Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah, and Ezra, modern historians discern instead indications of internecine quarrels among various Jewish groups in the south, notably between those Jews who had returned from the Babylonian exile and those Jews who had been left behind in Judah. Mixed up with these quarrels was the friction between the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and the local rulers in Samaria, acting as agents of their Persian overlords. What should be noted is that the group the NT calls Samaritans is totally absent from the OT narrative of these disputes.

        Some scholars claim that a ray of light is shed on the Samaritans during the murky Persian period by 5th-century papyri emanating from the Jewish colony of Elephantine in Egypt. To request aid in the rebuilding of their own temple, which had been destroyed, these Egyptian Jews sent letters both to Bagoas, the governor — and hence imperial agent — of Judea and to Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, likewise an agent of the Persian empire. Far from indicating that a ‘schism’ had already taken place between Jews and Samaritans, this correspondence tells us nothing about Samaritans understood in a religious sense. As R.J. Coggins points out, the city of Samaria, to which the letter is sent (as well as to Jerusalem), was a center of local political power, but was never the center of the Samaritan religion or priesthood. Mt. Gerizim near Shechem was[16](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#16).

        Likewise less than enlightening are Josephus’ accounts of the origin of the Samaritan temple at the end of the Persian period and the dealings of both Samaritan and Jewish priests with Alexander the Great[17](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#17). These stories are so laced with legendary elements that historians are divided on what if anything can be salvaged as reliable

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historical data[18](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#18). Some authors suggest that, when Alexander destroyed the city of Samaria because of a revolt against his rule, large numbers of its inhabitants fled to Shechem, which was in fact rebuilt ca. 331 B.C.[19](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#19). This in turn may have led to Shechem’s becoming a religious center of the emerging Samaritan religion. But we must admit that at this point we are mostly in the realm of speculation. Perhaps the greatest lesson to be drawn from all these frustrating attempts to sketch the origins of Samaritanism is that one must carefully and consistently distinguish ‘Samarians’, the inhabitants and rulers of the city and territory known as Samaria, from ‘Samaritans’, the adherents of an Israelite religious group centered around Mt. Gerizim/Shechem. If this distinction is maintained, a review of the available evidence only underlines our ignorance of the origins of the Samaritan religion prior to the Hellenistic period.

        With all this uncertainty, it is not surprising that scholars disagree on when or how the Samaritans came to build their temple on Mt. Gerizim. Some (e.g., A. Spiro, B. Reicke) place the event toward the end of the Persian period, perhaps ca. 388 B.C.[20](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#20). Others prefer a later date in the 4th century, soon after the beginning of the Hellenistic period inaugurated by Alexander the Great[21](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#21). The exact site of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Gerizim has so far eluded archaeologists, and some scholars suggest that the cult site was much more modest in size than Josephus’ remarks might lead us to expect. In this regard, it is well to remember that Samaritan traditions stress the holiness of Mt. Gerizim and the altar Moses supposedly commanded to be built there,

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and not a temple building as such. This stands in contrast to the OT and later Jewish traditions that focused on the temple built on Mt. Zion[22](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#22).

        Interestingly, in line with this point, no Samaritan temple is mentioned in the first Jewish (and deuterocanonical) text that clearly refers to the Samaritans (though not by that name). This highly polemical text, Sir 50,25-26, forms part of the end of the Book of Ben Sira (if we may put aside the text-critically problematic chap. 51). In Sir 50,25-26, we read, according to the Hebrew text preserved in manuscript B, a couplet in the form of a numerical proverb[23](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#23): ‘My soul loathes two nations [*gôyîm*], and the third is not [even] a people [*(am*]: those who dwell in Seir [= Edom] and Philistia, and the foolish nation [*go=y na4ba4l*] that lives in Shechem’ [24](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#24).

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        The Hebrew text contains a number of philological problems. For instance, should one press *na4ba4l* (‘foolish’) to carry the weighty sense of one who rebels against God or denies the existence and power of the true God — thus implying that the Samaritans, by their use of a rival sanctuary, in effect reject the true God of Israel? And should one see here the distinction, common in later Jewish texts, between *gôyîm* understood as ‘Gentiles’ and *(am* understood as the chosen people Israel? In any event, by putting those who dwell at Shechem in the same basic category as the Edomites and the Philistines, traditional enemies of Israel, Sir 50,25-26 apparently intends to deny the Samaritans any claim to be part of Israel, the chosen people of God. Perhaps Ben Sira shares the view of the final redactor of 2 Kgs 17, who, as we have seen, implies that the Samaritans are a mixed race practicing a polytheistic religion. As we have also seen, Josephus is completely in accord with this tendency, which he underscores by calling the Samaritans ‘Chutheans’, i.e., people from the region of Kuthah, one of the pagan populations brought in by the king of Assyria after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel (see 2 Kgs 17,24)[25](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#25).

        Muddled accounts of the Samaritans and their religious stance continue down into Hasmonean times and beyond. We are told, for instance, in 2 Macc 6,2 (cf. 5,23) that, under pressure from the Hellenizing policies of the Seleucid monarch Antiochus IV (175-164 B.C.), the Samaritans accepted Hellenistic influence in their sanctuary by naming their temple *Zeus Xenios* (Zeus the Friend of Strangers)[26](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#26).

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The text does not say explicitly that the Samaritans took the initiative in requesting this name for their temple. Not surprisingly, in *Ant.* 12.257-264, Josephus gives a more hostile version of events: the Samaritans disown all kinship with and similarity to the Jews and willingly petition Antiochus IV to have their unnamed temple named *Zeus Helle4nios* (the Greek Zeus). The historical fact may simply be that the Samaritans, feeling themselves in a perilous position, did not resist Antiochus’ Hellenizing policies with the same zeal as that shown by Judas Maccabeus and his followers. In any event, after the triumph of the Hasmonean leaders over the Seleucids, relations between Samaritans and Jews went from bad to worse. The ambitious Hasmonean rulers extended their territory to include Samaria; but, unlike some of the native populations elsewhere (e.g., Idumea), the Samaritans refused to be coopted by the Judaism of Jerusalem. A climax in the deterioration of relations was reached during the reign of the Hasmonean monarch and high priest John Hyrcanus, who destroyed the Samaritan sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim in 128 B.C. and the town of Shechem ca. 107 B.C.[27](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#27). From this time onward, relations between Samaritans and Jews were extremely strained, although the ups and downs of subsequent history brought them at times into more amicable dealings with each other.

        Looking back on this obscure and tangled history, we should at least learn to avoid certain facile statements found at times in both popular and scholarly presentations. For example, writers often argue over when the ‘schism’ between Samaritans and Judaism took place. The more cautious commentators rightly reject the idea of a single break at one moment in time. They prefer to speak of a gradual drifting apart or a series of breaks interwoven with occasional and temporary

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rapprochements. But one must ask whether the very concept of ‘schism’ is appropriate here. ‘Schism’ presupposes some original unity or union. If we are speaking of Samaritans and *Jews*, we must ask in what sense these two groups were ever united. This question in turn brings us back to our initial problem of terminology and definitions. ‘Jews’ ('Ioudai=oi in Greek, *yehûdîm* in Hebrew, *yehu=da4)|<n* in Aramaic) take their name from the tribe of Judah and the territory referred to in Hellenistic and Roman times as Judea ('Ioudai/a in Greek, *yehûdâ* in Hebrew, *yehûd* in Aramaic)[28](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#28). After the Babylonian exile in the 6th century B.C., some of the ‘Jews’ who had been exiled from Judah to Babylonia returned to their native land in Palestine, many with the specific intention of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple on Mt. Zion. There they interacted with various natives of Judea who had not been forced into exile; the interaction was not always a happy one[29](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#29). If one understands the phrase ‘Palestinian Jews’ to designate the ethnic-geographical-religious community that resulted from these events and interaction, and if one understands the distinctive religious practices and beliefs of this community to constitute ‘Palestinian Judaism’, then Samaritans, descended in some sense from a number of the northern tribes of Israel (most likely Ephraim and Manasseh) and focused religiously on the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim, never belonged to the group we label Palestinian Jews and never practiced the corresponding religion we call Judaism. In keeping with this historical situation as well as with their self-understanding, the Samaritans refer to themselves in their major religious works as ‘Israel’ but not as ‘Jews’[30](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#30).

        Perhaps, then, a better way of conceiving of the state of affairs around the turn of the era is to maintain that both Samaritanism and Judaism were latter-day forms of the ancient religion of Israel, a Palestinian religion that believed in and worshiped the God YHWH as

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the unique God of Israel according to the prescriptions contained in the five books of Moses. Over the centuries, this religion had developed distinctive practices such as circumcision of infants, the prohibition of eating pork, the observance of every seventh day as a day of rest, an emphasis on the need to have one central sanctuary, and annual celebrations of special feasts of pilgrimage to this central sanctuary (e.g., Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles). This core religion of Israel experienced various traumas, transformations, and developments under the assaults and influences of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic empires.

        During the last centuries before the turn of the era — though at different times and in different ways — Samaritanism and Judaism emerged from the crucible of all this historical turmoil as two major expressions of the ancient religion of Israel, the ancient worship of Yahweh. Neither religion was immediately derived from the other and neither broke away from the other[31](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#31). There was no one, definitive moment of schism[32](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#32). Indeed, in a real sense, there was no schism at all. This helps explain the strange symbiosis of the these two latter-day forms of ancient Israelite religion, at times in fierce opposition to each other, at times in uneasy rapprochement[33](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#33).

        It is within this unclear and fluctuating situation in the 1st century

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A.D. that we must place the few Gospel texts that speak of Jesus’ relation to the Samaritans. Before we begin, though, one point should be emphasized. From all we have seen, we can already exclude one popular presentation of the Samaritan religion in the 1st century A.D.: namely, that it was a type of syncretistic polytheism combined with Jewish elements. Far from being polytheists in practice or belief, the Samaritans tended to represent a rather conservative expression of Israelite religion, more rigorous than many Jews in their observance of the Sabbath and more wary of religious innovations — a characteristic that may partly explain their restriction of the canon of sacred books to the Pentateuch. As for syncretism, to the cold eye of the historian of religions, the Samaritans would probably have appeared no more syncretistic than their Jewish or later Christian neighbors in the eastern Mediterranean world.

III. Samaritans: The Problems of the Gospel Texts

        The canonical Gospels offer relatively little material on Jesus and the Samaritans. What they do offer stands in basic agreement with what we know from sources outside the NT. At the same time, though, the passages dealing with Samaritans in the Gospels add nothing essentially new to our knowledge of the Samaritans. Moreover, as many exegetical studies indicate, the Gospel references to Samaritans may tell us more about the situation of the early church as it pursued its mission in Palestine than they do about the historical Jesus [34](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#34). The easiest way to gain an overview of what, if anything, these references may tell us about Jesus’ relation to the Samaritans is to undertake a rapid survey of each Gospel or Gospel source in turn[35](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#35):

        1. ‘Samaria’ and ‘Samaritans’ do not occur at all in either Mark or Q, our two earliest written sources of Gospel material. This in itself may serve as an initial indicator that Jesus’ interaction with Samaritans was probably not all that extensive. This point is confirmed indirectly by Matthew.

        2. In Matthew, ‘Samaritans’ occurs only in the negative command Jesus gives the Twelve at the beginning of the missionary discourse

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(Matt 10,5b-6): ‘Do not go to the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of Samaritans (ei)j po/lin Samaritw=n mh\_ ei)se/lqhte); go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (poreu/esqe de\_ ma=llon pro\_j ta\_ pro/bata ta\_ a)polwlo/ta oi!kou 'Israh/l)’. While one cannot prove absolutely that this saying is a product of the early church — possibly created by stringently conservative Christian Jews who opposed a wider mission to Samaritans and Gentiles — any claim that these words come from the historical Jesus faces a number of difficulties.

        (a) As it stands, Matthew’s missionary discourse (10,5-42) is a creation of Matthew himself, who has conflated the missionary discourses found in Mark and Q. (This a commonplace in NT exegesis that can be demonstrated easily enough by comparing the missionary discourses in Mark 6,7-11; Matt 10,5-42; Luke 9,3-5; and Luke 10,2-12 [36](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#36)). Yet the prohibition of a mission to Gentiles or Samaritans

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spoken in Matt 10,5b-6 is found in neither the Marcan nor the Q form of the discourse. Clearly, then, Matthew himself has chosen to insert this prohibition into the traditional missionary discourses that he has inherited and combined. Consequently, the key prohibition of entering a Samaritan town must come either from Matthew’s redactional creativity or from his special M tradition.

        (b) An argument in favor of the prohibition being a purely Matthean creation might be constructed on the basis of a parallel logion found later in the Gospel. At 15,24, Matthew inserts a similar negative statement into his reworked version of Mark’s story of the Syrophoenician woman who begs Jesus to exorcise her daughter (Mark 7,24-30). (To be exact: the Syrophoenician woman of Mark’s story becomes a Canaanite woman in Matthew’s version, Matt 15,21-28.) Only in the Matthean form of the story (at Matt 15,24) does Jesus apply to himself a description that echoes his command to the Twelve in Matt 10,6: ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (ou)k a)pesta/lhn ei) mh\_ ei)j ta\_ pro/bata ta\_ a)polwlo/ta oi!kou 'Israh/l). Since Matt 15,24 is not only a Matthean insertion into the Marcan story but also clearly a product of Matthew’s own creative activity (and not a traditional logion) as he redacts this Marcan pericope, the suspicion arises that the same is true of the insertion of Matt 10,5b-6 into the Marcan and Q traditions of the missionary discourse. However, the case is far from clear. The presence in 10,5b-6 of a number of rare words or phrases gives one pause. The phrase ‘to the Gentiles’ (ei)j o(do\_n e)qnw=n) occurs only here in the NT, and ‘a city of Samaritans’ (po/lin Samaritw=n) occurs only here in Matthew. Hence the presence of M tradition that Matthew has redacted for his own purposes is a possibility, some would say even a probability[37](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#37).

        (c) I might also add as an aside: I consider at least the saying in Matt 15,24 unhistorical in its present context, since, in Volume Two of my study of the historical Jesus, I have already decided on other grounds that the underlying Marcan story about the Syrophoenician woman does not reach back to the historical Jesus. A fortiori, that must be true of Matthew’s editorial addition to the story[38](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#38).

        While these considerations do not prove beyond a doubt that Matt 10,5b-6 does not go back to the historical Jesus, they do place the

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burden of proof on anyone who would make that claim[39](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#39). My own view is that this saying is more likely a product of some group within the first Christian generation that opposed widening the proclamation of the gospel to groups other than Jews. Still, one must note an important paradox here. The saying in Matt 10,5b-6 may not be ‘authentic’ in the sense of having been said by the historical Jesus. Yet it may be ‘authentic’ in a broader sense. Namely, if we may put aside the question of the intentions of its creator(s), the saying seems to reflect accurately what in fact happened during the public ministry: neither Jesus nor his immediate disciples pursued a formal, programmatic mission to the Samaritans *as a group* in the way that they pursued such a mission to their fellow Jews in Galilee and Judea. In addition, we should take note of the telling point of view presupposed in Matt 10,5b-6: Samaritans are not Gentiles, but neither do they belong to ‘the house of Israel’ — even to those Israelites considered ‘lost’[40](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#40). Thus, the saying in Matt 10,5b-6, coming probably from Christian Jews of the first generation of the church, captures well the ambiguous status and marginality of Samaritans in the eyes of both Christians and Jews in the 1st century A.D.

        The fact that Jesus did not undertake a formal mission to the Samaritans as a group does not, however, exclude the possibility of occasional encounters with or references to Samaritans — which is precisely what we find in the Gospels of Luke and John. Nevertheless, while they supply more extensive references to Samaritans, Luke and John must be approached with suspicion as sources for the historical Jesus’ interaction with Samaritans. Of all the NT authors, it is only Luke (explicitly) and John (implicitly) who refer to Christians preaching the gospel to Samaritans in the early days of the church (see Acts 1,8; 8,1,5-25; 15,3; cf. John 4,35-38). The possibility that Christian history is being read back into the public ministry of Jesus is

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thus quite real. 3. Luke mentions Samaritans both in narratives about Jesus and in the words of Jesus[41](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#41):

        (a) The narrative material includes the healing of the ten lepers, one of whom turns out to be a Samaritan (Luke 17,11-19). Actually, it is only in the second half of this story that the one grateful recipient of healing, who returns to thank Jesus, is said to be a Samaritan (v. 16b). In Volume Two of *A Marginal Jew*, I noted how the opposition of the one grateful Samaritan and the blasé attitude of the other nine (presumably Jews) may foreshadow Luke’s story of the spread of the Christian gospel as told in the Acts of the Apostles: the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem leads to a mission to Samaria (8,2-25)[42](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#42).

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Luke’s schematic vision of many Jews rejecting the gospel while at least some inhabitants of Samaria accept it may be prefigured in his distinction in the story of the ten lepers: only the Samaritan has faith (pi/stij), and so only the Samaritan is not only healed physically (i)a/qh, as were the other nine) but also saved spiritually (with the full symbolic sense of se/swke/n in v. 19). While I think that the story of the ten lepers represents L tradition rather than a pure Lucan creation and that the L tradition is not simply a reworking or a variant of the healing of the leper in Mark 1,40-45, I do not feel that, given the many Christian and specifically Lucan concerns in Luke 17,11-19, the details of the story can be confidently traced back to the historical Jesus. Hence I would not want to insist on the presence of a *Samaritan* leper in the story as historical. This is not a question of being sure that the detail is not historical; it is simply a question of reaching the frustrating but frequent judgment *non liquet* (not clear).

        (b) The other Lucan narrative involves a brief reference to the beginning of Jesus’ great journey up to Jerusalem, a journey that in Luke’s story reaches all the way from chap. 9 to chap. 19 and so forms a major compositional element in the Gospel[43](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#43). Almost as soon as Jesus begins this fateful journey, we are told (9,52-53) that he seeks to enter a village of Samaritans, but they refuse to receive him ‘because

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he was traveling to Jerusalem [for the feast of Passover]’. At the very least, the competition between the rival sanctuaries of Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Zion, each one being the goal of pilgrims at Passover, is echoed in this verse. The disciples James and John react angrily to this rebuff, suggesting in a both officious and bloodthirsty manner (v. 54), ‘Lord, do you wish that we call down fire from heaven and destroy them?’ Jesus replies by rebuking his vengeful disciples rather than the inhospitable village. He then solves the problem pragmatically by going off to a different village (vv. 55-56). (Whether this other village is inhabited by Samaritans in the religious sense is not said; Luke’s grasp of Palestinian geography in this section of his Gospel is shaky at best.)

        In itself, there is nothing improbable in this story: we see the temperamental ‘sons of thunder’ (thus are James and John designated in Mark 3,17, though not in Luke) clashing with the merciful Jesus. At least coherence favors the historicity of the incident, and various commentators detect a pre-Lucan substratum beneath all the Lucan redaction[44](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#44). Yet the presence and function of this story at a pivotal redactional moment in Luke’s overarching composition raise doubts. We stand at the solemn beginning of Luke’s great journey narrative, with all sorts of OT allusions and key Lucan motifs ringing in vv. 51-52: ‘Now it came to pass that when the days for his [i.e., Jesus’] being taken up were being fulfilled, he set his face firmly to go to Jerusalem; and he sent messengers before his face; and going, they entered a village of Samaritans...’[45](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#45). One must also remember that Luke is

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building here on a Marcan framework and that in Mark, as in Matthew, this final journey apparently goes through Perea across the Jordan and up to Jerusalem by way of Jericho — a common route for Jewish pilgrims wishing to avoid the hostility of Samaritans[46](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#46). True, it remains possible that the incident recounted in Luke 9,52-56 actually took place on some other journey to or from Jerusalem (as, e.g., in John 4)[47](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#47). But once, again, serious doubts about redactional creativity leave us with a *non liquet* in regard to Luke 9,51-55.

        (c) Luke’s most famous reference to Samaritans comes in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (10,30-37). This involves us in the much larger problem of trying to judge whether an individual parable that lacks multiple attestation of sources goes back to the historical Jesus or is a product of the early church — a problem that cannot be discussed in detail here. We must be satisfied with considering the two major positions on this question as it concerns the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Some critics, such as G. Sellin, have argued that Luke himself has created the parable of the Good Samaritan, along with the dialogue between Jesus and a lawyer that frames it[48](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#48). If Sellin is correct, then any use of the parable to understand the views of the historical Jesus is obviously illegitimate. Sellin’s position, though, depends upon many individual judgments — from the structure and classification of different forms of parables to the theological views of Luke on the Mosaic law — that are, to say the least, debatable. Along with many critics, I consider it more likely that, while the Parable of the

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Good Samaritan shows the redactional style and theology of Luke in its final form and placement, it is not simply a creation of Luke but goes back to his special L tradition[49](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#49). The introductory dialogue between a lawyer and Jesus on the two commandments of love (Luke 10,25-29) seems to be Luke’s recycling of a tradition also found in Mark 12,28-34 || Matt 22,34-40. The exact nature of the source Luke is using (Mark? Q? L?) is debated by scholars. In any case, Luke’s need to refashion an older tradition to make it a suitable introduction to the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the fact that nevertheless the introduction does not perfectly fit what it is supposed to introduce probably indicate that the parable itself is an earlier tradition taken over by Luke and reworked for his larger theological and literary plan. Whether the parable goes back to the historical Jesus is more difficult to say, though Christian piety and sentiment, if not hard-nosed critical arguments, certainly favor the idea[50](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#50).

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        Even if we should allow that the substance of the parable goes back to Jesus, what exactly would that tell us about the historical Jesus and the historical Samaritans? In this parable, Jesus uses a Samaritan as a tool in his usual rhetorical strategy of reversing the expectations of his complacent audience: a poor, wounded man (presumably a Jew coming down from Jerusalem, perhaps from worshiping at the Jerusalem temple) is helped not by a Jewish priest or Levite (ministers of the Jerusalem temple) but rather by a despised Samaritan (who, by definition, rejects the Jerusalem temple). In the Lucan context, the parable helps to redefine (or better: it refuses to define) who one’s neighbor is (10,29). Implicitly, the parable tells us that the neighbor that the Book of Leviticus commands us to love (Lev 19,18) is not only the fellow member of our own religious or ethnic community but any and every human being in need. Explicitly, though, the parable ends not with a definition of who one’s neighbor is but rather with a command to act as a neighbor to anyone in need. In any event, the Parable of the Good Samaritan is a call to show mercy and compassion to all the suffering members of our human community, irrespective of religious or ethnic barriers. All this supposes that Jesus deplores the hostile relations between Samaritans and Jews of his day (an idea supported by the anecdote in Luke 9,52-56), although that is not the major thrust of the parable. Admittedly, even if all this is true, it does not get us very far. We are left with the meager datum that, while not undertaking a formal mission to Samaritans, Jesus took a benign view of them[51](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#51).

        (4) In John as in Luke, we find both a narrative about Jesus’ relation to the Samaritans and a saying mentioning the Samaritans.

        (a) The narrative is the famous encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4,4-42). Here we meet the problem of the relation of tradition, redaction, and possible historical core on a massive scale. No critical scholar would deny that the story as it stands

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in John 4 reflects John’s own theology and his way of structuring a story to serve that theology. The narrative betrays typical theological concerns of John and typical Johannine vocabulary[52](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#52). Especially prominent as a structuring device of the whole story is what we might call a ‘christology of encounter’. As elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (the gathering of the first disciples in John 1,35-51; the blind man who gradually comes to see who Jesus really is in 9,1-39), a person (or a group of persons) who has not previously met Jesus ‘bumps into him’, struggles to understand and articulate who he is, and runs through a series of titles or descriptions, usually in a carefully arranged ascending order of prominence. This is certainly true of the Samaritan woman, who is guided by Jesus on a spiritual journey that leads her from an initial, slightly hostile reference to Jesus as ‘you, a Jew’ (4,8) through descriptions of him as ku/rioj (‘sir’ or ‘lord’ in 4,11.15), an ironic question about whether he is greater than the patriarch Jacob (4,12), and an affirmation that he is a prophet (4,19), to the climactic though hesitating suggestion to her fellow Samaritans that this Jew may be the awaited Messiah (4,25 + 29). After encountering Jesus themselves, the Samaritans conclude this narrative essay in christology with the choral acclamation: ‘This is truly the Savior of the world’ (v. 42). Fittingly, then, right in the midst of the story, during an interlude in the action, Jesus seems to refer prophetically to the future mission of the early Christian church to the Samaritans (vv. 31-38; cf. Acts 8)[53](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#53).

        All this makes one wary of claiming that behind this magnificent

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theological composition, foreshadowing as it does the Christian mission to the Samaritans, lies a particular event from the life of the historical Jesus. Yet, whether such an event lies there or not, what is striking about John 4 is that it is the most explicit and well-informed passage about Samaritans in the NT. For instance, there is indeed a well at the foot of Mt. Gerizim. The evangelist is probably quite correct in informing us that Samaritans and Jews do not use the same utensils (v. 9, with an indirect reference to purity rules)[54](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#54). The narrative also correctly implies that it would be most unusual for a Jewish man to speak with a Samaritan woman (with a possible reference to suspicions about the ritually impure state of Samaritan women and their loose morals)[55](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#55). More significantly, for the only time in the NT, explicit mention is made of the competition between Samaritan worship on Mt. Gerizim (though the name itself is not spoken) and Jewish veneration of Jerusalem and its temple (v. 20)[56](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#56). For all the supposed anti-Judaism of John’s Gospel, it is in this story that Jesus is most directly identified as ‘a Jew’ — as distinct from another monotheistic religious group of Semites in Palestine — and that he clearly vindicates the

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stance of the Jews vis-à-vis the Samaritans on the proper place for the public, communitarian worship of God (‘we [Jews] worship what we know’, v. 22). Indeed, Jesus sums up his Jewish view of things vis-à-vis that of the Samaritans in the lapidary pronouncement: ‘Salvation is from the Jews’. One suspects that this is not a pure redactional creation of the evangelist especially noted for his polemic against ‘the Jews’. In addition, the Samaritan woman’s expectation of a Messiah who is a prophet, teacher, or revealer figure (v. 25) confirms for the 1st century what we learn from later Samaritan sources: the Samaritans awaited an eschatological figure called the Taheb. The Taheb was not a royal Davidic figure but more of a prophet-teacher-revealer like Moses (cf. Deut 18,15.18)[57](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#57). In sum, as in many other narratives in the Fourth Gospel, we seem to be hearing in John 4 early Christian-Jewish tradition that is well informed about the situation in 1st-century Palestine. Whether or not this material goes back in part to the historical Jesus, we find in John 4 an important contribution to or confirmation of our fragmentary knowledge of Samaritans in the 1st century A.D.[58](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#58).

        (b) Finally, in John 8,48 we have a saying that uses the word ‘Samaritan’. However, in this case, the saying is spoken not by Jesus

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but by his adversaries. In fact, it is a slur that they hurl against Jesus in the midst of a hot exchange of invectives: ‘Do we not say well that you are a Samaritan and are possessed by a demon?’ This slur may refer either to the supposed illegitimate origins of the Samaritans (and thus indirectly to the supposedly illegitimate birth of Jesus [59](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#59)) or more likely to the supposed magical powers of the Samaritans (e.g., Simon Magus, Dositheus), attributed in this saying to their consorting with demonic agents. James D. Purvis ingeniously spells out this point by placing it within the larger context of the developing polemic of chap. 8[60](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#60). He suggests that the double charge made by Jesus’ adversaries refers back to (1) Jesus’ accusation that the Jews are ‘not of God’ (8,47) and not Abraham’s children (8,39-40), an accusation that echoes the sort of charge that *Samaritans* would make against Jews, and (2) Jesus’ claim to be of heavenly or divine origin (‘from above’) and therefore ‘not of this world’ (8,23) — a claim that his adversaries twist into an accusation of being possessed by a *demon*. It is telling that in v. 49 the Johannine Jesus thinks it sufficient to reply to the adversaries’ double charge with a single denial: ‘I am not possessed by a demon’. Clearly, then, in the mind of the evangelist, the charge of being a Samaritan and the charge of being possessed are two alternate ways of saying the same disparaging thing. Whatever the precise historicity of the debate in John 8 — a great deal of which reflects the polemic between John’s community and Jews or Jewish Christians at the end of the 1st century A.D.[61](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#61) — the saying in 8,48 voices the common disdain with which observant Jews viewed Samaritans.

        In the end, the results of our quest are disappointingly meager. We must admit we are not left with very much by way of hard data about the historical Jesus’ interaction with or views about the Samaritans[62](http://www.bsw.org/project/biblica/bibl81/Comm05n.html#62). At best, there is a multiple attestation in Lucan and Johannine traditions that Jesus stood over against the typical Jewish views of the day in that he held a benign view of Samaritans, even when that attitude was not reciprocated. In addition, both Luke and John suggest that Jesus had

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positive, though passing, encounters with particular Samaritans. But, by either explicit statement or telling silence, all the Gospels agree that there was no programmatic mission to the Samaritans during Jesus’ lifetime. While this may seem a paltry yield for so much work, it reminds us of a principle of scholarship that holds far beyond the quest for the historical Jesus but must be constantly reaffirmed especially in the quest: it is far better to be clear about what we know (or do not know) and how we know it than to continue to engage in widespread but unfounded generalizations.

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SUMMARY

        Careful analysis of the Gospels shows that there is not very much hard data about the historical Jesus’ interaction with or views about the Samaritans. There is multiple attestation, found in the Lucan and Johannine traditions, that Jesus, different from typical views of his time, held a benign view of Samaritans and had positive, though passing, encounters with some Samaritans. However, there is gospel agreement, from silence or statement, that Jesus had no programmatic mission to the Samaritans. Besides the above important conclusions, this essay also makes clear the useful distinction between Samaritans and Samarians.

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NOTES

1 One reason for the relative silence about the Samaritans in scholarly treatments of ‘Jesus and Judaism’ (see, e.g., E.P. SANDERS, *Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia 1985]; ID., *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* [London – Philadelphia 1990]; ID., *Judaism.* Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE [London – Philadelphia 1992]; G. VERMES, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* [Philadelphia 1983]; ID., *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* [Minneapolis 1993]; I.M. ZEITLIN, *Jesus and the Judaism of His Time* [Cambridge 1988]) may be the problem of categorizing the Samaritans as a Jewish group (as distinct from categorizing them, according to their own usage, as ‘Israel’). After all, even the Qumranites/Essenes were, for all their differences from mainstream Palestinian Judaism (in which I include the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the priests, and common people), clearly Jews. The status of the Samaritans vis-à-vis 1st-century Palestinian Jews was, as we shall see, at best ambiguous. A number of Gospel passages apparently view them as neither fully Jewish nor fully Gentile. Some later rabbinic texts reflect a similar ambivalence. At least in the eyes of some, then, the Samaritans were marginal in the literal sense of straddling the margins or borders between the Jewish and Gentile worlds. Their proper classification, as well as a detailed description of their historical origins, remains as problematic for modern historians as it was for 1st-century writers.

2 A classic example is found in the classic work of G. BORNKAMM, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York 1960 [Germ. orig.: Stuttgart 1956]) 41-42: The Samaritans are considered to be among the ‘heretical Jewish groups [...] The Samaritans are looked upon by the Jews as religiously unclean, because of their intermarriage with pagans, but more so as followers of a satanic heresy (Jn. viii. 48) [...] Their [the Samaritans’] religious vitality was already broken in the days of Jesus [...] they lead a separate existence as a sect’. They are also implicitly referred to as ‘a mixed race’ (p. 42). See also the more recent (and supposedly critical) work by J.J. ROUSSEAU – R. ARAV, *Jesus and His World*. An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary (Minneapolis 1995); the article on ‘Samaria, Samaritans’, is found on pp. 240-245.

3 See, e.g., R.T. ANDERSON, "Samaritans", *ABD* V, 940-947, esp. 943. Curiously, Anderson claims (p. 943) that ‘the Samaritans were often part of the NT story’. As we shall see, that is hardly the case in the story of Jesus as presented in the four Gospels. As a matter of fact, the Samaritans are totally absent in Mark and Q and are only mentioned once in passing in Matthew. Even the references in Luke and John are few and far between.

4 For general orientation and detailed bibliographies, see J.A. MONTGOMERY, *The Samaritans.* The Earliest Jewish Sect (New York 1968 [repr. of 1907]);M.

GASTER, *The Samaritan*s. Their History, Doctrines, and Literature (The Schweich Lectures; London 1925 [repr.: Munich 1980]); D. DAUBE, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Meaning of *sygchraomai*", *JBL* 69 (1950) 137–147;A. SPIRO, "Samaritans, Tobiads, and Judahites in Pseudo Philo", *PAAJR* 20 (1951) 279-355; ID., "Steven’s Samaritan Background", in J. MUNCK, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; Garden City 1967) 285-300; J. MACDONALD, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (NTLib; London 1964); G.E. WRIGHT, *Shechem*. The Biography of a Biblical City (New York – Toronto 1964); J. D. PURVIS, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect* (HSM 2; Cambridge, MA 1968); ID., "The Samaritans and Judaism", *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. R.A. KRAFT – G.W.E. NICKELSBURG) (SBL.BMI 2; Atlanta 1986) 81-98; ID., "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans", *NovT* 17 (1975) 161-198; J. BOWMAN, *The Samaritan Problem*. Studies in the Relationships of Samaritanism, Judaism, and Early Christianity (PThMS 4; Pittsburgh 1975); H.G. KIPPENBERG, *Garizim und Synagoge* (RVV 30; Berlin 1971); R.J. COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*. The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered (Growing Points in Theology; Atlanta 1975); ID., "The Samaritans and Acts", *NTS* 28 (1982) 423-434; ID., "The Samaritans in Josephus", *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (ed. L.H. FELDMAN – G. HATA) (Detroit 1987) 257-273; ID., "Issues in Samaritanism", *Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Part III. Where We Stand: Issues and Debates in Ancient Judaism(ed. J. NEUSNER and A.J. AVERY-PECK) (HO I/40; Leiden 1999) I, 63-77;R. EGGER, *Josephus Flavius und die Samaritane*. Eine terminologische Unter-suchung zur Identitätsklärung der Samaritaner (NTOA 4; Freiburg – Göttingen 1986); N. SCHUR, *History of the Samaritans* (BEAT 18; Frankfurt 1989); I.R.M. BÓID, *Principles of Samaritan Halachah* (SJLA 38; Leiden 1989); M. MOR,"I. Samaritan History. 1. The Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonaean Period",

*The Samaritans* (ed. A.D. CROWN) (Tübingen 1989) 1-18; L. POLIAKOV, *Les Samaritains* (Paris 1991); ANDERSON, "Samaritans", 940-947; A.D. CROWN, *A Bibliography of the Samaritans* (ATLA.BS 32; Metuchen 21993); *A Companion to Samaritan Studies* (eds. A.D. CROWN – R. PUMMER – A. TAL) (Tübingen 1993); J.-D. MACCHI, *Les Samaritains*. Histoire d’une légende. Israël et la province de Samarie (Le Monde de la Bible 30; Geneva 1994).

5 See P. RICHARDSON, *Herod*. King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans (Columbia 1996 – Minneapolis 1999) 77-79. The terminology here is confusing, since originally, in the writings of the OT (with a few possible exceptions), it was the *city*, not the *region*, that was called Samaria. In the OT, the whole region is referred to by such names as Ephraim or Israel; scholars speak of the northern kingdom of Israel. After the destruction of the city by the Assyrians, the name Samaria came to be used of the whole Assyrian province. Then, after Herod rebuilt and renamed the capital city Sebaste, the name Samaria was used not of the city but only of the region; this is the regular NT usage (but see the text-critical problem in Acts 8,5). On all this, see James D. PURVIS, "Samaria", *ABD* V, 914-921.

6 On this, see COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 9; ID., "Issues in Samaritanism", 6-7. Differing from Coggins in emphasizing Samaritan nationhood and geography is SCHUR, *History of the Samaritans*, 14-19.

7 RICHARDSON, *Herod*, 139.

8 The typical tendency of scholars to read Josephus as hostile to the Samaritans is seen, e.g., in COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 10, 93-99; ID., "The Samaritans in Josephus", 260-271. Opposed to this idea of Josephus’ hostility is EGGER, *Josephus Flavius*, 310-314. She holds that, in general, Josephus shows true historical objectivity when dealing with the Samaritans, understood as the religious group centered on Mt. Gerizim. Egger does well to emphasize the importance of distinguishing between what I call ‘Samarians’ in the geographical sense (all inhabitants of Samaria) and ‘Samaritans’ in the religious sense. However, her suggestion that Josephus was clear and consistent in using terms like Samarei=j, Samarei=tai, Xouqai=oiin the original draft of his work and that it was his Greek-speaking collaborators who confused his terminology is highly speculative.

9 On this, see MACDONALD, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, 17, relying on the account in the Samaritan writing known as *Chronicles II*.

10 The Greek translates the Hebrew at this point in 2 Kgs 17 as Samari=tai, hence the common English translation ‘Samaritans’. I.W. SLOTKI, *Kings* (SBBS; London 1950) 268, sums up well the sense of the original Hebrew text when he states that *has$s$o4mero4n|<m* refers ‘to the Israelites who had formerly inhabited the district. The new settlers made use of the places of worship which the former inhabitants had erected’. Interestingly, the Samaritans themselves derive their name not from the geographical region of Samaria (taken from the name of the capital city, Samaria [*s$o4mero=n*]), but rather from the term *s$a4mer|<m* [their form of the biblical Hebrew *s$o4mer|<m*], ‘keepers [of the Law]’. This is a regular usage in *Chronicles II*. On this, see COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 10-11, who also discusses there the alleged reference to Samaritans in 2 Chr 13,11.

11 See the extended treatment of the passage in MACCHI, *Les Samaritains*, 47-72; also COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 13-19. Different commentators see different stages of tradition and redaction, but almost all agree on the complicated, multistage nature of the tradition history of the chapter. For example, J. GRAY, I & II Kings (OTL; Philadelphia 1963) 579-598) discerns a primitive report, perhaps from the Annals of Israel, redacted and added to by a number of later hands, including the Deuteronomic redactor and perhaps a priestly historian of the sanctuary at Bethel. For short and sane comments on the overall sense of the passage, see J. ROBINSON, *The Second Book of Kings* (CNEB; Cambridge 1976) 160-163; T.E. FRETHEIM, *First and Second Kings* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville 1999) 193-194.

12 As noted above, Egger is one of the few authors who dissent from this consensus on the hostile attitude of Josephus toward the Samaritans understood as a religious group.

13 On the situation after the destruction of the capital of Samaria, see MACCHI, *Les Samaritains*, 120-133, 173-174; SCHUR, *History of the Samaritans*, 26; R.A. HORSLEY, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee*. The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis (Valley Forge 1996) 21-24.

14 Fortunately, our focus on Jesus’ relationship to the Samaritans dispenses us from plunging into the complicated problem of the chronological order and the precise dating of the activity of Nehemiah and Ezra.

15 On this, see MACCHI, *Les Samaritains*, 34-35; also BOWMAN, *The Samaritan Problem*, 4. It cannot be emphasized enough that one must distinguish from (the later) Samaritans in the religious sense certain political figures, especially imperial officials, in the provinces of Samaria and Ammon such as Sanballat and Tobiah (see, e.g., Neh 2,10.19; 6,1-2; 13,4-9.28). Only when we get to Josephus is the political struggle over the rebuilding of Jerusalem reinterpreted in terms of conflict with Shechem and hence with the Samaritans. This point is not sufficiently appreciated by MACDONALD, *Theology of the Samaritans*, 24; SCHUR, *History of the Samaritans*, 31-32.

16 COGGINS, "Issues in Samaritanism", 66.

17 *Ant*. 11.297-347. One also finds a garbled version of the story in the post-Talmudic scholion to the 1st-century A.D. Aramaic Megillat Ta(anit (see also the variant version in b.Yom 69a). A translation of the scholion along with a discussion of the anachronisms contained in it can be found in *Josephus*. With an English Translation by R. Marcus. [Edition] in Nine Volumes. VI: Jewish Antiquities, Books IX–XI (LCL; London – Cambridge, MA 1983) 517-519. The proliferation of legends about Alexander the Great in both pagan and Jewish literature makes one leery of accepting Josephus’ account of the relations between Alexander, the Samaritans, and the Jews, including the story of the apostasy of the Jewish priest Manasses to the Samaritans and Alexander’s permission to build a Samaritan temple.

18 See COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 95-97. The one shred of truth in the whole story may be that the origins of the Samaritan temple lie somewhere around the shift from the Persian to the Hellenistic era. SHUR, *History of the Samaritans*, 35-36, is more ready to accept Josephus’ account of events during the time of Alexander than I would be.

19 See WRIGHT, *Shechem*, 172-180; COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 106-109. Coggins discusses the possible relevance of the discovery of skeletons, Samaria papyri, and Shechem-like pottery in a cave in the Wadi Daliyeh to Alexander’s destruction of Samaria and the supposed flight to Shechem. Perhaps the most significant archaeological datum is the simple fact that Shechem was reoccupied late in the 4th century B.C. and continued to be occupied until the late 2nd century B.C. These dates correlate neatly with the activity of Alexander the Great and that of the Hasmonean monarch John Hyrcanus respectively.

20 SPIRO, "Samaritans", 312; B. REICKE, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte.* Die biblische Welt von 500 v. Chr. bis 100 n. Chr. (Berlin 31982) 24-29.

21 So, e.g., WRIGHT, *Shechem*, 178; similarly, KIPPENBERG, *Garizim und Synagoge*, 57.

22 It is sometimes claimed that the very existence of a temple on Mt. Gerizim would indicate that a definitive, irrevocable break had already taken place between Samaritans and Jews. Yet a temple built by Jewish colonists in Egypt existed at Elephantine in the 6–5th centuries B.C., and another Jewish temple in Egypt existed from the middle of the 2nd century B.C. until ca. A.D. 71 at Leontopolis. Neither of these temples seems to have created an irrevocable breach between the Egyptian Jews who worshiped there and the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem. While this is certainly true — and while one is therefore reminded that Deuteronomy’s law of only one temple for the public cult of Yahweh may not have always been understood and enforced as stringently as scholars formerly imagined — one should also note two aggravating differences in the case of the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim: (1) This temple existed within the traditional promised land of Israel and not in the Diaspora; hence, from a practical point of view, it could serve as a rival pilgrimage site for people living in Israel. (2) The Mt. Gerizim temple came to be understood by the Samaritans and the Jews alike as a *rival* to that of Jerusalem; such seems to have been the intent of the additions the Samaritans made to the Decalogue (after Exod 20,17 and Deut 5,18), ordering that an altar of sacrifice be constructed on Mt. Gerizim. The Samaritan version of the Pentateuch also presents Moses ordering the construction of an altar on Mt. Gerizim in Deut 27,4 (a version of the text that some scholars hold to be earlier than that of the MT). Thus, Mt. Gerizim came to be claimed as the one legitimate sanctuary of Yahweh, with Mt. Zion’s claim being rejected. As far as we know, no such claim was ever made for the sanctuaries at Elephantine or Leontopolis. In any event, the somewhat confusing stories about disputes between Jews and Samaritans in Egypt (*Ant*. 12.10; 13.74-79, possibly a doublet) may indicate that by the 2nd century B.C. conflicts between Jews and Samaritans had spread into the Diaspora and were focused on the question of whether Jerusalem or Gerizim was the true sanctuary.

23 On this text, see P.W. SKEHAN – A.A. DI LELLA, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York 1987) 558; perhaps, as Coggins claims ("Issues in Samaritanism", 68), too much of the standard OT story is taken as sober history in their comment.

24 Instead of ‘those who dwell in Seir’, the Greek translation has ‘those who dwell on the mount of Samaria’. Almost all recent critics accept the Hebrew text as the original form; see COGGINS, "Samaritanism", 73.

25 At times, Josephus also calls the Samaritans ‘Shechemites’ (see, e.g., *Ant*. 11.340-347). COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 10, suggests that Josephus purposely used *Samaritai* of the community at Shechem ‘to imply a contemptuous association with the by this time paganized city of Samaria...’ More frequent in both Josephus and the Mishna is the use of the designation ‘Chutheans’, a usage that shows even more clearly than that of *Samaritai* that the account in 2 Kgs 17 was now being associated in a polemical manner with the community at Shechem.

26 The Greek of 2 Macc 6,2 is not entirely clear. The key phrase referring to the inhabitants of Mt. Gerizim is kaqw\_j e)tu/gxanon oi( to\_n to/pon oi)kou=ntej. The *NAB* takes this to mean ‘as the inhabitants requested’, while the *NRSV* translates it as ‘as did the people who lived in that place’ and the *NEB* ‘following the practice of the local inhabitants’. The *New Jerusalem Bible* also uses ‘requested’ in its translation, but indicates in a note on the verse that this translation is chosen in light of Josephus’ narrative, while the Greek of 2 Macc 6,2 could simply mean that ‘being themselves hospitable, the Samaritans chose this epithet’. I think it wise not to read Josephus’ hostile interpretation of events into a translation of the admittedly obscure 2 Macc 6,2. Indeed, so difficult is an accurate interpretation that J.A. GOLDSTEIN, *II Maccabees* (AB 41A; New York 1983) 268, 273, purposely leaves a blank at this point in his translation (‘in accordance with the ... of the inhabitants of the place’). He suggests that one could complete the thought contained in the verb e)tu/gxanon with either ‘in accordance with the practice’ or ‘in accordance with the name’. In his opinion, taking the text to mean that the inhabitants ‘obtained’ or ‘obtained by request’ this name is possible but not likely because of the imperfect tense of the verb. In any case, in 2 Macc 6,2 the inhabitants of Mt. Gerizim do not take the initiative in the way portrayed in Josephus’ account.

27 Scholars still debate the exact dates of these events, with some suggesting that the destruction of both the Samaritan temple and Shechem took place ca. 107 B.C.; so D.S. RUSSELL, *The Jews from Alexander to Herod* (NCB.OT 5; Oxford 1967) 63. WRIGHT, *Shechem*, 183-184, favors distinguishing the two events. In any case, the basic facts are not in dispute.

28 On the whole vastly complicated question of defining who was a Jew in the ancient world, see the various essays of S.J.D. COHEN, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*. Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties (Hellenistic Culture and Society 31; Berkeley 1999).

29 COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 5-6, rightly warns against taking the narrative of the Chronicler and Ezra-Nehemiah as sober, objective history. It is instead idealized, sacred history that seeks to legitimate those Judeans who went into exile and then returned to Jerusalem as the true Israel.

30 On this whole question, see PURVIS, "The Samaritans and Judaism", 90-95. While I agree with the substance of Purvis’s remarks, I question his view that Samaritanism should be considered part of Judaism ‘broadly defined’. At this point, though, the argument becomes semantic rather than substantive.

31 Hence I think it inappropriate to speak of the Samaritans as the earliest or oldest Jewish sect in the manner of such scholars as Montgomery or Gaster. A better formulation is that of MACCHI, *Les Samaritains*, 43: ‘Therefore, the Samaritans should not be considered as a Jewish sect but rather as another branch of the religion of Yahweh, centered around a holy place different from Jerusalem’.

32 On the inappropriateness of the term ‘schism’, see COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 162-165. Coggins does at times, though, refer to Samaritans as part of ‘that larger complex which constitutes the Judaism of the last pre-Christian centuries’ (p. 163). For the reasons given above, I think ‘Israel’ would be a better umbrella term than Judaism. Interestingly, elsewhere Coggins is more nuanced; see, e.g., "Issues in Samaritanism", 75-76: ‘Just as it is clearly wrong to regard the Samaritans as Gentiles *tout court*, so it [is] equally impossible to treat them as Jews *tout court* ... if pressed to describe themselves, they [the Samaritans] would have used the name ‘Israelites’ rather than "Samaritans"’. Similarities between Samaritans and Qumranites (to a lesser extent, Sadducees) are often pointed out (see, e.g., ANDERSON, "Samaritans", 942; BOWMAN, *Samaritan Problem*, 91-118); but common traditions or tendencies rather than direct dependence of one group on another seem the best explanation.

33 See Josephus’ disparaging statement about the Samaritans’ fluctuating attitude toward the Jews: sometimes they call themselves their kinsmen, sometimes they claim to be of another race (*Ant*. 9.291). This oscillating attitude may have been shared by the Jews as well, even into the Christian era.

34 Notice, e.g., the focus of PURVIS, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans", 162, 191.

35 As I noted at the beginning of this essay, works that offer surveys of Samaritan history or theology often do not treat the NT texts in a critical manner; so, e.g., SCHUR, *History of the Samaritans*, 80-82.

36 For bibliography on the missionary discourses and the question of their sources, see E. SCHOTT, "Die Aussendungsrede Mt 10. Mc 6. Lc 9. 10", *ZNW* 7 (1906) 140-150; F.HAHN, *Mission in the New Testament* (SBT 47; Naperville 1965) esp. 41-46; J. JEREMIAS, "Paarweise Sendung im Neuen Testament", *Abba*. Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte (Göttingen 1966) 132-139;H. SCHÜRMANN, "Mt 10,5b-6 und die Vorgeschichte des synoptischen Aussendungsberichtes" in his *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Evangelien*. Beiträge (KBANT; Düsseldorf 1968) 137-149;H. KASTING, *Die Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission* (BEvT 55; Munich 1969) esp. 124-126; F. W. BEARE, "The Mission of the Disciples and the Mission Charge: Matthew 10 and Parallels", *JBL* 89 (1970) 1-13; G. TESTA, "Studio di Mc 6, 6b-13 secondo il metodo della storia della tradizione", *DT(P)* 75 (1972) 177-191;G. THEISSEN, "Wanderradikalismus. Literatursoziologische Aspekte der Überlieferung von Worten Jesu im Urchristentum", *ZTK* 70 (1973) 245-271; S. SCHULZ, "‘Die Gottesherrschaft ist nahe herbeigekommen’ (Mt 10,7/Lk 10,9). Der kerygmatische Entwurf der Q-Gemeinde Syriens", *Das Wort und die Wörter*. Festschrift Gerhard Friedrich zum 65. Geburtstag (ed. H. BALZ – S. SCHULZ) (Stuttgart 1973) 57-67; M. MIYOSHI, *Der Anfang des Reiseberichts.* Lk 9,51–10,24 (AnBib 60; Rome 1974) 59-94; A.D. JACOBSON, "The Literary Unity of Q. Lc 10,2-16 and Parallels as a Test Case", *Logia*. Les paroles de Jésus – The Sayings of Jesus. Mémorial Joseph Coppens (ed. J. DELOBEL) (BETL 59; Leuven 1982) 419-423;R. PESCH, "Voraussetzungen und Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission", *Mission im Neuen Testament* (ed. K. KERTELGE) (QD 93; Freiburg 1982) 11-70; G. SCHNEIDER, "Der Missionsauftrag Jesu in der Darstellung der Evangelien", ibid., 71-92;H. FRANKEMÖLLE, "Zur Theologie der Mission im Matthäusevangelium", ibid., 93-129; K. STOCK, "Theologie der Mission bei Markus", ibid., 130-144; D. SENIOR –C. STUHLMUELLER, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll 1983) 141-160, 250-251, 266; C.M. TUCKETT, "Paul and the Synoptic Discourse", *ETL* 60 (1984) 376-381; R. URO, *Sheep among the Wolves.* A Study on the Mission Instructions of Q (AASF.DHL 47; Helsinki 1987).

37 On this question, see S.H. BROOKS, *Matthew’s Community*. The Evidence of His Special Sayings Material (JSNTSS 16; Sheffield 1987) 49-50.

38 See my treatment in J.P. MEIER, *A Marginal Jew*. Rethinking the Historical Jesus (AB Reference Library; New York 1991-1994) II, 659-661.

39 G. VERMES, *Jesus the Jew* (Philadelphia 1973) 49, seeks to argue for the historicity of Matt 10,5b-6 on the grounds of the embarrassment it would naturally cause the early church or, as he puts it, its ‘shocking inappropriateness in an internationally open Church’. The problem is that this whole approach assumes a church united on the subject of a non-Jewish mission from the beginning — hardly what we see in either Paul or Acts (or overhear in some of the Gospel logia). The prohibition in Matt 10,5b-6 may well have its originating *Sitz im Leben* precisely in the early church’s debate over an ‘international’ mission.

40 This point holds true irrespective of whether we consider oi!kou 'Israh/l an epexegetical or partitive genitive.

41 The attempts of some critics (see, e.g., BOWMAN, *Samaritan Problem*, 74-89) to see many points of contact between Luke-Acts and the Samaritans is, in my opinion, strained.

42 MEIER*, A Marginal Jew*, II, 701-705. However, whether Philip’s mission to Samaria should be understood as involving Samaritans in the religious sense is not entirely clear. The judgment depends partially on whether we read in Acts 8,5 that Philip, one of the seven leaders of the Hellenists (see Acts 6,5), went down to *a* city of Samaria or to *the* city of Samaria. The Greek MSS differ on this point; some (e.g., ·74, A, and B) include the definite article while others (e.g., C, D, and the Byzantine tradition) omit it. If we read ‘the city of Samaria’, then Philip’s mission would not involve Samaritans in particular, since the city of Samaria (rebuilt in the 1st century B.C. by Herod the Great as Sebaste) had become largely paganized. If instead we read ‘a city of Samaria’, it is likely — especially in light of 8,25 — that Samaritans are meant. The fourth edition (1993) of the *UBSGNT* reflects the uncertainty of the manuscript testimony by putting the definite article in brackets in the main text and giving the reading a ‘C’ rating. This indicates that the editorial committee inclines to the position that the article ‘may be regarded as part of the text, but ... in the present state of New Testament textual scholarship this cannot be taken as certain’ (p. 2\*). In the 2nd edition of his *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York 21994), B.M. Metzger states that the external evidence supports the inclusion of the article, while internal considerations favor its absence (p. 311). Metzger suggests that the reading with the definite article be translated ‘the [main] city of Samaria’, which could be interpreted as either Sebaste (the paganized capital) or Nablus/Shechem (the hub of the Samaritan religion). But by what right do we interpolate ‘main’ into the text? In any event, Samaritans are certainly mentioned as the audience of missionary preaching in 8,25: As Peter and John return to Jerusalem after completing Philip’s initial work, they proclaim the gospel in ‘many villages of the Samaritans’. — Given all these textual and conceptual difficulties, it is not surprising that the major commentaries are divided in their treatment of Acts 8,5. E. HAENCHEN, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (MeyerK 3; Göttingen 61968] 252, favors the article, but notes the opposite opinion. H. CONZELMANN, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1987 [Germ. orig.: Tübingen 21972]) 62, thinks that ‘Luke believes that the region of Samaria has only one city — the city of the same name’. G. SCHNEIDER, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (HTKNT 5; Freiburg 1980-1982) I, 487, holds that the reading with the article is to be preferred, but whether Luke thinks that the capital city of Samaria is Sebaste or Shechem is unclear. J.A. FITZMYER, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York 1998) 402, is more willing to give serious consideration to the reading without the article, which is the definite choice of K. LAKE – H.J. CADBURY, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ed. F.J. FOAKES JACKSON – K. LAKE) (The Beginnings of Christianity 1; Grand Rapids 1979 [orig.: London 1933] IV, 89). C.K. BARRETT, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; Edinburgh 1994-1998) I, 402-403, gives a thorough discussion of all the possibilities without indicating a firm choice. In all these arguments pro and con, there is an underlying problem that is not always discussed: Luke’s hazy notions about Palestinian geography, especially when it comes to Samaria. Would he have been aware of the difference in religious makeup between *the (capital) city of Samaria* and *villages of Samaritans* in the region of Samaria? In other words, throughout this treatment we have been at pains to distinguish conceptually between Samarians and Samaritans. Did Luke instead, like some modern scholars, inadvertently identify the two groups?

43 Besides the standard Lucan commentaries (e.g., FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke*, I, 823-832; I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids 1978] 400-408), see MIYOSHI, *Der Anfang*, 6-32; E. MAYER, *Die Reiseerzählung des Lukas (Lk 9,51–19,10)*:Entscheidung in der Wüste (EHS.T 554; Frankfurt 1996) 203-206.

44 See, e.g., MIYOSHI, *Der Anfang*, 6-16. The difficulty of deciding what belonged to the pre-Lucan form of the story is clear from the oscillation in M. Dibelius’s criticism. While in the 1st edition of his *Formgeschichte* he thought that the story behind Luke 9,52-56 was a ‘personal legend’ about James and John, by the 3rd edition (M. DIBELIUS, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* [Tübingen 61971; repr. of 31959] 44-45), he had reversed himself and decided that the primitive story originally spoke of anonymous disciples, who were later identified with James and John, perhaps to give an explanation of the name ‘sons of thunder’. H. FLENDER, *St Luke Theologian of Redemptive History* (Philadelphia 1967 [Germ. orig.: Munich 1965]) 33-34, sees Lucan tradition in vv. 51b, 52b, and 53ff. If truth be told, beyond saying that Luke is probably redacting an earlier story in these verses, we are largely in the dark.

45 The Lucan motifs that dominate 9,51-56 include the theme of ascension as the goal of the Lord’s way (which *must* pass through death and resurrection in the city of destiny, Jerusalem), the rejection of the Lord by some and yet his acceptance by others, the need for the disciples to follow the way of the Lord (including his experience of rejection), the mission they receive from the Lord to prepare his way, the mercy of the Lord toward ignorant sinners (whom he seeks to save rather than destroy), and echoes of an Elijah-christology. Both Miyoshi and Mayer place this pericope firmly within the larger theological and literary project of Luke, whose major themes and structures it faithfully mirrors. OT allusions include the ‘taking up’ of Enoch and Elijah, the theme of the rejected and martyred prophets of Israel, and possibly the prophecy about sending messengers before the face of the Lord in Mal 3,1.

46 While the text of Mark 10,1 (cf. Matt 19,1) is probably inaccurate (‘into the territory of Judea [and] across the Jordan’ — but see the variant readings), the general intent seems to be to indicate the roundabout path to Jerusalem by way of Perea (cf. pe/ran tou= 'Iorda/nou) and the road through Jericho (cf. Mark 10,46). A direct north-south route from Galilee through Samaria to Jerusalem would not lead through Jericho near the Jordan; yet this is how Luke portrays the end of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (see Luke 18,35; 19,1.28-29).

47 See MARSHALL, *Luke*, 404.

48G. SELLIN, "Lukas als Gleichniserzähler. Die Erzählung vom barmherzigen Samariter (Lk 10,25-37)", *ZNW* 65 (1974) 166-189; *ZNW* 66 (1975)19-60.

49 In favor of Lucan redaction of an earlier tradition, see MARSHALL, *Luke*, 444-450; FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke*, II, 882-890 (with further bibliography). For the history of interpretation, see W. MONSELEWSKI, *Der barmherzige Samariter* (BGBE 5; Tübingen 1967); H.G. KLEMM, *Das Gleichnis vom barmherzigen Samariter*. Grundzüge der Auslegung im 16./17. Jahrhundert (BWANT 103; Stuttgart 1973). For consideration of the parable from various historical, theological, and literary angles, see J. JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus* (NT Library; London 1963) 202-205; J.D. CROSSAN, *In Parables* (San Francisco 1973) 57-66; J. DRURY, *The Parables in the Gospel.* History and Allegory (London – New York 1985) 132-135; J.R. DONAHUE, *The Gospel in Parable* (Philadelphia 1988) 128-134; B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable*. A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus (Minneapolis 1989) 189-202. For a series of essays applying a structuralist approach to this parable, see J.D. CROSSAN (ed.), *The Good Samaritan* (Semeia 2; Missoula 1974). For larger hermeneutical issues, see S.W. PERPICH, *A Hermeneutic Critique of Structuralist Exegesis, with Specific Reference to Lk 10.29-37* (Lanham 1984); L.W. MAZAMISA, *Beatific Comradeship*. An Exegetical-Hermeneutical Study on Lk 10:25-37 (Kampen 1987); J.I.H. MCDONALD, "The View from the Ditch — and Other Angles", *SJT* 49 (1996) 21-37. Many commentators agree with the general approach of Fitzmyer: the core of the parable comes from the L tradition; Luke has framed it with an introductory question (v. 29b) and a concluding command (v. 37b). I think it significant that the parable (or example story) depends for its full impact on all sorts of details of Jewish-Palestinian life that are presupposed rather than explained; this may argue for pre-Lucan tradition.

50 The entire argument of the Jesus Seminar in favor of the parable’s coming from Jesus is simply that this story ‘redraws the map of both the social and the sacred world’ and is therefore a prime example of ‘the provocative public speech of Jesus’; see R.W. FUNK – R.W. HOOVER et al., *The Five Gospels* (New York 1993) 324. Apparently no early Christian, while engaged in tearing down the sacred walls separating Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, would have ever thought to use such provocative public speech to redraw social and sacred maps. Why this is so is not explained.

51 This exhausts explicit references to Samaritans in Luke’s Gospel. Some might see a garbled reference in Luke 13,1 (‘the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices’) to Pilate’s attack on and slaughtering of a gathering of Samaritans on Mt. Gerizim (*Ant*. 18.86-87). But this remains highly speculative, and nothing can be concluded that aids our particular inquiry. On the question of the possible historical backgrounds for 13,1, see FITZMYER, *The Gospel According to Luke*, II, 1006-1007.

52 Note, e.g., the themes of water, Spirit, eating and drinking, Jesus as the supersession of traditional religious institutions, realized eschatology, the lack of understanding on the part of the disciples, and the ultimately cosmic dimensions of the work that Jesus is to bring to perfection. C.K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St John* (London 1958) 191, emphasizes that the evangelist has written the story as a whole and that therefore it is impossible ‘to isolate a pre-Johannine nucleus of the story’. Even R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John* (AB 29-29A; Garden City 1966-1970) I, 175-176, while defending a substratum of traditional material, acknowledges the evangelist has formed it ‘into a superb theological scenario’. For a semiotic analysis of the whole story, see H. BOERS, *Neither on This Mountain Nor in Jerusalem*. A Study of John 4 (SBLMS 35; Atlanta 1988); a bibliography on John 4 can be found on pp. 201-207. For general bibliography on the passage, see E. HAENCHEN, *John*. A Commentary on the Gospel of John (Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1984 [Germ. orig.: Tübingen 1980]) I, 213-216.

53 See O. CULLMANN, *Der johanneische Kreis*. Sein Platz im Spätjudentum, in der Jüngerschaft Jesu und im Urchristentum. Zum Ursprung des Johannesevangeliums (Tübingen 1975) 49-52.

54 John 4,9 is often translated in more general fashion as ‘Jews have no dealings with Samaritans’ (so *RSV*) or something similar. The root sense is the verb in question, sugxra/omai, is ‘use together’. Hence scholars like DAUBE, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman", 143, and COGGINS, *Samaritans and Jews*, 139, suggest that, in the specific context of John 4, the idea is that Jews will not use utensils used by Samaritans because of considerations of purity. This contextual interpretation of the verb fits perfectly with the details of the dramatic scene in John 4: Jesus is thirsty and wants a drink of water from ‘Jacob’s well’, but he has no utensil or vessel with which to draw the water (see v. 11: Jesus has no a!ntlhma with which to draw the water). Hence the translation of the *NAB* may reflect better John’s intention: ‘Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans’. Yet this interpretation, however attractive, is not without its philological difficulties, as is pointed out by D.R. HALL, "The meaning of *sygchraomai* in John 4,9", *ExpTim* 83 (1971-1972) 56-57. However, Hall’s own counter-argument suffers from weaknesses as well. In light of both the immediate Johannine and larger Jewish-rabbinic context, I prefer Daube’s approach (‘use in common’), though I admit the alternate translation (‘have dealings with’) remains a possibility.

55 The text often cited in this regard in m.Nid. 4,1: ‘Kuthean women[= Samaritan women; literally: ‘daughters of Kutheans’] are [considered unclean as] menstruants from their cradle’. One must allow, however, for the activity of censors, who sometimes introduced *kûttîm* (Kutheans) into rabbinic texts as a substitute for other designations. One should also note that rabbinic views on Samaritans vary greatly from text to text.

56 Interestingly, this is presupposed in the Lucan passages we have examined (esp. 9,53), but it is never explicitly stated anywhere in Luke’s Gospel.

57 The etymology of the term Taheb is disputed, though it may well be the participial form of the verb *tûb*, ‘to return’, hence ‘the returning one’. The Taheb was a very malleable figure in Samaritan thought and, in various writings, is associated with different eschatological expectations; see F. DEXINGER, "Taheb", *A Companion to Samaritan Studies* (eds. A.D. CROWN – R. PUMMER – A. TAL) (Tübingen 1993) 224-226. The origin of the figure no doubt lies in the eschatological hopes ignited by the promise that God would raise up a prophet like Moses (Deut 18,15.18); Jews, Samaritans, and Christians all developed these hopes in different ways. Interestingly, at times the Taheb is said to be a descendant of Jacob. Is there possibly a connection between this idea and the ironic question of the Samaritan woman to Jesus in John 4,12: ‘Surely you are not greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well...?’

58 While many critics would admit some contact between a stage or stratum of Johannine tradition and the Samaritans (see R.E. BROWN, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* [New York 1979] 22-23, n. 31, 35-40), few would be willing to accept the claim of BOWMAN, *Samaritan Problem*, 59, that the Gospel of John addressed itself to the ‘heretical’ Dosithean wing of 1st-century Samaritan religion. In any event, there seems to be some narrative source that the Fourth Evangelist is using as he composes 4,4-42. Both Fortna and von Wahlde detect tradition behind the present story, though they differ on whether it belonged to the cohesive ‘Sign Source’ or ‘Gospel of Signs’ that the evangelist supposedly used; see R.T. FORTNA, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor*. From Narrative Source to Present Gospel (Philadelphia 1988) 108-109; and U.C. VON WAHLDE, *The Earliest Version of John’s Gospel* (Wilmington 1989) 83-90.

59 See my remarks in MEIER*, A Marginal Jew*, I, 227-229.

60 PURVIS, "The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans", 195-196; see also BROWN, *The Gospel According to John*, I, 358.

61 See, e.g., BROWN, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 76-78.

62 Since the focus of this essay has been the relation of the historical Jesus to the Samaritans, I have not considered the views of scholars who see Samaritan influence in the speech of Stephen in Acts 7 or in the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In my opinion, though, such views lack solid proof.