

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

**AN ENCOUNTER OF JESUS WITH THE SAMARITAN
WOMAN AS A MODEL FOR MISSION TODAY: JOHN 4:4-42**

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**A Long Essay submitted in the partial fulfilment of the requirements
For the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies**

Nairobi 2005



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DEDICATION

To my Parents

And

All the members of the Vincentian Congregation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“... Every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not from God, but is the spirit of antichrist ...” (1Jn 4:3). Woe to me if I do not preach that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the saviour of the world. In my research on the **Enconnter scene of Jesus and the Samaritan woman**, I have received assist and encouragement from God and different individuals.

First and foremost I acknowledge God almighty who has given me wisdom and enlightenment to complete this thesis. My immense gratitude goes to my humble and caring moderator Rev. Fr. Ambrose Mutinda, C.S.Sp. for his availability and friendly admonitions, which oriented this essay. Most special thanks to Bro. Matthew Kuthanapilly SDB, who helped me to organize the text. It is on the same note that I recognize and appreciate the encouragement of Bro.Biju Moonjely V.C and Bro. Antony Vadakkemury V.C who read this project with dedication, attention and care. I am particularly grateful to all Vincentian Fathers and Brothers who are working in our East African Mission for their brotherly affection, concern and encouragment.

To all, I say thank you and may God bless you.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor Degree in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Jesus is the one sent by the Father to reveal the Father to humanity and to share with us his life. In Christ, God allows himself to be represented: “the messenger is a fully accredited representative of the one who has sent him” (Jn 14:9-10). In the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Pope Paul VI tells that Jesus Christ is the model of evangelization. Jesus is going to another culture to invite the people into the Kingdom of God (Jn 4:4-42). Jesus’ words and deeds directed people to this Kingdom. And this same Jesus, the first missionary sent by God the Father had told his disciples “to learn from me” (Mt 11:29), and to do what he had done; “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mk 14:24). So, in this dimension Jesus is the best example for missionary work, Jesus said, “for I have set you an example” (Jn 13:15).

The New Testament contains four distinct Gospel portraits of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. All four Gospels attempt to bring the good news of the story of Jesus to the needs of a particular community. Each Gospel deals with the meaning of Jesus’ identity and mission in its own way.

The formative issue for the Gospel of John seems to have been the question: who is Jesus? The Gospel narrative is an attempt to provide fresh answers to this question. It seeks to move the reader away from overly confident assumptions, false certitudes, and complacency about Jesus’ identity. It offers each reader of the gospel the opportunity to discover Jesus for himself or herself. This purpose, to lead the reader to his or her own experience of Jesus, accounts for the distinctive literary style of John. The use of the extensive dialogues between Jesus and other characters would help to open the story to the reader’s own experience. For John the dialogue is a means of Jesus’ revelation of himself.

Women play significant role in the Gospel of John. This significance is evident both in the number of stories on which woman appear and in the theological importance of those stories. Women are Jesus' main conversation partners in three stories that reveal Jesus' identity (4:4-42; 7:53-8:11; 11:1-44). And the role of the mother of Jesus is also given an important place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Cana (2:1-11).

The first chapter of my essay is a study on the origin of the Samaritans, their religious status and the relationship between Samaritans and Jews. Then, my concern is to bring out how were the Samaritans treated in the synoptics. We also will uncover the understanding of Samaritans about themselves. And my attempt, in this chapter, is to show how much importance is given to understand the identity of Jesus, using different symbols.

The second chapter is dedicated to the detailed exegetical analysis of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4:4-42. The whole chapter deals with the dialogue of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. I set the conversation under different stages and show how did the conversation influenced her conversion. The Samaritan woman's perception of 'who Jesus is' has grown from 'a Jew', through 'sir' or 'Lord', to 'a Prophet', to 'a Messiah' or Christ' and at last the Samaritans' recognition of Jesus as 'the Savior of the world'.

The third chapter is an endeavor to bring forth the climax of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. I see this encounter scene as a excellent model for our missionary work in this modern world. This dialogue –analysis is an attempt to enter into the process of the divine human encounter and its forth coming fruits. Since both Jesus and the Samaritan woman play very important role bringing conversion and faith in God the Father, they can be seen as model for our missionary activities among our own people and among the non-Christians.

Chapter 1

Historical and Religious Settings of the Encounter

Introduction

Through this chapter I make an effort to bring out the historical and religious settings of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman. To have a clear idea of this encounter we should understand the identity of the Samaritans and the symbolic terms which Jesus uses in the encounter discourse with the woman. The Fourth Gospel, which is attributed to John, is full of symbolism. In this chapter I aim to bring the symbolic meanings that are needed for my research in this essay.

1.1 Who are the Samaritans?

When we think about the people who are called Samaritans, many questions may come to our consideration. Are they inhabitants of the region of Samaria? The answer to this question can be given from 2 Kings 17. Because the existence of a peculiar sect native to Samaria, the central region of Palestine, is first noticed in the Old Testament, 2 Kings 17 where they are called the Samaritans.¹ Some scholars agree that the Samaritans are different ethnic group. In the New Testament, the term Samaritan is used exclusively for the members of a particular ethno-religious community based in the

¹ Cf. G. CROSSLEY, *The Old Testament Explained and Applied*, 333.

region of Samaria. They were centered around the mount Gerizim but were also scattered throughout the area.²

Samaritans are either the direct descendants of the Northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh who managed to survive the fall of Northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians in 722 BC. Or, they are the descendants of Colonists brought into the region of Samaria by the Assyrians from other lands they conquered (2Kgs.17).³ The name 'Ephraim' in John makes an appeal that Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's hope for a people united, not only for the Jews of Judah, but also for the Samaritans who claimed to be descendants from the northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

1.1.1 The Etymology of the name 'Samaritans'

The Term **הַשְּׁמֶרִיטִים** which literally means the inhabitants of Samaria is the root word for Samaritans. The usage of this term **הַשְּׁמֶרִיטִים** is found only in 2 Kings 17:29, in the whole of the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint, Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that made by the Jews has attempted to translate the Hebrew term **הַשְּׁמֶרִיטִים** as **οἱ Σαμαριται**. The word 'Samaritans' is a direct translation of the Greek word **οἱ Σαμαριται** used in Greek Bible in 2 Kings 12:29. Samaritans never use this word to call themselves. They have preferred themselves to be called **שְׁמֶרִיטִים** which means 'keepers or observers of the law'.⁴

1.1.2 Identity of Samaritans according to Samaritans

The Samaritans themselves claim that they are the remnant of the Israelites and followers of Joshua who has always worshiped Yahweh at Shechem. When we come upon definite information concerning the Samaritans, we realize that "the Samaritans

² Cf. D. HAMM, "What the Samaritan Leper Sees: The Narrative Christology of Luke 17:11-19", *CBQ* 56, (1994) 278.

³ Cf. R. IRUDAYA, "Who are the Samaritans?", *Vidyajyothi*, 68, 2 (2004), 579.

⁴ Cf. Irudaya, 581.

appear as nothing else than a Jewish sect.”⁵ The one essential difference between them and Judaism is that their cult centers in Gerizim, not on Zion. They believed that they are the bearers of the true faith of ancient Israel as expounded by Moses and as practiced at mount Gerizim in ancient times.⁶ They call themselves שְׁמֹרִים which means observers of Torah. They understand themselves to be the descendants of Joseph’s tribes of ancient Israel as Jews are the descendants of the tribes of Judah. They believed only in the Pentateuch, which are the five books of Moses, which constitute the entire canon of the Samaritan community.⁷

1.1.3 Identity of Samaritans by Religion

Samaritans have always claimed that they have been a distinctive religious group holding the Israelite faith. They belong to the Israelite faith of Yahwehism and to the remnant of the Kingdom of Israel more particularly of the two northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. It seemed antecedently probable that “the Samaritans must be the heirs of the peculiar religious characteristics of northern Israel; they would be the lineal successors of the church of Elija, Elisha and Hosca, and of those Yahweh-enthusiasts, the family of Jehu.”⁸

1.1.3.1 The Belief of Samaritans

Samaritans worshiped God, Yahweh. Their understanding of doctrine of God affected particularly their understanding of eschatology. The modern Samaritans state their belief thus: “We believe only in God and in Moses, the Son of Amram, his servant, and in his Sacred Law and in the Mount Gerizim and in the day of punishment and

⁵ Cf. J.A.MONTGOMERY, *The Samaritans*, 46.

⁶ Cf. J.MACONALD, *The Theology of the Samaritans*, 422-423.

⁷ Cf. D.N.FREEDMAN, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 932.

⁸ Montgomery, 46.

reward.”⁹ They had only one God not unity of God, “God did not bear, was not born; he has no second, no companion, and is incomparable. He is alone, separate, pristine, eternal, by himself.”¹⁰ For them God is independent of space and time. God is “hidden, not appearing to sight, nothing is before him and after him nothing.”¹¹

1.1.4 Samaritans in the Synoptics

The words Samaria and Samaritans were used six times each in the New Testament. The first Gospel, which is according to Mark, did not mention Samaria or Samaritans. Mathew makes a note of the Samaritans once in his Gospel whereby Jesus is sending his twelve apostles on a mission into a Samaritan village (10:5-6).¹² Luke 9:51-55 refers to an episode in which Jesus and his disciples were refused hospitality by a Samaritan village. Samaritans were not friendly to Jews, especially when the Jews were passing through their territory on the way to the holy city, Jerusalem. Even if Samaritans refused Jesus, a Jew, He loved them and respected them as he did to anyone else. For example, Later on, in his travel narrative (10:30; 17:11-19) Jesus uses the despised Samaritans to teach further lessons about discipleship.¹³

The evangelist Luke, whose interest was in “the lost sheep of the Israel” gave the story of the healing of ten lepers, one of who was a Samaritan (17:11-19). In holding them to the Levitical law, he included the Samaritan with the rest as an Israelite. Luke may be indicating the possibility that status reversal, so much a part of his presentation of salvation thus far in the Gospel, extends to the Samaritans as well. The gratitude of the Samaritan was made to point a moral to the Jews even as was the faith of a heathen

⁹ Maconald, 49

¹⁰ Maconald, 67.

¹¹ Montgomery, 208..

¹² Cf. Irudaya, 580.

¹³ Cf. *TNJBC*, 701-702.

centurion upon another occasion, Mt 8:5-8.¹⁴ The Samaritan leper praises God for what Jesus, God's agent, has done to him. It is prominent because it shows eschatological fulfillment. What was promised in 2 Kings "Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel" (5:8), has come to fulfillment in Jesus. God's salvation is for all people.¹⁵ The three actions of the leper - Praising God, falling at Jesus' feet and thanking Jesus - shows that he has perceived that Jesus is the Saviour.

Luke makes a change of attitude, unlike the attitude of Samaritans towards Jesus and his disciples, by narrating the parable of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel (10:25-37). In the parable two important persons passed by on the other side (31-32). The priest and Levite did not care this wounded man. Against the picture thus established, the introduction of the third traveler is exciting. He being a Samaritan is a socio-religious outcast. Unlike the prior two characters, he is not portrayed as a holy man. His actions initially follow, and then depart from that of his predecessors. The first two came - saw - passed by on the other side. The third one came - saw - was moved with compassion - went to the wounded man and cared for him.¹⁶

1.1.4.1 Reverse Model Points to Universalism

Luke chapter 9 describes a journey Jesus took up to Jerusalem, apparently by the route through Samaria. But Samaritans refused a Jew and his disciples. In response to this inhospitability the disciples wanted to punish the Samaritans. They said, "Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?" (9:54), but as a response Jesus rebuked them. In the following chapter (Lk 10) itself Luke brings the parable of Good Samaritan. It can be an example of love of enemy, because Jesus loved the Samaritans who refused him. Jesus is the Saviour of his enemies too. This lengthy section (10:25-37) of the Gospel, then is like the rest of the Lucan narrative,

¹⁴Cf. Montgomery, 160-161.

¹⁵Cf. *TNJBC*, 709.

¹⁶Cf. J.B. GREEN, "The Gospel of Luke", *TNICNT*, 430-432.

sotereological in focus,¹⁷ and Jesus' demolition of barriers – separating men and women, children and those of high status, Samaritans and Jew, and so on – presages the achievement of a mission extending salvation even to the Gentiles (cf. 2:32, 3:6; 4:16-18). And in 17:11-19, the event of one Samaritan leper who came back to thank Jesus receives Salvation through his positive response to the mercy he has received.

1.2 Symbolic representations

The author of the fourth Gospel had an eye for symbolism. Many times he notes some little detail that is full of rich symbolism, and so again a depth of meaning is added to his narrative. The symbolic language of John's Gospel has long engaged the imagination of its readers. The leading symbols (e.g. light and darkness bread, living water) are difficult to define because they convey multiple meanings simultaneously. In terms of theological emphasis, I give special attention to the Johannine presentation of 'living-water' in the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman.

1.2.1 Use of Symbols in the Fourth Gospel

A symbol is an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance.¹⁸ In Johannine terms, symbols span the chiasm between what is "from above" and what is "from below" without collapsing the distinction. In the language of the Fourth gospel, God is "from above" and people are "from below". Jesus came from above, but he could not reveal divine truths in heavenly language. Therefore Jesus used familiar earthly images to convey his message.¹⁹ The symbols that are easiest to identify are expressed in the form of metaphors. Metaphors can be recognized because of its incongruity or contradiction results when a person speaks of one thing in terms of another. The Samaritan woman found Jesus sitting alone beside a well, and he asked her

¹⁷Cf. *TNICNT*, 399.

¹⁸ Cf. *CIDE*, 1480.

¹⁹ C.R. KOESTER, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 2.

for a drink. The woman demurred, but Jesus told her that if she had asked, he would have given her “living water” (4:10). The woman immediately objected, since the well was deep and Jesus did not even have a bucket. Her objection in turn provided an opportunity for Jesus to elaborate further on the meaning of his statement.²⁰

1.2.2 Samaritan Women as a Symbol

Symbolism in John’s Gospel centers on Jesus, the person in whom God is revealed. The people whom Jesus encounters play a vital supporting role in the narrative. The supporting Characters draw out facets of Jesus’ identity through their responses to his words and actions. There is an interconnection between the particular and the universal aspects of Jesus’ identity. He was a Jew who fulfilled the messianic expectations peculiar to Israel, yet he was also of significance for all people. This interplay between the particular and the universal is especially apparent in Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman, which follows a progression nearly identical to that just noted, relating it to the Samaritan as well as the Jewish religious tradition.²¹

1.2.3 Water as a Symbol

Earthly images could be used to bear witness to divine realities because the earth is God’s creation. This is one of the main theological underpinnings of Johannine symbolism. The Gospel declares that “no one has ever seen God” but that the only Son “has made him known” (1:8) by using images from the creation to bear witness to the Creator.

1.2.3.1 Water in Old Testament

Water, the primordial element, is first of all the source and strength of life, without it the earth is nothing but an arid desert. Thus water is most closely intermingled with

²⁰ Cf. Koester, 9.

²¹ Cf. Koester, 42

human life and the history of the people of the covenant. God, the Creator of this order, is the master of the waters (Job 5:10; Ps104:10-16). Psalm 104 sums up the admirable mastery of God over the waters. Water is the effect and the sign of the blessing of God towards who serve Him faithfully (Gn 27:28; Ps 133:3).²² Water is not only the power of life but also that which bathes and washes away stains (Ez 16:4-9; 23:40). God washes the sinner whose sins He forgives (Ps 51:4). In the Old Testament God himself is the “the fountain of living waters” (Jer 2:13; 17:13). His worshippers can drink from “the river of his delights” (Ps 36:8). The image is transferred from God to Wisdom (Wis 7:25; Son 4:15) and applied to the Torah.²³

1.2.3.2 Eschatological Water

The theme of water holds an important place in the perspective of restoration of the people of God. After the gathering together of all the dispersed, God will distribute in abundance the purify waters which will cleanse the heart of man and thus enable him to fulfill faithfully and completely the law of Yahweh (Ez 36:24-27).

In the eschatological perspectives, water ordinarily takes on a symbolic value. The water that Ezekiel sees rising from the temple symbolizes the life giving power of God, which is going to spill over in the Messianic age and enable men to bring forth fruit in abundance (Ez 47:12).²⁴ In Is 44:3ff water is the symbol of the Spirit of God that can transform the desert into a flowering orchard and the unfaithful people into a true “Israel”. The word of God is compared to the rain that comes to make the earth fruitful (Am 8:11). The teaching that wisdom includes is “life-giving water” (Sir 15:3).²⁵

²² Cf. *DBT*, 644.

²³ Cf. R. SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 427.

²⁴ Cf. W. ELCHRODT, *Ezekiel*, 498.

²⁵ Cf. *DBT*, 646.

1.2.3.3 *Life-giving Water*

In the New Testament this terminology occurs in only two books, the Fourth Gospel (Jn 4:14) and Apocalypse (7:17; 21:6). For Qumran the water of life comes from the community's discipline and for John it is given by Christ to those who believe in him. This water, given by Christ enables people to quench their thirst on the true Promised Land.²⁶ Christ came to bring the life-giving water promised by the Prophets (Jn 19:34).

What was Jesus referring to, when he spoke of giving "living water" to the woman? The living water is not eternal life but leads to it. The indication is that water is to natural life as living water is to eternal life. From medieval times onwards systematic theologians treat living water as a symbol for sanctifying grace. Within the scope of Johannine theology there are two possibilities: living water means the revelation which Jesus gives to people, or it means the Spirit which Jesus gives to people.

1.2.3.4 *Living Water as Jesus' Revelation*

The Old Testament uses the symbolism of water for God's wisdom that grants life. Proverb 13:14 says, "The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life that a man may avoid the snares of death"; also 18:4, "the words from a man's mouth are deep water". In the circle of the scribes wisdom was identified with the Torah. Sirach 24:23-29 tells us that the Torah fills people with wisdom like river overflowing its banks. The expression 'Gift of God' that appears in John 4:10 was used in rabbinic Judaism to describe the Law.²⁷

For Jesus to refer to his own revelation as 'living water' with this background in mind is perfectly plausible, for in John Jesus is presented as divine wisdom and as the replacement of the Law.²⁸ 'living water' is one of the many images by which Jesus

²⁶ Cf. M.J.TAYLOR, ed., *A Companion to John*, 87.

²⁷ Cf. R.E. BROWN, "The Gospel According to John", *TAB I*, 178-179.

²⁸ Cf. R.E. BROWN, "The Gospel According to John", *TAB I*, 179.

designates himself or his gifts in John, along with 'bread', 'vine', 'door', 'way' and so on. The metaphor of the bread from heaven gives an important pointer for the explanation of the 'living water': that the gift is closely related to the giver. To know him in his being as God's 'Word' of revelation and salvation is to understand his gift, which is revelation and life. Only the revealer who has become flesh, who is divine light and life (Cf. 1:4; 8:12; 11:25; 14:6), can pass on this life (5:27). In the conversation the Samaritan woman is moved by Jesus' words but has not grasped their profound meaning. Hearing Jesus' offer of 'living water', she misunderstands it as a promise of something earthly and natural – the sort of misunderstanding which has already occurred with Nicodemus (3:4). She is interested in the 'living water' but can only think of the water in the well of Jacob. Still, the Samaritan holds Jacob, the patriarch in high honor. But as in the Nicodemus episode, 3:5, Jesus now states more clearly that he is not thinking of 'this' water in the well of Jacob, but that he is ready to give a completely different sort of water, which quenches all kinds of thirst for ever.²⁹

The 'living water' given by Jesus becomes a source within man, as Philo says of the Logos and a later the divine Torah. Jesus' gift takes in and penetrates the whole man. Finally, Jesus affirms that his source flows unceasingly and unendingly. The water is said to 'spring up', 'bubble up', to bring out the supernatural 'vitality' of the divine forces bestowed on man.

1.2.3.5 Living Water as the Spirit

In several passages the themes of water and spirit are joined together. In John 3:5, Jesus tells, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." In Ezekiel 36:25-26 Yahweh had said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you... a

²⁹ Cf. Schnackenburg, 428-430.

new heart will I give you and a new Spirit will I put within you.” The first act of inward renewal consists in the cleansing from all defilements.³⁰ Moreover, for the identification of ‘living-water’ as the Spirit we have the specific evidence of John 7:37-39. On the seventh day Jesus stood up in the temple court and proclaimed that he was the source of living water. Zechariah 14:8 had predicted that living water would flow out of Jerusalem, and Ezekiel had seen a river flow from the rock underneath the Temple. Now Jesus says that these rivers of living water will flow from his own body, that body which is the new Temple (Jn 2:21). So the water from the rock was only a foreshadowing of the true water of life that flows from the Lamb³¹ in Revelation 22:1- we find the symbols of the river of water of life with its trees of life suggesting the return of the former paradise.

We may have to conclude saying if the water is a symbol of the revelation that Jesus gives to those who believe in him, it is also a symbol of the Spirit that the resurrected Jesus will give.

1.2.4 Life as a Symbol

Life included the idea of a power which manifested itself particularly through the breath and the blood. According to the scripture God was the only living source and the giver of life. John laid hold of life in the pre-existent Word, the divine creative force. Jesus not only brought life, but he was life. This very life he surrendered out of love for the Father and people. So, for a man to be entrusted with life, he had to love his brothers under pain of abiding in death.³²

For Jesus life is something valuable, “More so than food” (Mt 6:25). “Saving a life” is a more important even than the Sabbath (Mk 3:4). Christ, as man, is “the Word of life” (1 Jn 1:1). He is rightfully the complete master of all life (Jn 5:26). He gives a

³⁰ Cf. Elchrodt, 497-498.

³¹ Cf. R.E. BROWN, “*The Gospel According to John*”, TAB I, 327.

³² Cf. DTNT, 268.

living water in which the recipient becomes “a spring of water bursting forth to eternal life” (Jn 4:14)³³

Conclusion

Historically speaking the Jews looked down the Samaritans as a mixed adulterated sect. But Samaritans always claimed that they have been a distinct religious group who hold the same status of the Israelite. For John use of symbolic images are very common and necessary for bringing up the revelation of Jesus as Son of God. In the encounter event of Jesus with the Samaritan woman he uses the symbol of water and life as well as the Samaritan woman.

³³ Cf. *DBT*, 315.

Chapter 2

Jesus' Encounter with the Samaritan Woman

Introduction

Chapter four in the fourth Gospel is a literary unit remarkably well structured. Its main themes are drawn from the dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan woman, with the disciples and with the Samaritans. For the fourth Evangelist, in this encounter scene, the interest was to bring forth the revelation of Jesus with the aim of bringing forth faith in those who dialogue with him. He is designated as Lord, Prophet, Messiah, Christ and the Saviour of the World. Other major themes in the encounter scene are 'living water' (of which I have talked in the previous chapter), 'true worship' and 'I am He' which are centre or keystone for this chapter.

2.1 Comparison: Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman

In the fourth gospel often the individuals are praised in the narrative which provides opportunities to assess their character through comparison and contrast. The first pair consists of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, two figures whose representative is highly developed (3:1– 4:42).³⁴

When Nicodemus comes to Jesus, he appears to be alone; no one else speaks or is said to be present. Nevertheless, Nicodemus begins the conversation by saying, "Rabbi we know that you are a teacher came from God"(3:2), which suggests that he speaks for a group of people. Jesus responds to him in the singular but suddenly shifts to

³⁴ Cf. M. C. TENNEY, *JOHN: The gospel of Belief*, 92.

the plural in the middle of the conversations charging that “*you people*” do not receive our testimony. If I have told “*you people*” earthly things... how will *you people* believe if I tell *you people* heavenly things?” (3:11-12) the narrative initially identifies Nicodemus as a representative of two groups of people. First, Nicodemus is introduced as “a man of the Pharisees” and “a ruler of the Jews” (3:1).³⁵

The Samaritan woman is presented as opposite to Nicodemus’ picture. Nicodemus was a *man*, a *Jew*, and a *respected member* of society who came to Jesus by *night*. Samaritan was a *woman*, an *out-cast*, and a *marginal member* of the society who encountered Jesus in broad *day light*. Like the story of Nicodemus, the encounter with the Samaritan woman begins as a conversation between two individuals. Jesus meets the woman as he sits alone beside a roadside well; no one else is present. Yet as the conversation progresses, the woman serves as the spokesperson of the Samaritan people. She and Jesus begin to address each other in plural forms of speech and the woman voices Samaritans’ national concerns. The horizon broadens still further until the Samaritan towns-people receive Jesus not just as a national deliverer but as saviour of the world.³⁶

2.2 Jesus’ Ministry in Samaria

Jesus’ ministry in Samaria is unique to the fourth gospel. Some scholars suggest that the theme of dialogue with Nicodemus continues. The theme is conversion, being born from above. In the structural analysis, what is the necessity of Jesus going through Samaria? In 4:4 it is said Jesus ‘had to pass’ through Samaria. But this is not a geographical necessity; if Jesus was in the Jordan valley he could easily have gone north through the valley and then up into Galilee through the Gethshan gap, avoiding

³⁵ Cf. Koester, 45.

³⁶ Cf. Koester, 48.

Samaria. The divine necessity is the Samaritans' confession of Jesus as the saviour of the world.³⁷ So the necessity is Divine which is, in John God's will or plan (3:14).

The ministry of Jesus in Samaria is mentioned only in John. The missionary discourse in Mt. 10:5 forbids the disciples to enter a Samaritan city. The story of Christianity's spread to Samaria some years after the ministry of Jesus will help us to explain some details in John's account; yet we should note that the act gives no hint that Jesus already had followers in Samaria before Philip came, as the fourth gospel would indicate.³⁸

2.3 Stages of conversation

In 4:5-6, the story of the chapter begins. Jesus apparently knew the site and chose it as a place of rest from the journey. As a tired traveler, Jesus sat down by the well. The time indicated is high noon. The whole account is designed to give the reader a natural and human picture of Jesus' presence at the well.³⁹

The divine-human encounter here takes place in the ordinary circumstances of life. God meets man in his ordinary life-situations and that in the very midst of his existential problems.

2.3.1 Stage one: *Jesus' Thirst*

Jesus starts his dialogue with the woman by asking for a drink (4:7). This opening of conversation by a man with an unknown woman is a serious violation of the cultural code. In a public setting, it was rare for men and women to speak to one another apart from the necessities of the market place. For a Jewish man and a Samaritan

³⁷ Cf. F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 137.

³⁸ Cf. R.E. BROWN, "The Gospel According to John", *TAB I*, 175.

³⁹ Cf. H. R. RIDDERBES, *The Gospel of John*, 153.

woman to speak together was totally unthinkable. Jesus, with no apparent regard whatsoever for this powerful code, initiates a dialogue with her: "Give me to drink."⁴⁰

The thirst of Jesus at this moment is certainly physical, which we can make out from the remarks that it was about noon and that Jesus was tired from the journey. However we can not reduce his thirst to a merely physical one. Jesus' thirst was a symbolic and expressive of a spiritual thirst, the thirst, for getting entry into the life of the Samaritan woman with the living water.⁴¹

As we have seen in the previous chapter since from the deportation of the Israelites from the North in 721 BC, the Jews had been treating Samaritans as ritually impure mixed race of semi-pagans.⁴² Therefore, the surprise of the woman: "how it is that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" may not be a surprise to the reader. A Samaritan woman was considered a perpetual source of uncleanness and contamination. Therefore all food and drink handed by them were also considered unclean and polluting.⁴³

In this scene the understanding of the woman about Jesus' identity is merely as a Jew, a member of Samaritan's hostile community. The Samaritan woman looked at Jesus with the usual Samaritan prejudice towards the Jews and hence she could not recognize him.

2.3.2 Stage Two: Invitation to Recognition

In this scene, Jesus extends to the woman a twofold challenge that is to recognize who is speaking to her and to ask him for living water. Jesus' request for drinking water ends up in the dialogue on living water. Jesus is leading her from physical thirst to a spiritual thirst. Now emerges a series of misunderstanding by

⁴⁰ Cf. W.H. BROOK, *Becoming Children of God*, 103.

⁴¹ Cf. M. VELLANICKAL, *Studies in the Gospel of John*, 99.

⁴² Cf. C. OWCZAREK, *Sons of the Most High*, 200.

⁴³ Cf. R.E. BROWN, *The Gospel According to John: Anchor Bible*, 169.

Samaritan woman about the living water offered by Jesus. The woman misunderstands the water on a material earthly level.⁴⁴ She thinks that Jesus is offering to give her spring water. The point of this misunderstanding is to bring home the fact that the water which man calls 'living' is not really living water at all. In the context of the Johannine dualism the earthly goods are only apparent, false goods and natural life is only inauthentic life. Only what is given by the divine revealer can be said to have the character of the real and authentic.⁴⁵

The woman hears 'the words of Jesus' as he tells her of two realities of which she is ignorant. The first is the gift of God, and the second is that the person 'who is speaking to her' is capable of giving this gift. The mocking title of 'a Jew' has been replaced by 'Sir' or 'Lord'.⁴⁶ The Greek word Κύριε means both 'sir' and 'Lord'.⁴⁷ There is a progression from the interpersonal discussion between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, where the possibility of a greater gift. Through the words addressed to the woman, the revelation of a universal truth is made known to the reader. Water from a well only leads to the future experience of thirst, but Jesus offers water that will meet all needs.⁴⁸

2.3.2.1 *"If You Knew the Gift of God"*

The two Phrases that Jesus used 'gift of God' and 'living water' are entirely unknown to the Samaritan woman. The First phrase 'the gift of God', was used in rabbinic writings to describe the Supreme gift: the Torah. Like wise, 'living water' was also used of the Torah. Since the Torah was the important revelation of God for the

⁴⁴ Cf. A., MAGNATE, "Johannine Literature", 45-46.

⁴⁵ Cf. Vellanickal, 101.

⁴⁶ Cf. A., MAGNATE, 44-45.

⁴⁷ Cf. R.E. BROWN, 171.

⁴⁸ Cf. F. J. MOLONEY, 142.

Samaritans, Jesus, in effect, presented himself as the new source of God's saving revelation for both the Jews and Samaritans.⁴⁹

In verses 11 and 12 the woman shows no sign of understanding what Jesus is talking about, and clings to the literal meaning of Jesus' words. In the New Testament the word 'gift' occurs in connection with the Holy Spirit, who is the great gift poured out by God in the Messianic days.⁵⁰ Living water is also the symbol of the Spirit.⁵¹ Again, in the New Testament, salvation (2 Cor 9:15), word of God (James 1:17) etc are considered gift of God. The gift of God in 4:10 may be offer of salvation in Jesus Christ, Word of God, i.e. the revelation as truth. Jesus himself according to 3:16 also, Jesus is the greatest gift of God. Jesus is inviting here to recognize him as the gift of God.⁵²

2.3.3 Stage Three: Thirst for Life

Jacob's well is a fountain with fresh, flowing water, but when the conversation shifts to the theme of Jesus' living water, Jesus is now the fountain. "The real object of man's desire is not natural water but something which will give him life. And it is Jesus alone who can quench this thirst."⁵³ The water Jesus gives will touch the depths of the human spirit. In the gift of living water which Jesus has to offer, everyone can find the fullness of God's gift, a fullness of a gift which is truth.

As a reaction to the statement by the Samaritan woman "certainly you are not greater than our father Jacob" Jesus limits himself to the superiority of what he had to give and does not speak about himself. He therefore contrasts the water from Jacob's well with his gift. Jesus' answer certainly has a very different background. The point here is that the contrast between what Jacob, patriarch of the Samaritans, gave his

⁴⁹ Cf. K. QUAST, *Reading the Gospel of John*, 33.

⁵⁰ Cf. MANIPARAMBIL, J., "Johannine Literature", 10-15.

⁵¹ Cf. MANIPARAMBIL, 10-15.

⁵² Cf. Taylor, ed., 93.

⁵³ Vellanickal, 102.

children and the water that Jesus will give.⁵⁴ Here, we find that motif of the inadequacy of what was given in the past and of the fact that those who partake of what Jesus gives will never lack.

Jesus twice uses 'heavenly' language about the eternal value of the water that he gives. This water not only will provide ultimate satisfaction but also will overflow like a fountain, affecting those around the one who has received it.⁵⁵ It is a classic Johannine statement of the intimate link between the value of faith commitment for the believer and its evangelical effects on others.

Finally, Jesus succeeds to create in her a thirst for the authentic water. Man can drink water only when he has a thirst for it. In verse 15 we see, the woman says to Jesus 'Sir, give me this water', unlike Nicodemus she continues the conversation asking for the water. According to Brown, in her address 'sir' likely there is a progression from one to the other time as the woman uses it with increasing respect in verses 11 and 15.⁵⁶

2.3.4 Stage Four: Invitation for Self-discovery

In this stage we meet Jesus, entering to a different realm of the conversation. The woman is asked to look at herself to make an examination of herself and see how she stands in her relationship with God and with fellow beings. Only such a self-evaluation will prepare her to be a worthy receptacle of the living water. It is Jesus who takes the initiative in leading the woman to recognize who he by referring to her personal life.

2.3.4.1 "... You have had five husbands..."

In verses 16-18 Jesus' demand appears to shift the issue. Woman gives an ambiguous and even deceptive answer in instructive reaction against moral probing; she

⁵⁴ Cf. Ridderbes, 155-156.

⁵⁵ Cf. W. H. BROOKS, *John's Gospel and The Renewal of the Church*, 35.

⁵⁶ Cf. R.E. BROWN, 171.

says “I have no husband” (v.17). Jesus uses her answer to uncover her evil deeds; “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband” (v.17b). The characterization of woman as adulterous and immoral is based not upon a description of her in the text, but upon a manner of interpreting the conversation that she has with Jesus.⁵⁷

Many commentators have regarded five husbands as symbolic. The woman represents Samaria people by five foreign tribes each with its God. The one who is ‘not a husband’ represents either a false gods or Samaritan’s false worship of the true God.⁵⁸ When we think on historical level, we find the relationship between her ‘husbands’ and her current ‘man’ to be an expression of Samaria’s colonial past and present. If the five previous husbands are symbolic of Samaria’s intermarriage with foreign people and the acceptance thereby of their false Gods, her current man can be seen as Rome with whom she ‘lives’ has not married.⁵⁹

In this chapter the woman’s response in 4:19, ‘sir, I see you are a prophet’, is her direct acceptance of Jesus’ statement of her national history. She said ‘a Prophet’, not ‘the Prophet’. A prophet does not mean Jesus the Christ, but as an ordinary Prophet.⁶⁰

2.3.4.2 Self Exposure to the Light

It is in the light of God’s revelation that man discovers himself. The revelatory light of God penetrates the life of man and brings to light his deeds whether good or evil. Hence the more one discovers God, the more he discovers his true self. The attainment of the knowledge of God and knowledge of self are part of the same process. It is very clear that after listening to Jesus’ extra supernatural knowledge about her life she begins hesitantly to think on a spiritual or heavenly level. This time in the narrative she shows more openness to the person of Jesus: “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet”

⁵⁷ Cf. J. NORFLEETE, 17.

⁵⁸ Cf. C. K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 197.

⁵⁹ Cf. Brooks, 36.

⁶⁰ Cf. J.H., BERNARD, *Gospel According to St. John*, 143

(v.19). Self discovery in the light of God's self-revelation leads man to proceed further in rectifying and strengthening his relationship with God.⁶¹ The use of verb 'perceive' indicates that she has come to an intellectual perception of Jesus' prophetic qualities from her growing experience of Him. But, yet there is no deep spiritual insight being shown here.

2.3.5 Stage Five: New mode of Worship

In 4:20, there is again the change of the topic. It seems that the woman wanted to divert the focus from her own personal life to a new subject. The theme is now about 'True Worship.' By acknowledging Jesus as a prophet, the Samaritan woman draws Jesus' attention to the place of worship. According to the law the only place for worship was Jerusalem, (cf Dt 12:2-12), but for the Samaritans the place was the mount Gerizim, where they had built a shrine, that was later destroyed by John Ircanus in 128 BC.⁶²

The exchange between Jesus and the woman goes on and is focused on the opposition between the Samaritans and the Jews: "you worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know" (4:22). New worship which Jesus introduces has two aspects. The true worshiper worships the Father in Spirit and truth, at the same time it is the Father who seeks out such worshipers. The act of worshipping implies the act of bending or prostrating oneself in the direction the one worshiped. In this context, true worship is the orientation of oneself toward the Father himself in such a way that he becomes the imperative of one's life.⁶³ John understands "Spirit" to be the Spirit of God, which purifies the believer and is a permanent possession. God's truth can also be spoken of as purifying the sinfulness and perversity of humanity. For John, Jesus is the truth, since he is the revelation of God (8:45; 14:6; 17:17-19).⁶⁴

⁶¹ Cf. Moloney, 149.

⁶² Cf. J. ASHTON, ed., *the Interpretation of John*,

⁶³ Cf. Moloney, 152.

⁶⁴ Cf. *TNJBC*. 957.

2.3.5.1 "Hour is coming and now is"

In verse 2:21, Jesus speaks of the new time and place of worship. The reader meets the typical Johannine indication of his unique eschatological perspective: "the hour is coming and now is." What Jesus is about to announce is eschatological, but one need not wait till the end of time for its availability; it is present because Jesus is present. Thus the time of the new form of worshiping God has been established.⁶⁵ The coming of the hour matches the coming of the Messiah. The announcement of the 'now' matches the identity of the Messiah. The hour is completely connected with Jesus' presence. He fills the content of the hour. In the same way, we read in Jn 11:24-25 about the faith confession of Martha and the life giving presence of Jesus. "If you have been here"(11:21): Martha confesses a faith that has recognized that God is the source of Jesus' powers. It separates her from those crowds that are amazed by Jesus' deeds. In the presence of Jesus Martha came to the purified faith and said "Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the One coming into the world" (Jn 11:27). The Samaritans too realized that Jesus is the Saviour of the world when they came to experience his presence. (Jn 4:42).⁶⁶

It is all that happens in connection with his person: preaching, death, resurrection and ascension. In verse 23, the particular point in question shifts from the place of worship to the manner of worship. His statement has nothing to do with worshiping God in the Spirit of man, for the spirit is the Spirit of God. John the Baptist already spoke of Jesus as the bearer of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁷

2.3.5.2 *Worship in Spirit and Truth*

The Samaritan woman had only spoken of 'worship', Jesus adds the object of that worship: the Father (4:23-24). The contrast between worship in Jerusalem or on Gerizim and worship in spirit and truth is part of the familiar Johannine dualism between earthly and heavenly; 'from below' and 'from above', flesh and Spirit. It is the spirit given by Jesus that is to animate the worship that replaces worship at the

⁶⁵ Cf. Bernard, 147.

⁶⁶ Cf. *TNJBC*, 970.

⁶⁷ Cf. Brown, 180.

Temple.⁶⁸ God can be worshiped as Father only by those who possess the Spirit that makes them God's children (Rom 8:15-16) in effect. Jesus said if the woman really wants to know the truth about worship, she will find it not in the formula of ancestors, but in the relation of her own heart with God. She must deal with Him through His Spirit, and on the basis of truth.⁶⁹

To worship in truth is to experience God in a real way. Truth in John affirms ultimate reality, so worship in truth is genuine worship in the context of genuine life in the Spirit. While the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth (14:16; 16:12), Jesus is the truth (14:6).⁷⁰

2.3.6 Stage Six: Messianic Expectation

The revelation about the true worship has aroused in the woman the Messianic expectations, which were the long cherished expectations of Israel. The woman progresses in her confession of faith, she suggests that he might be the Messiah-Christ.⁷¹ The woman's answer: "I know that Messiah is coming" shows that there is a measure of sincerity in her heart. "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us" are a confession both of ignorance and of hope. He was waiting for light, and soiled as she was, she clings to the ancient promise of God that a deliverer would come who would take away the darkness from her eyes.⁷²

2.3.6.1 Samaritan's Messianic Expectation

The Samaritans were longing for the coming of **בִּנְיָן**, apparently the term for the Messiah. The meaning of this term **בִּנְיָן** was "restorer". They had no idea about a Messiah who will be coming in the dynasty of David. The Samaritans believed that a

⁶⁸ Cf. Brown, 180.

⁶⁹ Cf. Tenney, 95.

⁷⁰ Cf. Quast, 35.

⁷¹ Cf. D. M., SMITH, *The theology of the Gospel of John*, 28.

⁷² Cf. Tenney, 95.

Messiah will come to restore them and he will be a New Moses.⁷³ Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman tells us about the coming of Messiah. The concept of the Messiah, which had in the mind of the Samaritan woman, was not that of a Jew. Because the Samaritans did not have the Prophets and writing as part of their scripture, which tells about the coming of the Messiah who will restore the people of Israel.

2.3.6.2 'Εγὼ εἰμί

In the Old Testament, God revealed with the phrase *ani-hu* which means 'I am' (Ex 3:14; Is 52:6). This was translated by the LXX people as 'Εγὼ εἰμί. The Phrase 'Εγὼ εἰμί as such is simply a phrase of common speech equivalent to 'it is I' or 'I am the one'. Only Jesus had made such a statement in the history of humanity.⁷⁴ The first usage of this formula with predicate understood in John gives the impression that it is to be taken in the Messianic sense. It is the only time in the fourth gospel that he expressly acknowledges the title Messiah and Christ.⁷⁵

From a formal point of view this happens in the fact that Jesus' 'Εγὼ εἰμί saying occurs between two questions concerning Jesus' identity (verses 10, 29). The 'Εγὼ εἰμί saying answers the first indirect question formulated by Jesus and so acts as the structural climax of the main part of the episode in Samaria. It is after this 'Εγὼ εἰμί saying that the woman departs to tell the villagers about this man who knows all about her (v.28). Even telling about her life Jesus was not understood as a messiah, but only as a prophet. Because of Jesus' claim, made by means of 'Εγὼ εἰμί, she wonders whether he may indeed be the Christ. (v.29)⁷⁶

In this revelation of Jesus' identity the 'Εγὼ εἰμί saying of 4:26 is of utmost importance, for its function is to resolve the irony created by the two indirect questions

⁷³ Cf. J. H. CHARTESWORTH, ed., *The Messiah: Development in the Early Judaism and Christianity*, 14.

⁷⁴ Cf. Vellanicke, 30.

⁷⁵ Cf. JOHN A., ed., *The Interpretation of John*, 31

⁷⁶ Cf. D. M. BALL, 'I Am' in *John's Gospel*, 65-66.

about Jesus' identity (vv. 10,12) as well as by the woman's statement about the Messiah (v.25). When Jesus said Ἐγὼ εἰμὶ, it reveals to her that he is the very one whom she expects to show her all things.⁷⁷

2.3.7 Stage Seven: Savior of the World

The climax of this encounter is the faith of the Samaritans as they recognized Jesus as the Saviour of the world. First they believed because of the woman's witness, and then they had personal experiences of Jesus. They said "for we have heard for ourselves". (4.42). we may be surprised to see that the people criticize the woman. Why they criticized the woman? A closer look reveals two reasons for their reactions to the woman. First, she asks: "this couldn't be the Christ, could it?" What she was excited but still uncertain of, they have found out for sure. Perhaps more importantly what they have discovered is that this one is not only the Messiah, but also the "Saviour of the world" (4.42).⁷⁸

Conclusion

The interaction between the Samaritan woman and Jesus is the way in which the character of Jesus is revealed. The Samaritan woman in John 4 is a tool to help the reader to understand the person of Jesus. Although she is character in her own right, her reactions and misunderstanding enables the reader to see Jesus for whom the evangelist believes he really is. The characterization of the Samaritan woman thus acts as a foil to further the characterization of Jesus. Through out the dialogue, the Samaritan woman asks so many different questions to Jesus. These questions are not primarily to reveal her character or her ignorance about spiritual things but to draw out the character of

⁷⁷ Cf. Ball, 60- 62.

⁷⁸ Cf. C.H., TALBERT, *Reading John*, 118-119.

Jesus. It is therefore important to recognize the Samaritan woman's interaction with Jesus plays a role in revealing who He is.

Chapter 3

The Encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman as a Model for Mission Today

Introduction

The Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus pictured in the Gospel of John underscores the importance of the missionary method of Jesus. The sequence of events and the conversation itself can be understood as part of Jesus' missionary approach in realizing his goal. The response of the woman and the Samaritans too depict the progress in the faith and the task of the new believer. In this chapter we shall evaluate the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at three levels, from the point of view of Jesus, of the woman and of the Samaritans and then the application of the missionary method of Jesus to the contemporary missionary endeavours.

3.1. The Missionary Method of Jesus

The encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman sheds light on the method of Jesus in bringing his subjects to faith. Not only that Jesus moves against the conventional understanding of religion and society but he also teaches a unique way of transmitting his mission. We shall highlight a few aspects of his missionary approach that are apparent in the encounter narration.

3.1.1. Jesus Transcends Human Boundaries

In the previous chapters we have already depicted the attitude of the Jewish society towards the woman in the time of Jesus. ‘...A man shall not talk with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, and especially not with another woman on account of what men may say.’⁷⁹ The gravity of Jesus’ initiative to hold a conversation with a woman at a public place is multiplied when we consider her social status as a Samaritan.⁸⁰ The Jews deemed any association with the Samaritans as against ritual purity. Jesus stretches his hand to bring the Samaritan woman to faith by transcending these human set boundaries. Hence the gesture of Jesus appears to be bold and revolutionary.

3.1.2. The Pedagogy of Jesus

Jesus starts his conversation with the woman fully aware of her socio-political backgrounds. By asking her for a drink, Jesus does not have it in mind to accept a drink from her; rather he wanted her to listen to his teaching. When he realizes that the woman is unable to grasp the heart of his conversation, he moves to the personal and then religious backgrounds – display of an intimate knowledge. Jesus asserts that she had lived with six men which was obviously a sinful act.⁸¹ However, Jesus’ intention of highlighting her sinful status is not to condemn her but to draw her to him, to facilitate her evolution in faith.

Jesus’ masterly tactics guide the women from the worldly and superficial conversation to profound religious heights. Jesus identifies himself as the Messiah and constructs the faith of the woman on her traditional understanding of the Messiah. The

⁷⁹ Cf. L. MORRIS, *The Gospel According to John*, 242.

⁸⁰ Cf. Religious and social hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans caused mutual exclusion and avoided any interactions. See Chapter 1.1.

⁸¹ Cf. According to the Jewish tradition a woman entering into more than three marriages was considered a sin. The Samaritans also shared the same understanding. Hence the personal life of the woman is that of a sinner. See. Schnackenburg., 430.

Samaritans believed that the messiah would establish a new place of worship restoring true worship and revealing the truth.⁸² The 'we – you' structure of the conversation soon moves to the common ground – 'the true worshipper'– discarding all the diversities.⁸³ The woman immediately grasps the essence of the conversation and moves to faith. Jesus' dialogue is systematically structured and progresses from the past through the present and moves to the future.

3.1.3. Jesus Prepares the Woman for the Mission

Firstly, the new believer is taught about the deep rooted aspects of true worship. Jesus imparts the knowledge about the worshipping the Father in truth and spirit. There is no more separation of tribe or culture; the socio-political backgrounds do not count anymore. The underscored elements of every worship are truth and spirit, and not mere lips-service. Hence Jesus inaugurates a new community of true worshippers which is beyond human barriers.⁸⁴ The Samaritans and Jews will no longer differ in their worship. In the new mode of worship that Jesus brought everybody will worship the Father in Jesus Christ: "In Him, Through Him, with Him"⁸⁵.

Secondly, the vocation of the new believer is to imbibe wholly the gift of Jesus and in turn to become a fountain of the same to others. 'The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life' (v 4). The gift and the giver cannot be separated. The one who receives the gift becomes a channel taking the gift to all whom he/she encounters.

Thirdly, the concern of Jesus is only to fulfill the mission entrusted to him by the Father. 'He is so full of a sense of mission and so zealous for his Father's interest that

⁸² Cf. Schnackenburg, 441.

⁸³ Cf. A. FEHRIBACIIM, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 59-60.

⁸⁴ Cf. Schnackenburg, 438.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Order of Latin Mass Book*

worldly things and needs sink into insignificance'⁸⁶. Priority of love and obedient submission to Father's will is clear in his response to his disciples, 'to do the will of my Father is my food' (v 34)⁸⁷.

Finally, the sole mission is that which is entrusted to his followers by Jesus. The mission of Jesus is sustained through every individual believer, but in perfect continuity with the giver of the mission. There is no isolated or independent mission and so the role of the missionary is to build on what the predecessors have already prepared.⁸⁸ 'I send you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour' (v 38). In summary, the believer shares the mission of Christ and it is carried out through the gifts one receives from Christ himself. Hence the individual believer becomes another Christ, fountain of his gifts, to whom he or she is sent. The believer has already share Christ's mission, passion, death and resurrection.

3.2. The Samaritan Woman as a Model Missionary

The semi-pagan woman, a sinner, displays the qualities of a perfect missionary. Her openness to listen to a strange Jew bears fruits. She is drawn to faith because of her decision to actively participate in the conversation which Jesus initiated. She soon lets go her personal goals and set out to preach the person she has encountered.

3.2.1. The Openness of the Samaritan Woman

The conversation which Jesus began crossing the socio-cultural and religious boundaries often encroached the personal life and beliefs of the Samaritan woman. It was definitely an painful experience for her. She obviously believed in her tradition and the great ancestors which is apparent in her sarcastic reply to Jesus, 'Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob?' (v12). The woman puts forth various self defenses during her

86 Cf. Schnackenburg, 448.

87 Cf. Schnackenburg,, 428.

88 Cf. Schnackenburg,, 452-454.

conversation with Jesus. However, when she realizes that the one who speaks with her is greater than the ancestor she is open to accept him, to let go her defenses and prejudices about him as a Jew. She had little to lose in regard to her social status and dignity.⁸⁹

The openness of the Samaritan woman is also displayed in her eagerness to keep up the conversation with Jesus. She is not afraid to ask fundamental questions to Jesus. Unlike Nicodemus, who was afraid to lose his social status (3: 1-2, 11), the Jews, who saw Jesus as someone inferior to their ancestor Abraham (8:53), and the disciples themselves, who were afraid to confront Jesus (4:27), the woman immediately responds positively to the new reality she has encountered.⁹⁰ She transcends her traditional understanding and mounts to a higher level of faith.

3.2.2. Faith of the Samaritan Woman

We have already discussed about the different stages of the growing faith of the Samaritan woman in the second chapter. In the beginning she is taken by surprise at the gesture of Jesus in entering into conversation with her. She hence views him with suspicion and responds mockingly. Even when Jesus speaks about the living water that quenches the thirst for ever, she grasps it only in an ordinary level. The receptivity of the woman soon takes her to a higher level.⁹¹ There is a leap of faith in her, from the ordinary to the spiritual. She is now concerned only about her spiritual food and hence seeks guidance on true worship.

The faith of the woman springs from her personal encounter with Jesus and not from her reflection or intellectual knowledge. She has come upon the seventh man in her life, the one she was waiting for. The ideal number seven implies fullness of

⁸⁹ Cf. Fehribachm, 75.

⁹⁰ Cf. Fehribachm, 74.

⁹¹ Cf. Schnackenburg, 420,429.

everything in life which she finds in Jesus.⁹² All her anxieties and worries cease and her quests are accomplished, she now moves to the perfect faith.

3.3 The Mission of the Samaritan Woman

The believer who has come to the true faith cannot be put inactive. Immediate response to mature faith is to share it with others. The reaction of the Samaritan woman upon receiving faith has several unique elements. We shall highlight a few of them.

3.3.1 The Mission as a Personal Initiative

Jesus draws the Samaritan woman to faith through his encounter with her at the well. However, he does not commission her for the mission; rather when she acquires the true knowledge and realizing the richness of it prompts her to be a channel of the very same message to others.⁹³ She hence transcends her limitation as a sinful woman to carry the message to her fellowmen and women.

3.3.2 Leaves behind Everything

When the Samaritan woman arrives at the fullness of faith she leaves behind everything. The woman who had come to the well to draw water in the solitude of the afternoon now forgets about her task and hastens to proclaim the good news to others. She even leaves behind the pot, symbol of her worldly needs.⁹⁴ The synoptic gospels display a similar reaction at the invitation of Jesus from the disciples. They left behind their father, boat, fishing net, and even their profession to be part of his mission (Mk 1:18, 20, 2:14, Mt 4:20, 22, 9:9, Lk 5:11, 28).

⁹² Cf. Fehribachm, 65.

⁹³ Cf. Schnackenburg, 442.

⁹⁴ Cf. Koester, 170.

3.3.3 Personal Experience as the Testimony

The woman preaches to the people only what she has experienced from her encounter with Jesus. She does not make any judgement on what Jesus did for her. Her concern was to bear witness to what she experienced and to draw others to the same experience.⁹⁵ Hence her invitation is 'come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done' (v.29).

3.3.4 Mission of bringing others to Jesus

The mission which the Samaritan woman undertakes is to invite others to the source of the living water. She uses her experience with him as a means to achieve this goal. She however summons others also to have the same personal experience, "Come and see" (v.29). She is convinced that the true faith has to be based on what one experience and not merely on what one hears.

3.3.5 Withdraws from the Scene

The mission of the woman is completed when she draws others to the fountain of the life, Jesus. The soul of the mission is to bring others to Jesus to have their own experience with him. The Samaritan woman after drawing his fellowmen to Jesus disappears from the scene. To advance in faith through a closer encounter with Jesus is left to the individual.⁹⁶ Her mission is achieved and she neither seeks appreciation for what she did nor claims any merit.

3.4. The Response of the Samaritans

The Samaritans in their openness head for an encounter with Jesus, a Jew, for them the fullness of faith is arrived only through a personal encounter with the Saviour.

⁹⁵ Cf. Fehribachm, 45.

⁹⁶ Cf. Schnackenburg, 456.

Their initiative leads them to a personal experience and the faith immediately grows to maturity; 'it is no longer because what you said' (v 42). The climax of true faith is in confessing Jesus as the universal Saviour (v42). The Samaritans are able to go beyond their traditional beliefs to confess their faith in the Messiah.

The invitation of the Samaritans (v 40) to stay with them may look scandalous against the social situation of the time. However, their faith enables them to overcome every scandal.⁹⁷ Jesus stays with them for two days to continue his mission, which is not stuck to any place or people; rather the mission is ever dynamic and never fully realized. Universality, broadness, and continuity of the mission of Jesus are obvious conclusions from the passage.

3.5 Jesus' Missionary Method and Contemporary Mission

Jesus' missionary approach has numerous implications for the contemporary mission. Even after two millenniums, Jesus' method of approaching people of other faith and culture provides a model. We shall briefly evaluate a few of the significant elements of the modern mission in comparison with the missionary approach of Jesus in this section.

3.5.1 Inculturation

Jesus, a Jew was able to convince the Samaritan woman and later the Samaritan crowd and bring them to faith. Jesus achieved this goal solely because of his ability to transcend the cultural and social boundaries that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. Jesus entered into conversation with the Samaritan woman with extensive knowledge about the Samaritan traditions, beliefs and their way of worship. In the contemporary situation, amidst numerous cultures and religious practices that are at

⁹⁷ Cf. Schnackenburg, 455.

times antagonist to each other, the attitude of Jesus (in modern terms inculturation or adaptation) has immense significance. Inculturation is the key to enter into any cultures. After the second Vatican council, inculturation in theology, Gospel and liturgy are promoted with excessive emphasis.⁹⁸ Cultural pluralism should never be a hindrance to the followers of Jesus to reach out to the people of different cultures.

3.5.2 Inter-religious Dialogue

Similar to cultural pluralism, religious pluralism is also a massive barrier for the missionaries of the contemporary era more than ever. Once again the approach of Jesus in entering into conversation with the Samaritans, people who were hostile to the Jews, gives us the direction. With a deep understanding of the religious values of the other faith, the bearer of Christian message has to venture into interreligious dialogue. Communicating the truth about worship is the primary objective of the mission. This objective can be achieved through a matured dialogue; furthermore, very often dialogue is the sole means towards it. The goal of every interreligious dialogue is to establish a universal communion based on love.⁹⁹

3.5.3 Communication and Mission

Communio et Progressio (Vat. II document) speaks elaborately about the need to integrate the modern means of social communication in our apostolate and especially in spreading the good news (126ff.). The Document also highlights Jesus as the perfect communicator (126). In the present era marked by revolutionary advancement in the field of communication, the Christian missionary is obliged to use them for the mission.

⁹⁸ Cf. J. DUPUIS, *The Christian Faith: in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, 509, 535, 508. The Address to the Bishops of Zaire, *Ecclesia in Asia* and *Fides et Ratio* speak in details about the need for inculturation in varied areas of Christian faith and worship.

⁹⁹ Cf. After the Second Vatican Council one of the highly emphasised aspects of mission is interreligious dialogue. There are numerous church documents and encyclicals that give guidance in this direction. *Lumen Gentium* (1965), *Nostra Aetate* (1965), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Redemptor Homini* (79), *Dialogue and Mission* (1984), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), *Dialogue and Proclamation* (1991) are the most prominent among them.

Jesus' communication proficiency is displayed in his encounter with the Samaritan woman which enables her to transcend to the spiritual level instantly.

Conclusion

Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman is seemingly simple but contains profound elements of his missionary model. The passive participation of the woman in the beginning soon turns to an enthusiastic acceptance of faith that prompts her to undertake the mission of channelling the good news to others. The Samaritans display an extraordinary openness to transcend the cultural and religious hazards to confess their faith in Jesus and in proclaiming him as the universal Saviour. The missionary model of Jesus is not obsolete; rather it has deeper application in the contemporary socio- cultural and religious diversities.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

John's purpose in writing his Gospel was that his readers might "believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). Jesus' ministry was not an exclusive one, but an inclusive one. Jesus was a friend of sinners, He cleansed lepers by touching, He had relationship with the rich and poor, and He invited all people into God's Kingdom. To bring each and every one to the kingdom, he moved beyond the ethnic and religious categories. 'Doing the Will of Him who sent me' and 'brining His work to completion' are Johannine descriptions of the nature of Jesus' ministry.

I have attempted to analyze this point by reflecting on the 'Encounter scene of Jesus with the Samaritan woman depicted in John 4:4-42. When Jesus travels to Samaria (4:4), he moves away from official Judaism, because at the time of Jesus, Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies. Since Jesus' ministry included all people without any barrier of religion, custom, gender, the enmity between Jews and Samaritans were not sufficient reason to neglect them. The word 'must' (4:4) implies logical necessity rather than personal obligation. In the light of the general tune of the Gospel, the word suggested that underlying compulsion of the Divine Will that sought out the lost Samaritan sheep.

In this story, the Evangelist seeks to demonstrate the significance of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. The dialogue here is much more 'personal' than that between Jesus and Nicodemus. Still this encounter represents more than an individual event, however it was essential to the woman herself and in this way is a model for others.

Jesus confronted the woman in an ordinary circumstance. The initiative is taken by God who meets us in ordinary circumstance of life. The human considerations and prejudices are often a hindrance to recognize God. Only recognition of our basic thirst for God and an awareness of our unrest resulting from going after one supposed satisfaction to another, will lead us to God, the authentic source of the living water that will quench our thirst for ever.

Through the dialogue, we can trace a rising estimate of Jesus in the woman's thinking. In verse 9 she calls Him a Jew. In verse 12 she suggested the possibility that He might be greater than Jacob. In verse 19 she called Him a prophet, and finally, in verse 29, she said: "He can not be the Messiah, can he?" The belief of the Samaritans is noteworthy, as the type of reaction that follows personal investigation of Jesus. The woman's testimony, plus the Lord's word (4:41), brought the conviction that He was the 'Saviour of the world'. In this instance Jesus had to overcome the obstacles of the woman's indifference, materialism, selfishness, moral turpitude, religious prejudices, ignorance and indefiniteness. Nevertheless in this conversation He led her straight to the beginning of an active faith.

Bringing the woman into conversion and faith Jesus becomes a model for missionaries. All Christians are missionaries of Jesus. "Mission is central to the life of the church, so that church is missionary by its very nature" (Ad Gentes. N.2). It is not easy to describe theoretically the specific identity of the missionary vocation. Mission is not a static concept and reality. It is dynamic reality; it varies from one situation to another, from one country to another. In the encounter scene Jesus is facing a woman who is totally ignorant about the identity of Jesus, but gradually Jesus makes her to recognize his identity. We can say without any doubt Jesus was a successful missionary in his mission to Samaria. The method Jesus used in a different culture is also applicable for the mission of the Church. By incarnating the Gospel in different

cultures, as the proper way of introducing people and their culture to Christianity, the church becomes “a more intelligible sign of what she is, and a more effective instrument of Christ’s mission” (Redemptoris Missio 52). Missionaries should live in contact with present realities, with people in real situation of life. Missionaries have to go beyond themselves, their own personalities, in order to understand and empathize with other personalities in completely different situations. Missionaries are persons who cross over all sorts of boundaries: boundaries of culture, religion, values, understanding etc.

I have attempted to describe briefly how Jesus won in his missionary work in Samaria. A thorough study on the ministry of Jesus in Samaria would help us to improve our mission activities among non-Christians. It is my hope that this essay will help all the people of the Church, especially those involved in cross-cultural mission, to understand better models of mission.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD: ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY.

TNJB: THE NEW JEROME BIBLICAL COMMENTARY.

TNICNT: THE NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT.

CIDE: CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF ENGLISH.

DBT: DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

DTNT: DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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