

The Samaritan “Other” in the Gospel of John

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My fascination with the Gospel of John began as a child framed around my mother's faith and drawn from the imprints of the drama of the cross and resurrection of Christ, as it unfolded through various stages of my childhood. Looking back, I think being raised largely by my widowed mother accounts for my being drawn to the scene where Jesus gives his mother to the “disciple whom he loved” (see John 19:26, 27). The compassion and generosity flowing out of that gesture had a deep resonance for me because I grew up largely in the shadow of my mother's sense of abandonment and helplessness.

Even today, the overpowering sense of intimacy emanating from John's gospel, centred in that profound exchange before the cross, continues to be an abiding presence and guiding light informing my own faith in the personal crises I have encountered. There are several other soft images of Christ that John testifies to, especially evident in his account of the miracles and—of particular interest to our discussion in this chapter—the Samaritan narrative of John 4. But standing in sharp contrast to these soft images are strikingly harsh scenes in which Christ seems unrelenting in his judgement and criticism, including—for example—the controversial “children of the

devil" episode (see 8:44). Clearly, the Gospel of John invites us to deal with these tensions.

Several scholars note that John appears to be writing for a "spectrum of readers" outside the Jewish enclave. The nature of this intended readership suggests a widening of the borders of the Jewish world, highlighted by Jesus' interrogation of Jewish thought and practice. Set against a Greco-Roman background, John's gospel appears to conscientiously transcend the social and religious formations of his time. If John's gospel is inclusive, it appears to focus on constructing a theology for an audience beyond the confines of the Jewish world.¹

Scenes such as the temple confrontation and Jesus' encounters with the Pharisees reflect Jesus' frustrations with a community inbred and in crisis, set against His looming death. The pace and intensity of John's gospel reflect its urgency to mount a gospel for the world. This is emphasised by the interrogative tone of John's gospel, and the several ruptures of action and disruptions of meaning within the text, all of which come together to challenge the seeming coherence of the laws and social practices of the Jews. My interest is in extracting for study one dimension of these ruptures or contradictions, seen in Jesus' attempts to breach the deeply ingrained prejudices of the Jews against the Samaritans.

Reading frame

My reading of the Gospel of John is drawn from literary, rather than biblical or theological studies, so my reading is exploratory and text-based. Further, my reading is influenced by my postcolonial background and as such, I come to the Gospel of John with a deep appreciation of it as a selective "biographical account" of Jesus' life. I remind myself that the gaps and omissions in the account caution against overstating the "literality" of each Scriptural verse.² This caution is important, given the powerful resonance of the "Word" and the "centrality of the journey motif in the narration of Jesus' life."³ Against the backdrop of the "Word" made flesh, God's transcendence hovers over our limited understandings, even as John's gospel propels us forward through the journey motif to greater self-awareness.

I have set out in this chapter to demonstrate how John's gospel negates

debates about the insider/outsider status of “the chosen” to focus instead on the identity of Christ as the “Chosen One.” Both the Jewish idea of “Israel” and the Christian community’s identity as “the new Israel” cause divisions between people. The claims of both Jews and Christians to exclusive election contradicts the inclusivity of John’s gospel.

John’s gospel opens on the authority of the *Logos*, Christ as the “Word” who was “with God in the beginning,” and through whom “all things were made.” In that Word “was life, and the life was the light of all people” (1:1–4, emphasis mine). The *Logos* marks the ascendancy of Christ as Son of God from the beginning of time. The elements of the flesh and spirit, of material and poetic power, of language and the senses, are all encapsulated in the *Logos*—the “Word Incarnate.” The Word establishes our human finiteness in contrast to God’s infinity. As pastor and New Testament scholar Jaime Clark-Soles points out, “Jesus transforms the mundane into the spiritual by participating in the mundane.”⁴ The mystical opening, then, sets the parameters for our reading, pointing beyond the narrow confines of our limited knowing to search continually for something other, something irretrievably elusive. Our reading of John’s gospel must continually reflect that expansiveness and generosity of the *Logos* as a gift encompassing all creation and all humanity. It is this generosity that I as a reader anticipate and find in John’s gospel—and that invites us on a journey of inclusiveness.

My aim is to do a close study of the appeal to the Samaritan motif by threading John 4 and John 8 to lead us to the central trajectory of John’s gospel: its broadening treatment of the “chosen” in terms of faith and belief. Ultimately, God and Christ belong to the world and the grace born through the death and resurrection of Christ is available to all who trust in Him: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.28).

Sacrificial violence

The lens I wish to appropriate for my reading of the Samaritan theme is René Girard’s theory of scapegoating or sacrificial violence.⁵ Girard argues that society since primitive times has rationalised its survival through the scapegoat mechanism. He argues that central to culture

is the concept of the “alien” or the scapegoat who must be sought out and eliminated for the preservation of that culture.⁶ The election of a scapegoat, derived from the tradition of the ancient *pharmakon*, suggests that the perpetuation of peace is ironically built on the framework of violence.⁷ Girard asserts that the “violent unanimity principle”—the consensus around the appointment and election of the scapegoat—provides the community with the illusion of unity.⁸ This violence is managed through a framework of myths, rituals and prohibitions.

Accordingly, Girard argues that peace is essentially bought at the terrible cost of violence sanctified through a system by which human beings consensually and ritualistically choose a scapegoat, through whom they purge their fears of violence. Girard argues that the ritualisation of this scapegoat mechanism has become so embedded in the psyche of human society that it has become the *modus operandi* of our existence. Girard asserts that the survival of ritual violence is built on its being characterised as “good” or “holy” violence and the premise of its seeming generative value to the community.⁹ This “wilful misunderstanding” of the need for violence to maintain peace has survived even into our so-called enlightened times through the theological basis for sacrifice. Accordingly Girard argues that in this sense “violence is sacred”:

The *sacred* is violence, but if religious man worships violence it is only insofar as the worship of violence is supposed to bring peace; religion is entirely concerned with peace, but the means it has of bringing it about are never free of sacrificial violence.¹⁰

What we have, then, is a perverse system through which the “cure for violence is sought through violence.”¹¹ Girard argues that it is Christ who puts an end to this vicious cycle by absorbing the scapegoat mechanism into His body. The death of God in the person of Christ breaks the sacrificial mechanism and calls for an end to all scapegoating.¹²

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My purpose is to employ Girard in studying the framework of the scapegoating of Samaritans as treated in John's Gospel. I intend to drill down through the narrative to the embedded mysteries, employing if you like, a "hermeneutics of suspicion" to disrupt the seeming neatness of the surface narrative.¹³ To be able to do that, I begin from the premise that the surface-level narrative leaves the question of Samaritan "guilt" uncontested until Christ exposes the scapegoating mechanism in John 4 through His exchange with the Samaritan woman.

The Samaritan "Other"

John 4 is pivotal in establishing a way out of the circuits of ritual violence against marginalised groups—in this case, the Samaritans. If we tried to trace the history of the persecution of the Samaritans, we would find ourselves on a slippery slope, given the complex historical and social overlays of Jewish–Samaritan dealings. However, in Girardian terms, the guilt or innocence of the victim is irrelevant to scapegoating. All scapegoating is sustained through a wilful delusion or through the "nonconscious" character of scapegoating. This "nonconscious element" protects "scapegoaters" from the truth of the violence they represent.¹⁴ These delusions are fortified instead by a system built often on religious rules and defended by tradition and practice. The potent power of scapegoating as in the case of the Samaritans is in the group defence of its position on the basis of theology, meaning that their persecution is couched in religious terms. Hence the practice of persecution is deemed "respectable."

Accordingly, a common rationale for the marginalisation of the Samaritans was their supposed irreverence or untouchability. They were:

 painted as mongrels or half-breeds due to intermarriage with non-Israelite groups after the Assyrian invasion of 722–721 BCE. Their priesthood and sanctuary were judged illegitimate, their text of the Torah corrupt, and their cult syncretistic—contaminated by the paganism of their Mesopotamian conquerors.¹⁵

The branding of the Samaritans in terms of their hybridity, their allegedly corrupt sacred texts, and their contaminating influence on

Jewish life and practice set them up as classic scapegoats. In reality, Jews and Samaritans had more commonalities than differences, and if anything, the Samaritans were more conservative:

The Samaritans worshipped YHWH as the one true God, but revered Mt Gerizim rather than Mt Zion as their holy place, thought their line of Levitical priests to be legitimate (as opposed to that of the Jerusalem temple), and accepted only the Torah and not the prophets (*nebibim*) or the "writings" (*ketubim*) as their sacred Scripture. . . . Significantly, historical evidence debunks the idea that Samaritans' religion was any more syncretistic than that of their cousins who worshipped in Jerusalem: quite the contrary, it was a more conservative expression of Israelite religion, far less open to changes.¹⁶

While Jewish prejudice against Samaritans is treated at length in John 4 through the Samaritan woman narrative, the key moment awaits us in John 8 where, ironically, Christ himself is charged with being a "Samaritan and demon possessed" (8:48). Like all scapegoating, the scapegoating of the Samaritans, by necessity, over-extends itself in John 8:48 when the angst against Samaritans is transferred to Jesus. The fact that Jesus provokes this transference in John 8:44 is particularly enlightening in that Jesus forces into the open the politics of exclusivity that Jews thrived upon, foreshadowing the role he will play as scapegoat for Jewish—as well as the world's—ignorance.

Jesus and "the Jews"

It would appear that some attention needs to be paid to this exchange between Jesus and this group of Jews in John 8. Undoubtedly, Jesus' characterisation of this specific group of Jews in John 8:48 as "children of the devil" is not intended to vilify all Jews. Such positions taken by various groups have no basis in John 8. Regrettably, the "children of the devil" verses have been exploited by many—including the early and Reformation church—to brand Jews as "Christ-killers." Siker argues that "history has demonstrated . . . the use of these texts (so-called proof-texts) in legitimating acts of horror against a people." She asserts:

From the damning preaching of Melito in the second century to the equally vicious condemnations of Martin Luther in the 16th century to the unspeakable horrors of the Nazi regime, the gospels have fuelled the fires of prejudice and outrage against the Jews, and Christianity has been accused of being anti-Semitic in origin.¹⁷

She also cites Rosemary Radford Ruether who argues that not only is the “origin of anti-Semitism most properly placed at the door of nascent Christianity, but . . . that it is an inherent and inextricable part of Christianity.”¹⁸

The grand irony missed by those who hold this position is their denial of the context for this exchange. To begin with, Jesus was speaking to his own people and the strong overtones suggest a degree of familiarity in such exchanges between Jesus and groups of Jews. The interpretation of these verses as anti-Semitic gloss over the inherent internal contradiction in that Christ was himself a Jew.¹⁹

The expression “Jew/Jews” is often times a negative term. It may describe individuals, the people, or the leadership of the Jewish nation. Jews are oftentimes portrayed as being in opposition to Jesus and not believing in him. However, there are important exceptions. Jesus is a Jew. Salvation comes from the Jews and there are Jews who believe in Jesus and follow him. . . . Nowhere do we find a wholesale condemnation of all Jews of all times. Salvation comes from the Jews through Jesus Christ and is extended to both Jews and Gentiles.²⁰

Clearly, a symbolic reading of Jesus’ words is in order. We cannot ignore the emotive overflow in Jesus’ stance. Flowing out of His frustrations, we see a very human Jesus! Judging from Jesus’ sense of fatigue, it would appear these arguments with different groups of Jews were not necessarily new. More importantly, John reminds us that these were believers—Jews “who had believed in Him” (8:31). To them, Jesus dictates a clear and outright challenge, commissioning freedom through true discipleship and locating this in the question of trust.

The ensuing dialogue between Jesus and the groups of Jews run in two polarised strands: the Jews fixating on their Abrahamic genealogy

and Christ contesting their over-reliance on their birthright, as well as their self-righteousness. These verses appear to complicate the issue of identity through the Abraham discourse. What Christ attempts to do is to shift the question of paternity to the spiritual realm, to questions of faith and action: *to believe, to hear, to trust*. How to belong to God or to Satan becomes then a matter of informed belief. As the following verses demonstrate, birthright does not preclude us from individual spiritual responsibility. Note the trajectory of the verses, beginning with (1) a circular agreement between Jesus and the Jews about their Abrahamic genealogy, (2) Jesus' exposing Jewish contradictions of their Abraham-inherited character and (3) closing on the premise that love for God's Son is the only legitimate kinship.

1. "We are descendants of Abraham" (8:33).
 "I know that you are descendants of Abraham" (8:37).
 "Abraham is our father" (8:39a).
2. "Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does'" (8:39b–41a).
3. "They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself'" (8:41b).
 "Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me'" (8:42).

I contend that Jesus was outlining that the Abrahamic tradition is aligned to faith in God, not the reverse! The irony of Jesus' words cannot be missed. Being descendants of Abraham and sons of God, you should know better! By not acting accordingly, you by default choose to belong to "your father, the devil" (8:44). Jesus' words here are no harsher than elsewhere in the gospels when he speaks about the fruits of sin. The Jews, by their closed-mindedness, are a proxy for all of us, in our moments of denial, distrust and faithlessness. We are all open to the same charge. Christ makes clear that the way of God is truth while

the way of Satan is falsehood. The choice to belong to God opens up our senses: "Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God" (8:47).

Girard's counsel is helpful here, arguing that Jesus' rather brutal summations mark the urgency with which he "intervenes . . . at the point when everything is ready to slide into a limitless violence."²¹ This urgency is explicit in John 8:43–46:

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

The passage appears to allude to the obstinacy of this group of Jews. What is it that Jesus was trying to teach that was so difficult for them to hear? Was it about his Sonship? Was it about their Pharisaic attitudes? Was it about their self-righteousness? Was it about their attitude to Gentiles? Was it about sectarianism? The key to answering this comes to us in the Jews' charge against Jesus: "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (8:48). How did the Samaritan label interject into this exchange? I suggest that "Samaritan" is a catch-all for Jewish animosity and angst, essentially a scapegoat. In this light, Jesus' confrontational stance becomes clear. It is aimed at breaking through layers of ingrained Jewish prejudices and Jewish notions of entitlement.

Jesus the Samaritan

The *samaritanising* of Jesus by the Jews has several implications. I want to consider this through exploring the structure of John 8, with specific attention to the adulteress narrative.²² John 8:12–47 is sandwiched between the adulteress narrative sequence and the charge in John 8:48 that Jesus is "a Samaritan and demon-possessed." Between Jesus' exposé in John 8:11—"Neither do I condemn you"—and John 8:48 is a series of exchanges between Jesus and the Pharisees on the

identity and authority of Jesus. Two competing discourses emerge, namely the divine authority of Christ in John's gospel pitted against the distorted perceptions of Jewish authority.

Accordingly, the verses oscillate between Jesus' claims to His Father's authority and the Jews' challenge of His authority. This heated exchange is juxtaposed against the silence and tranquillity of the scene with the adulteress. The soft image of Jesus silent, bent over, inscribing in sand forgiveness for the adulteress prefaces the rest of the more animated and fiery exchanges. Read in the context of Jesus' inclusiveness and compassion, the "children of the devil" charge reflects how Jesus' anger is manifest on behalf of the dispossessed and the marginalised. This *samaritanising* of Jesus is ironically the most powerful antidote to Jewish prejudice. Aimed at reversing Jesus' insider status to an outsider status, it collapses those assumed hierarchies for us as readers.

Poetically, Jesus' absorption of this role makes Him a double to the Samaritans, redeeming the Samaritans from their outsider status and destabilising for readers centuries of prejudice against Samaritans. What accrues further credibility for John 8:48 is that it becomes a structural hook, linking John 8 to John 4. What is obvious is that the reference to "Samaritans" in John 8 evokes the figure of the Samaritan woman in John 4. By the time Jesus is cast as a Samaritan, he has already redeemed the Samaritan reputation through his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. The irony of labelling–mislabelling–relabelling is not lost on us as we are faced with a fresh understanding of the plurality of our own identities. Ironically, the Jews' charge—"You are a Samaritan"—juxtaposes the Samaritan woman's "You are a Jew, I am a Samaritan" (see 4:9), highlighting the group politics of the former and the internalised *Othering* of the latter.

Rewriting the Samaritan status

In John 4, this phenomenon of *Othering* is raised through the Samaritan woman's self-declaration of her *Other* status, emphasised in the bracketed aside by John. In response to Jesus' request for a drink, the Samaritan woman declares without hesitation, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)" (4:9). The Samaritan woman signals her

identity in terms of her polarised status in respect to Jews/Samaritans. Through her question, she articulates her dispossessed status, as well as charts the long and suppressed history of oppression and victimisation suffered by her people. It is particularly significant that John's gospel uses the Samaritan woman as a mouthpiece for the Samaritan predicament, because her humiliation and ritualised oppression was well-known: "Samaritan women [were] stereotyped as 'menstruants from the cradle' and hence perpetually unclean [as established by the laws of] Leviticus 15:19."²³

Against this backdrop, Jesus' easy dialogue enables the woman to break through the social taboos she has been subject to. Boers notes appropriately that Jesus creates "an atmosphere in which the woman feels comfortable enough to raise the right issues for Jesus to respond to, . . . [that is] the religious and social issues which separate *Ioudaioi* and Samaritans."²⁴ By doing so, Jesus sets the tone and scope for generational change evidenced by the Samaritan woman's subsequent appeal to their common ancestry, through the allusions to Joseph and Jacob:

[H]er reference to Jacob as "our father" can be understood on two levels: if "our" refers to Samaritans, then it stands as an affirmation of their ancestral link to the patriarchs, but if it refers to Jesus and the woman, then it serves as an opportune reminder of the ancient common origin shared by all the descendants of Israel.²⁵

The Samaritan woman serves a double function: she fulfils the archetype of the scapegoat and stands also as a symbol for the collective marginalisation of the Samaritan community. Fundamentally, she carries a double-economy of the burden of marginalisation. In terms of the scapegoat theory, we could argue that the gospel's employment of a woman serves to increase the "mythical guilt" of the Samaritan scapegoat. Her double-marginalisation brings to the centre of John's gospel two strands of prejudice for scrutiny: the prejudice against Samaritans and the prejudice against women. The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman raises the issue of collective sectarian prejudice, while almost immediately elevating and prioritising the profile of women's dispossession. The choice of Jacob's Well for this encounter is worth exploring.

Significance of Jacob's Well

Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the site of Jacob's Well is not incidental to our argument. Jacob's Well generates an imaginative and psychological connection to the past. The place raises the trace of memory leading back to the stories of Jacob and Joseph, challenging myths of difference and notions of purity, through establishing the common ancestry of Jew and Samaritan and deflating all impure connotations through the memory of slavery and exile retrieved through the history of Joseph. The well could be regarded as a repository of witness and testimony, attesting to the generations of lives of people from both sides of the divide who had been nourished, physically and spiritually, by the same patriarchs and from the same gospel. In this sense, the well holds the histories, stories, love, pain, sorrows, fears and hopes of not just the people of Samaria but all travellers. It provides a labyrinth, a threshold, enabling multiple crossings. By choosing to rest at Jacob's Well, Jesus superimposes the historical traces we have just discussed by substituting Jacob's Well with his body, the new labyrinth for the world.

The allusions to water are not incidental either as we will see in the "Living Water" discourse. The dialogue that follows between the Samaritan woman and Jesus demonstrates how Jesus enables the Samaritan woman to negotiate the path from victim to free status through him. As Girardian theory establishes, the only way the scapegoating can be broken is through the victim's baulking against the system. Jesus identifies with the victim and baulks against a system that had displaced Samaritans for centuries by enabling the woman's speech.

The "Living Water" discourse

While John 4 demonstrates Jesus' passion for the world, it also demonstrates how personal the journey of salvation is to Jesus. The encounter at Jacob's Well is at best an intimate encounter between human frailty and divine wisdom. Given her alienation and dispossession, the Samaritan woman has no empirical substance to draw upon to find her own voice. Jesus gives her the cue to speak! He enables her voice by "initiating a dialogue."²⁶ And this Jesus does by way of a question, which on the surface suggests nothing more than a need for Jesus to

satisfy his own physiological need but the allusion to water cannot be missed. On the surface level, Jesus is thirsty and needs a drink. But in asking a Samaritan woman for drink, Jesus risks breaking the taboos established from the fear of contamination, a predicament of which the Samaritan woman is clearly aware. "By asking her for a drink, Jesus breaks through a very concrete and personal expression of prejudice: *Ioudaioi* believed they incurred ritual defilement by contact with food, drink or anything handled by a Samaritan."²⁷

Given this taboo, Jesus' actions appear to intentionally subvert Jewish laws. The result is that he empowers the woman by extricating and exposing the embedded prejudice against Samaritans. If the depth of Jacob's Well alludes to the immeasurable capacity for prejudice in the light of Jewish history, the well's association to "water" also provides the antidote to prejudice through the allusions to cleansing and renewal.

In this light, the "Living Water" discourse through which Jesus provides the Samaritan woman with spiritual nourishment is instructional.

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water" (4:13–15).

By comparing the materiality of water to that of his embodiment of eternal Living Water, Jesus levels the playing field between Jews and Samaritans offering the latter with the same "gift" available to the former. Through His selection of the Samaritan woman as heir to eternal life, Jesus breaches all the rules of scapegoating, collapsing all hierarchies through prophesying that "the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (4:23), thereby substituting all places of worship with his body.

The end of scapegoating

John's gospel powerfully portrays Christ's ethics of love as an antidote to ritualised violence. Christ comes to put an end to scapegoating. Christ's willingness as God to submit to death on the cross calls for an end to the ritual of scapegoating. What Christ's death demonstrates

is the vulnerability of the scapegoat mechanism in that it eventually exceeds the limits of its own boundaries, through the loss of distinctions between sanctioned and unsanctioned violence. The crucifixion registers this loss of distinctions in demanding the death of a God. Christ names the unspeakable at the heart of society, by demonstrating how close to home the question of violence and the violation of the *Other* is, even as close as the religious and sacred texts we cherish.²⁸ We are reminded of the responsibility we must each accept for interpreting the Scriptures so that our interpretations contribute to unity and community-building, reflecting Christ's gospel of love and peace.

1. C R Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B Eerdmans, 2008, page 6.
2. F F Segovia, "The Gospel of John" in Fernando F Segovia and R S Sugirtharajah (editors), *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, T and T Clark, 2009, page 174.
3. *ibid.*
4. Jaime Clark-Soles, "I will Raise [Whom?] Up on the Last Day: Anthropology as a Feature of Johannine Eschatology" in Francisco Lozada Jr & Tom Thatcher (editors), *New Currents Through John: A Global Perspective*, Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006, pages 37–8.
5. R Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (translated Patrick Gregory), Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.
6. *ibid.*
7. W Burkert, René Girard, & Jonathan Z Smith, *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997, pages 73–4. See also R Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987, page 131.
8. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, *op cit*, page 12.
9. See both *Violence and the Sacred* and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*.
10. Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, *op cit*, page 32.
11. *ibid.*
12. See Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, *op cit*.
13. See S Bigger, "Book Review: Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Journal of Beliefs*

& Values: *Studies in Religion & Education*, Routledge, May 2011. Bigger cites Ricoeur's premise for "the need for suspicion so that our understanding and knowledge are not subject to other people's honest or dishonest persuasiveness."

14. Burkert, Girard & Smith, op cit, pages 73–5.

15. E J Wyckoff, "Jesus in Samaria (John 4:4–42): A Model for Cross-Cultural Ministry," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology*, Sage, 2005, page 90.

16. ibid, citing Meier, pages 534, 542.

17. J Y Siker, "Anti-Judaism in the Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Mel," *Pastoral Psychology*, vol 53 no 4, March 2005, page 307.

18. Cited in Siker, ibid, page 308.

19. Koester, op cit, page 76. See also Ekkehardt Müller, "The Jews and the Messianic Community in Johannine Literature," *DavarLogos*, vol 4 no 2, 2005, page 170, for summary of positive treatment of Jews.

20. Müller, op cit, pages 175–80.

21. Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, op cit, page 207.

22. Some would argue that my premise here is faulty given its intertextual implications since biblical scholars believe the adulteress narrative is a later addition to John's gospel. However, this is not relevant to my purpose as a literary reader. In the first instance, my reading is a formalist-based literary reading of John's gospel, as I know it. The text is paramount and authorial intentions become secondary. Second, I read John's gospel in its final form and as it is presented to me as a reader of the 21st century. So, if we were to consider how John 8:48 is framed within the chapter, we would have to ask why the story of the adulteress prefaces the rest of the chapter.

23. Daube cited in Wyckoff, op cit, page 92.

24. Boers cited in Wyckoff, op cit, page 92.

25. Wyckoff, op cit, page 93.

26. ibid, page 92.

27. Daube cited in Wyckoff, op cit, page 92.

28. See Girard in *Violence and the Sacred* and *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, op cit, on sacrificial excess and Christ's role in breaking the circuits of violence.