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Double Vision for Revolutionary Religion: Race Relations, Moral Analogies, and African-American Biblical Interpretation

Love L. Sechrest

Today, the dominant mode in African-American biblical interpretation considers the ways that Black people actually read the Bible and comments on how the Bible can function as an instrument of oppression or opportunity.¹ In this essay, I place Martin Luther King Jr's reading of the Gospel of Luke in his February 1968 speech entitled 'To Minister in the Valley' alongside my own interpretation of one of the passages he engages in that speech: Lk. 10.25-31.² Through analysis of the 'Valley' speech and juxtaposition with my own exegesis of Lk. 10.25-31, this essay examines the ways that these interpretations exhibit a dual concern for intra-racial and interracial relations via construction of metaphorical analogues between contemporary social dynamics and the discourse in the Gospel of Luke. I contend that this simultaneous focus on internal and external issues arises out of what W. E. B. DuBois dubbed the double-consciousness of African-American life by which Blacks are always engaged in seeing themselves through both their own eyes and through the eyes of the other.³ African-American interpreters in the Kingian tradition⁴ deploy a dualistic hermeneutic that

¹ Joseph Scrivner, 'African American Interpretation,' in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Available online: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/obso/9780199832262.001.0001/acref-9780199832262-e-90> (accessed 17 February 2017).

² King, Martin Luther, Jr 'To Minister in the Valley', 1968, unpublished manuscript. This speech, along with King's other unpublished sermons and speeches, is available at the King Library and Archives at the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia, United States.

³ W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk, with a New Introduction by Randall Kenan* (New York: Signet, 1995), 45: 'It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that always looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.'

⁴ By the phrase 'Kingian tradition' I describe a hermeneutic often found in King's work, but do not imply that the associative reasoning at the heart of the method was unique to King.

was born of the double burden of seeing life through a natural lens and also an alien one; I argue that this burden, this double vision, also inculcates a capacity to see and have concern for other marginalized people.

Broadly, African-American biblical interpreters explicitly eschew the problematic notion that any reading of the Bible can produce the single correct and/or objective interpretation of the meaning in the text.⁵ Though all readings are 'interested' and thus invested with a particular viewpoint, African-American and womanist interpretation is a contextual reading that seeks to promote the liberation and flourishing of the marginalized in society, challenging Eurocentric silence and/or assumptions about Black characters, themes, or interests in the text.⁶ Randall Bailey's and Vincent Wimbush's work in African-American biblical interpretation has been influential in promoting the analysis of the social and political effects of the Bible in American life, analysing how African Americans interpret the Bible and interrogating appropriations of scripture in African-American spirituals, sermons, and speeches.⁷ Practitioners of African-American hermeneutics often do research at the intersection of anti-Black prejudice and biblical criticism, and these scholars explore the way that biblical themes and stories promote, sustain, or resist ethnic prejudice, racism, sexism, and homophobia as they appear in modern society.⁸

Another move in this domain can be seen in Brian Blount's *Can I Get a Witness?*, a book that blends historical, literary, and cultural critical analyses for the purposes of promoting anti-racist agency among African-American readers.⁹ Blount sees an analogy between the African-American struggle for civil rights and anti-imperialistic witness in the Apocalypse. Here Blount gains critical leverage by connecting the biblical text to African-American political resistance instead of the more common focus on how African Americans have interpreted scripture. Blount's implicit use of analogy and the way that his interpretive lens fuses an interest in interpretation and moral exhortation in its attention to the concerns of African-American readers illustrates King-like associative reasoning, and work in this register demonstrates the power of analogy as a hermeneutical resource for thinking about race relations.

⁵ Vincent Wimbush, 'Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures', in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*, ed. Vincent Wimbush (New York: Continuum, 2000), 8–9; also see Brian Blount et al., 'Introduction', in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1–7.

⁶ See Michael Joseph Brown's account of the rise and aims of African-American biblical interpretation in *The Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004), and Mitz Smith's overview of the development of womanist interpretation, along with new and seminal essays in *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015).

⁷ Randall C. Bailey, 'Academic Biblical Interpretation among African Americans in the United States', in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 696–711; Wimbush, 'Introduction', 1–43.

⁸ Cf. Emerson Powery who names 'liberation, resistance and survival' as the tripod upon which any black reading rests in 'African American Criticism', in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 326–49.

⁹ Brian K. Blount, *Can I Get a Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2005).

1 Revolutionary religion: Interracial and intra-racial analogues in 'To Minister in the Valley' (1968)

According to Richard Lischer, Martin Luther King Jr. ended up 'abandoning many of the critical theories about the Bible' learnt in his liberal training, reverting to 'techniques of interpretation that were more ancient than the African-American church such as allegory and typology, because they allowed his congregations a greater opportunity to identify their struggles with those portrayed in the Bible'.¹⁰ While Lischer's description implies that King's handling of the Bible is connected to his particular genius in the pulpit, he also rightly notes that King's method participates in the broader trajectory of exhortation that invites readers of the biblical text to see themselves metaphorically as participants in the drama played out on its pages. King's preaching and the preaching of other readers in the Black church is an interpretive poetry that correlates the shape of the biblical text to material conditions in the contemporary world. This work of correlation requires the development of compelling analogies between the biblical stories and contemporary life.

Originating from the Greek word ἀναλογία, which refers to a state of right relationship involving proportion, one often employs analogies to suggest that if two objects share enough characteristics in some dimensions, then one can infer that they are similar in other ways as well.¹¹ We could say that a biblical situation is analogous to a modern situation if they share – or can be suggested to share – important characteristics with respect to the human condition despite originating in vastly different cultures. In terms of developing contemporary ethics from biblical teaching as King did, we might say that the easier it was for his hearers to imagine themselves as participants in the biblical situation, the more morally compelling was his analogical interpretation of the biblical teaching.

Consideration of King's late February 1968 speech entitled 'To Minister in the Valley' can help illustrate some of these concepts. King delivered the speech at the Southern Christian Leadership Council's (SCLC) Ministers' Leadership Training Program in Miami, Florida, just months ahead of the start of the Poor People's March on Washington; he used the speech to rally support among the SCLC for the coming campaign. King's speeches are often deeply saturated in scripture and this one echoes Lk. 3.5 in articulating its thesis, while also appealing to Lk. 4.16-30, 16.19-31, Rev. 7.9-17, and Lk. 10.25-37 as supporting texts in three of its four major acts. The speech argues that SCLC leaders are called to minister in metaphorical 'valleys of despair' caused by poverty, war, and racism because the call of the gospel is to see that 'every valley will be exalted, and every mountain and hill will be made low; the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places straight' (Lk. 3.5; cf. Isa. 40.4). He speaks of the Valley of Poverty, which instead of being remedied by Congress is being exacerbated, citing pending legislation that will cut food subsidies to the children of welfare mothers. In

¹⁰ Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Word that Moved America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7–8.

¹¹ See, for example, Julian Wolfreys, Ruth Robbins, and Kenneth Womack, *Key Concepts in Literary Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 7.

discussing the Valley of War, King insists that his generation has experienced more war than any other in the nation's history, naming the Second World War, the Cold War, the Korean War, and the war in Vietnam. He also talks about the Valley of Racism in which Blacks were in lasting and deep despair. These three themes – poverty, war, and racism – were the trio of evils that would dominate King's speeches and sermons in the final intense three-year period before his assassination in 1968.

In the speech King encourages the SCLC by insisting that the group has both the talent and determination to make an impact in the cities of the South, exhorting members to make a difference in their communities by advocating politically for improved housing and programmes that feed the poor, and by working in the churches to regain the attention of young Black Americans. King freely confesses to this audience that the Black church has sometimes been lax in confronting the poverty of its own members. He suggests that the Black clergy is sometimes more concerned about garnering cars and money for themselves than in caring for their parishioners and inspiring young people who are becoming disenchanted with Christianity, thinking of it as the religion of whites:

We can get those young men and women ... to see that Jesus was a serious man precisely because he ... was concerned about their problems. He was concerned about bread. He opened and started Operation Breadbasket a long time ago. He initiated the first sit-in movement. [He is] the greatest revolutionary that history has ever known, and when people tell us that when we stand up like we stand up that we got our inspiration from this or that ... go back and let them know where we got our inspiration.¹²

And alluding to Lk. 4.16-30, King proclaimed that there is a revolutionary urge in Christianity that many have failed to see:

You don't have to go to Karl Marx to learn how to be a revolutionary. I didn't get my inspiration from Karl Marx. I got it from a man named Jesus, a Galilean savior. He said he was anointed to deal with the problems of the poor, and those who were in captivity, and preached the acceptable year of the Lord. That's revolutionary. And that is where we get our inspiration.¹³

Intriguingly, these lines represent an analogical movement from a discussion of the themes of Jubilee and relief for the poor in the Sermon at Nazareth (Lk. 4.18-20) to King's political insistence that these ideas depict a 'revolutionary Christianity' at the centre of the Jesus movement. It is as if Jesus' proclamation of Jubilee for both Jewish and Gentile peasants in antiquity inspires and becomes an analogue for King's own preaching in the fledgling Poor People's Campaign that hoped to build an interracial coalition for poverty relief in the United States.

¹² King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

¹³ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

The third part of the speech discusses King's sense of urgency about the upcoming Poor People's Campaign in Washington. This section is the heart of the speech and has three scenes in which King describes the social context for the Poor People's Campaign, urges that the campaign needs to be supported by the SCLC, and boldly asserts that the campaign is for the church. In discussing the context for the Poor People's Campaign, King links the explosions of Black violence over the preceding few summers to Black despair regarding unrelenting poverty and bad economic conditions. Though he is empathetic about the despair that provokes these disruptions, he pragmatically asserts that such riots are impractical because the suffering and loss of life and property outweigh any gains:

We have to face this as an honest fact that no substantive change has come to America or to any city as a result of a riot And yet something has to be done, to get this nation to see that it has a moral responsibility to see that everybody in this country should have a job or an income.¹⁴

King saw the list of demands that were to be presented to the nation's leaders at the Poor People's March as a constructive alternative to riots and 'timid supplications for justice', arguing that 'this country never moves on the question of civil rights or genuine equality for the [Blacks] until it's made to move through pressure'. Illustrating this point, King notes that the Civil Rights Commission had recommended everything that protestors wanted a full three years before the march in Birmingham, but pointed out that nothing was done until people faced police dogs and fire hoses. Similarly, the Civil Rights Commission had recommended everything protestors wanted two years before the dramatic marches in Selma that finally moved lawmakers to action. In this section, King is certain that nothing will be done in securing economic justice for Blacks and others trapped in poverty until there are massive protests.

The speech goes on to outline the strategy of the campaign that will begin with an intense effort to train 3,000 poor people in non-violent direct action in a first wave, followed by thirty to sixty days of successive waves of marchers descending on Washington who will clog up highways and live in make-shift shanty-towns in the capital to symbolize Blacks' living conditions. According to King, 'you don't deal with pharaoh's hardened heart with just one plague. [You've] got to keep plaguing pharaoh'.¹⁵ Protests would escalate as would these 'plagues' and would include a plan to collect garbage from the marchers' shanty-towns and Washington D.C. ghettos and dump it on Capitol Hill. In this case, King allegorically sees marchers as representing God's agency in afflicting Egypt and moving the pharaoh of Congressional will to liberate the Black poor from the shackles of economic slavery.

The next scene in this section represents King's moral argument about why the campaign needs to be supported by SCLC and the broader church. This section contains an extended interaction with the parable of the rich man ('Dives' in King's speech) and

¹⁴ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

¹⁵ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

Lazarus in Lk. 16.19-31, a parable that featured frequently in King's sermons.¹⁶ King's proposition in this section is that Blacks in the SCLC and the Black middle class in America must not let their poorer brothers and sisters be ignored while lacking the resources of the richer members of the community.¹⁷ King's exegesis of the parable begins by noting what he thinks is *not* taught in the parable, making the point that the parable is not a sweeping indictment against all kinds of wealth, but rather represents the need for deep reflection about how one handles wealth. Indeed, King asserts that, as a rich man who fails to handle wealth well, 'Dives went to hell because he sought to be a conscientious objector in the war against poverty'.¹⁸

Who in the modern context does King see as analogous to the rich man of the parable? In this 1968 'Minister in the Valley' speech, King is not nearly as subtle as he was in earlier sermons on this text as he boldly proclaimed that 'America is going to hell' and that 'America is Dives' (emphasis added). King's heightened global sensitivities in 1968 led him to the conclusion that America has 'participated in the economic exploitation of Africa, and Asia, and Latin America', and he notes that spending 4-5 per cent of the nation's GDP could rid the *earth* of poverty and bridge the gulf between the haves and the have-nots in this country as well. In this case echoing language from the parable of the Prodigal Son, King declares: 'This Congress, if it does not come to itself, is going to hell; a hell that God has planned'. Thus, in correlating Dives with America, King draws an analogy between the first world and the rich man, on the one hand, and between the two-thirds world and Lazarus, on the other. But note that King also continues his penchant for exploring intra-community tensions when he talks about the gulf between haves and have-nots in this country, implicitly correlating America's haves and Dives, on the one hand, and America's have-nots and Lazarus, on the other. He creates a biblical amalgamation of correspondences in which Congressional America is Dives, on the one hand, who is going to hell because of how he handles wealth, and the Prodigal Son, on the other hand, a move that sets this Congressional moral failure *inside* the context of the family.

In the next section, King's vision of the Poor People's Campaign imaginatively appropriates the imagery of the Apocalypse to describe his vision of how poor people will march out of their economic oppression in the cities and towns across the country and stream into Washington D.C. in a way that is analogous to the gathering of the great multitude from every people tribe and nation pictured in Rev. 7.9-17. In place of the innumerable multitude of white-robed saints who have escaped from great tribulation, King imagines thousands of poor people descending on Washington for a month-long period of demonstrations. Instead of the question and answer exchanged between the elder and John about the identity of the multitude in Rev. 7.13-17, King imagines a conversation in which an unnamed congressman asks questions about the massive size of the Poor People's Campaign crowd:

¹⁶ This text was also the focus in two other of King's sermons: 'To Serve the Present Age', 1967, unpublished manuscript; 'Dives and Lazarus', 1963, unpublished manuscript.

¹⁷ In 1967, King argues that the church, 'in order to serve the present age, will have to call on the nation and all men [*sic*] of good will to be rid of the triple evils of racism, poverty, and war' (King, 'To Serve the Present Age').

¹⁸ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

And after we get to moving, people will be coming from everywhere. And I want some Congressman to go to the window and look out, and say, 'I see a lot of people on these highways. Where are these people coming from? Who are they?' And I want somebody to go in there and say 'They are coming up, out of Mississippi and Alabama.' I want somebody to go by there and say, 'They are coming from the ghettos of Chicago and Detroit, Newark, New York, and Philadelphia.' I want somebody to say 'They are coming up out of great trials and tribulation. They are coming up out of years of neglect, and years of hurt' ... And I want somebody else to ask 'How many do you see out there?' I want somebody just to say, 'I've been trying to count them all the week. But it seems to me to be a number that no man can number.'¹⁹

Rather than a statement that the poor are coming 'from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages' as in Rev. 7.9, King notes that the multitude in D.C. come from states in the deep south and from major US cities, especially those experiencing race riots. Thus, in both cases the multitude is one that comes out of great tribulation though the causes of the tribulation differ in details. The great distress of the protestors in Washington D.C. comes from the twin evils of racism and poverty. According to King 'they are coming up out of years of neglect, years of hurt', while the distress of the innumerable crowd in the Apocalypse comes from a variety of sources alluded to in Rev. 2–3, from pressure to participate in empire and its corrupting wealth, from inter-ethnic tension, and from socio-economic deprivation.²⁰

King's exegesis in the final scene takes up analysis of the parable of the Good Samaritan and uses it to comment on the state of race relations in his context. In this section King argues that the civil rights movement demands from clergy and from the SCLC a 'committed empathy and a kind of dangerous altruism' that is analogous to the courageous and gracious action of the Samaritan in Lk. 10.25–37. King skims the details of the well-known story, and only momentarily dwells on the fact that the Samaritan was a man of 'another race'. He imagines that the Priest and Levite bypassed the robbery victim not out of religious duty or obligation, but out of fear: 'Maybe the robbers are still around ... If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?' Evocatively, similar to the way that Jesus shifts a question about 'who is my neighbour?' to one that dwelt on the matter of 'being a neighbour' (Lk. 10.36), King insists that the heroism of the Samaritan emerged when he reversed the question 'What will happen to me?' by asking 'If I do not stop to help this man, *what will happen to him?*' Analogously connecting this to the Poor People's Campaign, King in effect poses an *intra-racial* challenge to the SCLC to act like the Samaritan and imagine what will happen to Black brothers and sisters inside the Black community who are suffering in poverty if *they* do not take a stand. Then, just as his earlier invocation of the story of Dives and Lazarus did double

¹⁹ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

²⁰ For analogues that similarly connect the contemporary Black Lives Matter civil rights protest movement to womanist exegesis of Revelation, see Love Sechrest, 'Antitypes, Stereotypes, and Antetypes: Jezebel, the Sun Woman, and Contemporary Black Women', in *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse*, ed. Gay L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace (Semeia Studies 85; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 113–38.

duty by symbolizing inter-group and intra-group conflict, King adds an inter-group illustration by drawing a parallel between the Samaritan story and a period in his own life when he took a public stand against the Vietnam War. He tells about how much that posture cost him in terms of lost support in the press, diminished regard from the Johnson administration, and broken relationships with white allies and with Blacks in the movement alike, to say nothing of the material costs of lost donations to the SCLC under King's leadership. In reply to a reporter who asked about the damage to his reputation for taking this unpopular stand against the Vietnam War, King answered:

Sir, I'm sorry, you don't know me. I'm not a [consensus] leader. I don't determine what is right and wrong by looking at the budget of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or by taking a Gallup [Poll] of the majority opinion. Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus. On some positions, cowardice asks the question 'Is it safe?' Expediency asks the question 'Is it politic?' And vanity comes along and asks the question 'Is it popular?' But conscience asks the question 'Is it right?' And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because conscience tells him that it is right. And this is where ... we must go as ministers of the gospel.²¹

Thus, King's interpretation of the Good Samaritan does double duty by focusing on inter-group and intra-group conflict, and we shall see that this same dual concern for internal and external issues prevails in my own reading of this parable.

2 A second look at the Good Samaritan: An African-American reading of Lk. 10.25-32

Few treatments of the parable of the Good Samaritan adequately explore the relationship of the parable to its literary context in Lk. 9.51–10.24. Interpreters note that Luke has six episodes featuring Samaritans in Luke-Acts, in contrast to a complete absence of this group in Mark and single appearances in Matthew and John.²² The brief mention of Jesus' foray into Samaritan territory in Lk. 9.51–56 serves to highlight Jesus' rejection by Samaritans,²³ and this tableau is consistent with the long history of ethnic conflict between Samaritans and Jews, arising from disagreements about the rival temple institutions and debates about the canon.²⁴

²¹ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

²² Samaritan episodes in Luke-Acts: Lk. 9.51–56; 10.25–37; 17.11–19; Acts 1.8; 8.4–25; 15.3; cf. Mt. 10.5; Jn 4.4–40; cf. 8.48.

²³ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 405. Robert C. Tannehill (*Luke* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 170) notes that both of these episodes prefigure Jesus' final rejection in Jerusalem at the cross.

²⁴ J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Leicester/Downers Grove, IL: Apollos/IVP, 2003), 166; Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 346.

Luke 9.51–10.24 also appeals to imagery from the Elijah–Elisha cycle. While the connection with Elijah–Elisha imagery is explicit in Lk. 4.25–27, the connection is more allusive in 9.51–10.24. Jesus’ journey with his disciples to Jerusalem, the place where he will be taken up, echoes Elijah and Elisha’s journey to Jericho, the place where Elijah would be caught up (2 Kgs 2.1–2).²⁵ The allusions to the Elijah–Elisha cycle are even more marked with the mention of ‘fire from heaven’ in 9.54–55. In these verses the disciples are angry at the Samaritans’ rejection of Jesus and ask to call down heavenly fire upon them, in effect reprising Elijah’s response to the affront arising from Ahaziah’s idolatry (2 Kgs 1.1–3, 10–14). However, Jesus’ refusal to sanction the recalcitrant Samaritans in this way contrasts with Elijah’s fiery solution and is more similar to his handling of the rejection of his own people in Nazareth at 4.30 and at 9.5 where he advises disciples to shake the dust off their feet when they are not welcomed in Israelite towns. Jesus’ restraint indicates that he did not regard Samaritans as idolaters or heretics like Ahaziah, but that he sees them as insiders in that he responds to their rejection in a way similar to that proposed for Israelites in 9.5.²⁶ Jesus’ characterization of Samaritans as ‘foreigners’ in 17.18 acknowledges that most Jews would count Samaritans as outsiders, but his foray into Samaritan territory and his response to Samaritan rejection tacitly acknowledges the difference between the Samaritans of Lk. 9 and Ahaziah’s idolatry in 2 Kgs 1, as a closer examination of Lk. 10.25–37 will confirm.²⁷

The connection between 9.51–56 and the narrative in 9.58–10.24 builds on the observation that Jesus sees Samaritans as insiders – departed brethren if you will – inasmuch as the gathering of the seventy (9.58–62) and the sending of the seventy (10.1–24) function to develop the theme of Jesus’ mission to re-gather Israel.²⁸ As others have remarked, these sayings function literarily as the gathering of the seventy.²⁹ This suggests to some that these disciples will be venturing into Gentile territories, though the judgements against Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum still seem to have a Jewish context in mind for this mission. It is plausible that the note about eating and drinking in 10.7 simply recognizes that there was more variety concerning degrees of kashrut observance in the Diaspora than in Palestine.³⁰ What is especially important for our purposes is that the juxtaposition of this episode with Jesus’ prior entry into Samaritan territory implies that Samaritans would have been welcome to the company of the seventy.

Thus the literary context of the Good Samaritan concerns the intra-racial gathering of disciples for a mission to Israel, and indeed may be pictured as the conclusion, or

²⁵ Tannehill, *Luke*, 169.

²⁶ See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 403–4 and especially Martina Böhm, *Samarien und die Samaritai bei Lukas: Eine Studie zum religionshistorischen und traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund der lukanischen Samarientexte und zu deren topographischer Verhaftung* (WUNT 2.111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 205–38.

²⁷ See Snodgrass, *Stories*, 342–3 for a survey of the range of Jewish opinion on relations with Samaritans; also see Böhm, *Samarien*, 37–203 on this point.

²⁸ Böhm also sees 9.51–56 as initiating a mission to Israel, rather than a prophecy of the mission to Gentiles (*Samarien*, 205–38).

²⁹ On this passage as the gathering of the seventy, see, for example, Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 400; Tannehill, *Luke*, 174.

³⁰ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 434–7; cf. Lk. 10.8.

perhaps even an interruption, in Jesus' discourse with the seventy.³¹ The foray into Samaritan territory hints that Samaritans are to be included in this mission as members of Israel, and suggests that the re-gathering of the family is not simply a matter of geography, but also involves reconciliation of long-standing breaches in the family. If the disciples had missed the subtle implications of his attempt to gather co-workers from among the Samaritans, they would have a harder time missing the implications of the parable of the Good Samaritan: In Jesus' eyes Samaritans are Israelites, too.³²

Moving now to a consideration of the parable itself, we find that it is most often interpreted as a simple example story that illustrates the idea that for Jesus love of neighbour interracially bridges ethnic and religious boundaries.³³ The hero of the piece is a Samaritan who is despised by the religious leaders of Israel, but who also manages to outdo them in obedience to Torah.³⁴ The most prominent elements in the first section suggest that interpretation of the Law is the central issue in this discourse.³⁵ In addition, we note that the lawyer's summary of the two tables of the Law, which group the Ten Commandments into a vertical group that concern worship of God and a horizontal group that concern justice within the community, is one which garners Jesus' assent (10.28) and is consistent with a broad swathe of Jewish interpretation in the period. In 10.27 the lawyer recites the *Shema* from Deut. 6.5 which is the confession about the Israelites' devotion to God that still stands at the heart of Jewish identity alongside the command to love the neighbour as self from Lev. 19.18. However, we should note that the ensuing dialogue makes it clear that the obligation to love the resident alien as self from nearby Lev. 19.34 is also close to hand.³⁶ In one sense the parable may be interpreted as a contrast between the lawyer's desire to discuss the Israelite neighbour as in Lev. 19.18 with Jesus' interests in pushing the boundaries of love of neighbour to include everyone living in the community as in Lev. 19.34.³⁷

The boundaries that determined who was and was not a neighbour were an issue not only among Pharisees and others who seem regularly to have debated the topic but also for Luke's first gentile-Christian readers.³⁸ Some texts from the Second Temple period suggest that one should not do good to sinners and the ungodly (cf. Sir. 28.4; 1QS 1.1-3, 9-10; Tob. 4.17), while others show that love of neighbour was understood

³¹ For more on Jewish constructions of race and ethnicity in the period, see Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (LNTS 94; London: T&T Clark, 2009).

³² Contra Darrell Bock, *Luke* (2 vols; Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 2:970.

³³ See especially Hays, *From Every People and Nation*, 166-71, 204.

³⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories*, 348; also see Steven L. McKenzie, *All God's Children: A Biblical Critique of Racism* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1997), 93-7.

³⁵ The most prominent sections are marked throughout with the imperfective verbal aspect, here regarding the lawyer's action to test Jesus (present tense ἐκπείραζων in 10.25) and reinforced by the verbal aspect in Jesus' answering question 'How do you read [present tense ἀναγινώσκεις] [the law]?' Similarly, though on other grounds, see Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 428.

³⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson (*The Gospel of Luke* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 172) raises an interesting point about the way that the LXX translates the idea of 'resident alien' from the Hebrew of 19.34 by using the Greek word 'proselyte', a translation that essentially collapses Lev. 19.18 and 19.34 into a single imperative that commands love within the Israelite community.

³⁷ For an excellent take on this perspective, see Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 424-32. Johnson's reading (*Gospel of Luke*, 173-5) is an unusual case in that it concurs with much of what is presented here, while still reading Jesus' final question as a change of topic.

³⁸ Johnson, *Gospel of Luke*, 172-3.

by many Jews to extend to those outside of the Jewish people (*Jos. Asen.* 27–29; *T. Iss.* 5.2; 7.6).³⁹ Given this context, it may be that the lawyer asks whether the kinship-love of Lev. 19.18 should be extended to strangers and converts, a question that would be vitally important as Jesus gathers the seventy for a new and broader mission to marginalized Israelites in the Diaspora.

Luke 10.30–31 describes the victim's journey down from Jerusalem, and the travel of the priest on that same road may imply the common Judean origin of the two men, though this common identity is not at all required.⁴⁰ We might also suppose that the other characters have been chosen to represent the leaders of Israel.⁴¹ However, Michel Gourgues suggests that here we have an allusion to a tripartite formula that was frequently used in Judaism whereby such stories feature priests and Levites followed by someone who is a representative of the ordinary Israelite.⁴² An example of this formula from the Babylonian Talmud seems similar to the situation in this parable:⁴³

R. Meir used to say, 'Whence do we know that even an idolater who studies Torah is equal to a High Priest? From the following verse: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances which, if a man do, he shall live by them." It does not say "If a Priest, Levite, or Israelite do, he shall live by them," but "a man"; here, then, you can learn that even a heathen who studies the Torah is equal to a High Priest!' (*b. 'Abod. Zar.* 3a; cf. *b. Sanh.* 59a)

Thus, where one would expect an ordinary Jew to complete the triadic priest, Levite, and Israelite formula, in Luke we find a Samaritan instead. While some might conclude that Jesus is extending the obligations to outsiders which are normally reserved for insiders in this parable, it might be more in keeping with the function of such triadic formulas to conclude that Jesus is here suggesting that Samaritans *are* Israelites, even if they are members who had been then long outcast.⁴⁴ Though some might suggest that Lk. 17.18, where Jesus labels a Samaritan a 'foreigner', resists this interpretation, it may be that that passage makes a point similar to the one made in this parable. Contrary to expectations, it is the Samaritan who fills the role of the 'ordinary Israelite', exhibiting faithfulness to the commandments beyond the behaviour exhibited by the elite.⁴⁵

More significant for our purposes is the tantalizing possibility that 2 Chron. 28.8–15 provides an intertestamental LXX analogy for this parable. According to the Chronicler,

³⁹ For more on ancient texts that shed light on this passage, see the helpful summary in Snodgrass, *Stories*, 338–43, 45–47.

⁴⁰ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 429 n. 114.

⁴¹ Johnson, *Gospel of Luke*, 173.

⁴² Michel Gourgues, 'The Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan Revisited: A Critical Note on Luke 10:31–35', *JBL* 117 (1998): 709–13.

⁴³ See William Stegner, 'The Parable of the Good Samaritan and Lev 18:5', in *The Living Text*, ed. Dennis E. Groh and Robert Jewett (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 27–38.

⁴⁴ There is evidence that there were varying opinions on the status of Samaritans among Jews during the period: see Snodgrass, *Stories*, 342–3 citing *m. Nid.* 7.3; *b. Nid.* 56b; cf. Josephus, *War*, 3.35–53, as well as the longer discussion in Böhm, *Samaritanen*, 37–203.

⁴⁵ Similarly Böhm, who emphasizes the Samaritan as an example of halachic rigour in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Samaritanen*, 259–60).

King Ahaz of Judah was defeated by King Pekah of Israel in Samaria because the Judahites had abandoned the Lord (28.6; cf. 2 Kgs 15.27, 37). When Pekah's conquering army returns to the capital city of Samaria with thousands of Judahite captives and great booty, a prophet confronts the army insisting that it is sinful to kill the captives and to subjugate them as slaves: 'Send the captives back whom you have taken from your kindred' (28.11). In vv. 12-15, leaders from the tribe of Ephraim also stand up against the army and act as 'good' Samaritans in terms that are reminiscent of our passage in Luke. These Samaritans

took the [Judahite] captives, and they clothed all their naked ones from the spoil; and they gave them clothes and sandals, fed them and gave them drink, anointed them with oil, led all their feeble ones on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brothers; then they returned to Samaria. (2 Chron. 28.15; cf. Lk. 10.30, 34)

It is not too difficult to see that the Good Samaritan of Lk. 10 is analogous to the good Samaritans of 2 Chron. 28. In 2 Chron. 28, a conquering Samaritan army treats their Judahite captives like the kinsmen they are, whereas in Lk. 10 a Samaritan treats a man who may be a Jew with kindness, despite a long history of enmity between their peoples. In both cases the victims were (apparently) from Jerusalem, unclothed, beaten, and without possessions (2 Chron. 28.5, 6-8, 15; Lk. 10.30). In both cases, Samari(t)ans transport the victims by donkey, anoint them, and take them to recuperate in Jericho (2 Chron. 28.15; Lk. 10.30, 34-35).⁴⁶ Read through the lens of 2 Chron. 28, it is as if Jesus is saying that the Samaritan helps the injured man because he recognizes his kinship with that man as a Jew, a reasonable if not required assumption about the victim's identity; indeed, we could say that he is moved to compassion by the mere possibility that the injured man was a kinsman. This plea for recognition of the common kinship between Samaritan and Jew is a plea for acceptance of the *intra*-racial marginalized within the community. This plea goes beyond the idea that an obligation to the other is uncircumscribed by the normal calculus of kinship as in the traditional reading of this parable. In a striking way, our parable goes beyond that message by demanding that we add the calculus of kinship to our vision of the other and begin to view the outsider *as family*.

As described above, Jesus does not answer the original question from 10.29 – 'Who is my neighbour?' – but asks a different one – 'Who acted like a neighbour (10.36)?'⁴⁷ Hence, most judge that the question in 10.36 is one that subtly shifts the terms of the debate, from one about the extent of obligations to neighbour to one that focuses on the characteristics of neighbourliness, a shift that forces the lawyer to acknowledge the

⁴⁶ This list of similarities is inspired by a similar accounting by Spencer, though several of his adduced parallels between the prophets and leaders in 2 Chron. 28 and the priest and Levite in Lk. 10 are less than compelling (see F. Scott Spencer, '2 Chronicles 28:5-15 and the Parable of the Good Samaritan', *WTJ* 46 (1984), 322-7). One key difference between the Lucan version of the tale of the Good Samaritan and this OT *Vorlage* concerns the emphasis on the Samaritan's return which is foregrounded in Lk. 10 but lacks a counterpart in 2 Chron. 28.

⁴⁷ Snodgrass insinuates that this kind of odd reversal also occurs elsewhere in Luke: 7.36-50; 12.13-15; 17.20-12; 18.18-23 and parallels (*Stories*, 342-3). It may be that 7.36-50 is a valid analogue, but there are other explanations for the shifts in the other passages, including the interpretation of the so-called reversal offered here.

Samaritan as the moral exemplar.⁴⁸ The question is the most heavily marked verse in the episode with the main verb δοκέω foregrounded in the present tense and the even more heavily marked front-grounding of γίνομαι in the perfect tense: ‘Which of these three, seems to you to *be* a neighbour (τίς ... πλησίον δοκεῖ σοι γεγονέναι)?’ However, our understanding of the intertextual relationship between Lk. 10 and 2 Chron. 28 suggests that Jesus does respond to the lawyer’s question after all. The key to unlocking this parable is to understand the real question asked by the lawyer in 10.29. When the lawyer asks ‘Who is my neighbour?’ he is not asking ‘To whom should I show love?’ as is commonly assumed – interpreters are correct in noting that the latter question is never really answered. Rather, we should understand the lawyer’s question to be ‘Who constitutes the Israelite neighbour being discussed in Lev. 19.18?’ or ‘How does one identify the Israelite about whom the commandments in Lev. 19.18 are concerned?’ In other words, the question at stake in Lk. 10.30 is: Of the three people in the parable, *which one reveals himself to be* (γεγονέναι; 10.36) *a true member of Israel?* This question is directly answered by the parable: It is the one who lives obeying the two tables of the law regarding love of God (Deut. 6.5) and love of family (Lev. 19.18; cf. 19.34).⁴⁹

I suggest that the passage forms a conclusion to Jesus’ instructions for a broader Jewish mission. Adjacent as it is to the sending of the seventy assistants who re-gather the dispersed of Israel, it is a story that helps the seventy identify those formerly outcast from Israel. Thus, the parable prophesies the reconciliation between Israel and Samaritans which is fulfilled later in Acts 8. As with the Chronicler in 2 Chron. 28, Jesus is here primarily concerned about the unity of Israel and is at pains to heal schisms within the community of faith which are painfully exhibited throughout Acts and especially at the end in Acts 28.25–28. On this reading, the parable is an intra-racial exhortation for Jews to recognize Samaritans as brothers and sisters and as Israelites; it rebukes attitudes like the lawyer’s which try to justify an exclusivist posture towards other marginalized people in the community like sinners and tax collectors.

Thus an analogy for the intra-Israel reading offered above might involve an associative correlation between the ancient Samaritan–Jewish conflict and contemporary ethno-racial tension regarding the ‘forever foreigner’ trope in the United States as applied to all Americans of colour. This trope, in which people of colour are viewed as outsiders who are ‘not real Americans’,⁵⁰ is primarily associated

⁴⁸ See, for example, Johnson, *Gospel of Luke*, 173; Spencer, ‘2 Chronicles 28:5–15’, 341–2; Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 432; Marshall, *Gospel of Luke*, 445–6.

⁴⁹ Spencer (‘2 Chronicles 28:5–15’, 335) notes that Lev. 19.17–18 is ‘a composite unit, we find the command to love one’s neighbor ... which concludes v 18 as nothing but the positive reversal of the negative exhortation opening v 17: “You shall not hate your brother (*’ah*) in your heart”.

⁵⁰ A recent global survey of 1,500 people surveyed across 33 countries found that people often overestimate the number of foreign-born people in their country. In the United States the average guess was that 33 per cent of residents were foreign-born while the actual was 14 per cent. The comparable overestimates in Canada were 39 per cent estimated versus 21 per cent actual; in the UK 25 per cent estimated versus 13 per cent actual; in France, 26 per cent estimated versus 12 per cent; and in Italy 26 per cent estimated versus 9 per cent actual (Ipsos MORI, ‘Perils of Perception Survey’, 2015. Available online: <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/perils-perception-2015> (accessed 22 June 2017)). It is worth noting that in the United States the guess that 33 per cent of residents in the country are foreign-born is uncomfortably close to the actual number of *citizens of color* in the country, which could suggest that in the view of some at least, every non-white person seen is not a ‘real American’ notwithstanding their citizenship status.

with racist attitudes that exclude Asian Americans from insider status because of phenotypical differences,⁵¹ but its contours were also evident in the so-called 'Birther' movement during the Obama presidency, which challenged the native-born citizenship of the first African-American president and hence contested his eligibility to hold the office. The reading of the parable above suggests that marginalized persons are indeed real citizens who can be moral exemplars despite being regarded as outsiders by some; it suggests that the marks of true citizenship are deeds of mercy to marginalized insiders.

The idea that Blacks, Muslims, Mexicans and other citizens of colour are not regarded as 'real' members of the American family is rampant in US politics in the Trump era, and this reading of the parable calls for intra-national moral courage on behalf of all of those occupying these marginalized spaces in the context of an ascendant white nationalist xenophobia. For example, Japanese Americans, who remember the hostility of the American public in the aftermath of the Second World War-era Pearl Harbour attacks, are Samaritans when they stand in solidarity with Muslim Americans who occupy an analogous position in society ever since the September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C.⁵²

In fact, this intra-racial interpretation mimics the results of the traditional interracial interpretation by defining the kinship community as analogous to a single national 'family'. Hence, my intra-Israel reading of the parable works when considering tensions within ethno-racial subgroups as well as tensions within the national community by using elastic boundaries with respect to the definition of kinship or family. Just as King used the parable to criticize the Black clergy for lack of concern about the plight of poor Blacks, so too could intra-racial analogues to my reading exhort middle-class African-American Christians to eschew the respectability politics that inhibits many of them from direct ministry to the black casualties of the prison-industrial complex.⁵³ Thus, my own reading of the parable exhibits the dual vision that was so characteristic of King's preaching and activism, a vision that simultaneously leverages readings of scripture for impact on interracial relations as well as tensions within the Black church.

⁵¹ K. Kale Yu, 'Christian Model Minority: Racial and Ethnic Formation in Asian American Evangelicalism' *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion*, 7, no. 4, (2016). Available online: <http://raceandreligion.com/JRER/JRER.html> (accessed 17 February 2017); also see Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, for more on comparisons between ancient and modern conceptions of ethno-racial difference.

⁵² See, for example, Kimberly Veklerov, 'Formerly Interned Japanese Americans Stand Up against Muslim Hate', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 December 2015. Available online: <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Formerly-interned-Japanese-Americans-stand-up-6716136.php>. (accessed 18 June 2017).

⁵³ A similar situation may prevail regarding middle-class Mexican Americans with respect to the policing of their communities. For more on the over-policing of Blacks and Latinos in the US prison-industrial complex, see Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2010). See also Patricia Hill Collins' discussion of respectability politics (e.g. a desire to exhibit superlative public respectability as a way of eschewing stereotyped behaviour and earning white approval) in the African-American community in *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Conclusion: Analogues to the Parable of the Good Samaritan in African-American interpretation

King utilizes the unknown victim in the parable to develop both intra-racial and interracial analogues in his speech to the SCLC. By asking the SCLC leaders to act like the Samaritan vis-à-vis the poorest of the poor in the Black community and imagine what will happen to Black brothers and sisters who are suffering in poverty if they do not take a stand, King calls them to the kind of intra-racial love of family that is also at the heart of my interpretation of the Good Samaritan, especially when it is seen in light of its own inter-canonical analogy with the story in 2 Chron. 28. However, King broadens the scope of his interpretation through an interracial use of analogical reasoning when he illustrates the message of the parable by means of his isolating and unpopular moral stance against the Vietnam War, much as the traditional interpretation focuses on relationships with unknown outsiders. King imaginatively reads himself into the parable by asking 'What would happen to the Vietnamese people, the more than five hundred thousand of our own soldiers, [and] the soul of our nation if I did not take a stand against it?'⁵⁴ Together King's appeal to inner-Black familial dynamics as well as external and international dynamics in the kinship of the human family represents an authentic and powerful contemporary reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan that honours the parable's own intertextual relationship with the traditions of Israel, as well as those modern readers who see in it a perfect description of other-regard that can address interracial conflict.

Indeed, King brings this same capacity for double vision to his interpretation of the conflict at Nazareth in Lk. 4.18-20. Though some might decide that this passage is a simple story about intra-racial conflict between Jesus and the Nazarenes, in King's hands the echoes of Jubilee and the allusion to interracial relations in Jesus' response in 4.24-27 becomes an analogue for a multiracial coalition for poverty relief in the United States through the Poor People's Campaign. Likewise, his appeals to the story of Dives and Lazarus are characterized by concern with intra-racial and interracial issues: first with respect to relations between the Black middle and poor classes, and second with concern about tensions between the haves and the have-nots across the United States broadly. His double vision manifests itself again as he then uses the story to articulate concerns about poverty relief on an interracial/international scale.

My own interpretation of the Samaritan story also participates in a similar interpretive trajectory, but it does so through an intra-racial familial focus on a story that is widely seen as an exhortation about easing interracial tensions and thus extending Christian concern to the despised outsider. It manifests intra-racial and interracial concerns by creating analogues with expansive *and* narrow definitions of family. My reading implicitly recognizes that concern for the marginalized within one's own family is an important expression of King's revolutionary Christianity, but the interpretation also recognizes that concern for the poor and outcast in one's own family is the other side

⁵⁴ King, 'To Minister in the Valley'.

of the coin of international concern for the poor and outcast. Building on instincts of DuBois and the African-American interpreters before me, I suggest that there is something about the African-American experience of race that brings with it a capacity for recognizing that there is something deeply amiss in a community's self-conception when it marginalizes those in its own communities. More broadly, a diminished capacity to see ourselves as others see us inevitably diminishes our capacity to engage those outside of our direct line-of-sight. Indeed, this capacity to discern a difference between what one sees and what one knows that others see has long been a condition of African-American experience, and it is this impulse that stands at the centre of an African-American reading of scripture in the tradition of Martin Luther King Jr.

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