

## **Border-crossing and the Samaritan Traveler: The crossing of borders in the parable of the “Good Samaritan” (Lk 10:25–37)**

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### **Abstract**

Border-crossing is a defining subject in the contemporary field of postcolonial studies. Situating the parable of the Good Samaritan within this landscape, the present study engages the dynamism of border-crossing in the popular parable of the *Good Samaritan*. While the parable of the *Good Samaritan* has been studied from varieties of methodologies and perspectives, the mechanics of border markings – within the fictionality of border space – has generally escaped this study. Using social identity theory in this direction, the work probes the dynamics of group border markings in the characterization of this story – and the significance of this border polemics in the mapping of Luke-Acts. Consequently, the paper offers fresh perspectives to this popular parable in the different negotiations of border markings and the polemics of otherness in this story.

### **Keywords**

*Good Samaritan; social Identity theory; border-crossing; fictionality; polemic; Luke-Acts; parable*

## **1. Introduction**

The parable of the Good Samaritan has become an important site of popular and academic interests.<sup>1</sup> The continuous significance of the parable of the

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1 Joel T Nadler, “The Good Samaritan is Good for Business,” *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 7, no. 1 (2007): 259–261; Thomas Tang *et al*, “To Help or Not to Help? The Good Samaritan Effect and the Love of Money on Helping Behaviour,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 82, no. 4(2008):865–887; Michael Rader, “‘The Good Samaritan’ in Jewish Laws,” *Journal of Legal Medicine* 22, no. 3 (2001): 375–399; Adriana Salcedo,

Good Samaritan comes from three related factors.<sup>2</sup> First, the parable of the Good Samaritan has continuous importance because of its subversive ethics particularly the demand to extend care and goodwill to persons outside our defined circle of relationships. The ethics of the parable encourages the exercise of care and love to persons outside our racial, ethnic and cultural affiliations.

In this regard, Craig Blomberg observed Jesus “strongly affirms the double love-commandment and in his subsequent parable of the Good Samaritan endorses the broadest possible definition of the neighbour to whom one is required to apply that commandment.”<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the parable of the Good Samaritan has defining continuous importance because of its shocking description of one’s neighbour.<sup>4</sup> Robert Wall, to this end, observed that in the parable of the Good Samaritan “the heterodox Samaritan proved to be the Torah-observant neighbour” rather than the priest and the Levite.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Bruce Longenecker describes this parable in terms of a “shocking scandal.”<sup>6</sup> Significantly, while most religions and cultures in ancient times would have defined neighbourliness in terms of blood-

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“When Development Meet Culture and Conflict: The Challenges and Paradoxes of the Good Samaritan,” *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 5, no. 1(2009): 81–94.

- 2 See Ian McFarland, “Who is My Neighbour? The Good Samaritan as a Source for Theological Anthropology,” *Modern Theology* 17, no. 1 (2001): 57–66; Riemer Roukema, “The Good Samaritan in Ancient Christianity,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 58, no. 1 (2004): 56–74.
- 3 Craig Blomberg, “The Law in Luke-Acts,” *JSNT* 22 (1984): 59.
- 4 John D. Crossan has included the parable of the Good Samaritan as among Jesus parable of “World Shattering presence” of the kingdom. He included also the parable of the “The Rich Fool,” “The Rich Man and Lazarus,” “The Pharisee and the Publican,” “The Wedding Guest and the Proper Guests” among this list. See Crossan, “Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus,” *Semeia* 1 (1974): 63–104. See also Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 153–154, 170–180, 192.
- 5 Robert Wall added, “The contrast between the Good Samaritan on the one hand and the priest and Levite on the other, is as decisive as it is ironical.” See Wall, “Martha and Mary (Lk 10: 38–42) in the Context of a Christian Deuteronomy,” *JSNT* 35 (1989): 22–23.
- 6 Bruce Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35): A Study in Character Rehabilitation,” *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009): 426. In addition, David Landry and Ben May has classified the parable of the Good Samaritan as one of the parables of Jesus with “a surprising plot twist.” See also David Landry and Ben May, “Honour Restored: New Light on the Parable of the Prudent Steward (Lk 16:1–8a),” *JBL* 119, no. 2 (2000): 303.

relationship, geographical proximity, cultural connection, or religious affiliations, this parable directly challenged these settled conceptions of neighbourliness, and distanced neighbourliness from these familiar spaces.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the parable of the Good Samaritan describes an important ingredient of human relationship especially the need to show compassion without the impinging restrictions of subjective and personal considerations. The parable illustrates the need to go beyond the subjective and innate quest for self-preservation towards the reinstatement of the worth and dignity of another dehumanized human person. According to Nico Vorster, Jesus “illustrates what love for the enemy means in the parable of the Good Samaritan, where an ethnic and religious enemy becomes the hero.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, David Parris also observed, “[i]n the parable of the Good Samaritan, the readers are challenged to reconsider their definition not only of who their neighbour is, but also what it means to obey the greatest commandment.”<sup>9</sup>

Lastly, the parable of the Good Samaritan addresses an important factor in defining the borders around the people of God. The parable presents a remapping of the boundary lines around God’s people by challenging the exclusive border drawn around God’s people and including persons traditionally located outside of these drawn borders. In this regard, Crispin HT Fletcher-Louis said, “Jesus’ redefinition of the people of God” in the parable of the Good Samaritan “opens up the boundaries to include a Samaritan ...” and the exclusion of the Jewish pious community.<sup>10</sup> In

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7 Marcus J. Borg suggested that in the parables such as the Good Samaritan “Jesus often used the language of paradox and reversal to shatter the conventional wisdom of his time.” See Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 80.

8 Nico Vorster, “Preventing Genocide: The Role of the Church,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 59, no. 4 (2006): 391. See S. J. Kilgallen, “Mary and Martha: Why at Luke 10:38–42,” *Biblica* 84 (2003): 561.

9 David Parris also added, “The intersubjective world shared by the hearer and the parable [of the Good Samaritan] evokes the hearer’s expectations, which are then revised or expanded in relation to the truth claim presented in the parable.” See Parris, “Imitating the Parables: Allegory, Narrative and the Role of Mimesis,” *JSNT* 25 (2002): 46.

10 Fletcher-Louis, “‘Leave the Dead to Bury their Dead’: Q9.60 and the Redefinition of the People of God,” *JSNT* 26, no. 1 (2003): 50. In addition, Werner G. Jeanrond has also

these preceding areas, the parable of the Good Samaritan fundamentally redefines, challenges and critiques existing borders/conceptions of neighbourliness, and subversively underscored a reinterpretation of existing exclusive borders.<sup>11</sup>

Considering these areas, studies on the parable of the Good Samaritan have tried to engage the intriguing importance of this parable to the modern readers.<sup>12</sup> Yet, in spite of the strides in the study of this parable, there is little or no emphasis placed on the border-crossing nature of this parable and the implied assumption that neighbourliness naturally imposes the demands to cross over from one's bordered space into a foreign space where others are located. Based on this understanding, the paper engages the parable of the Good Samaritan in terms of the mechanics of border-crossing as a suggestive template in the reading or rereading of this parable.

## 2. Methodology of the study

It is needful here to state upfront the methodology employed in the study of this parable. We investigated the important elements of border marking and crossing in the mechanics of the social identity theory.<sup>13</sup> According to social identity theory, group boundaries are often maintained through

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observed, "... by redefining the meaning of 'neighbour,' the Lucan Jesus establishes a principle of moral obligation which is independent of the Mosaic law." See Jeanrond, "Biblical Challenges to a Theology of Love," *Biblical Interpretation* 11, 4(2003): 646.

11 Stephen Curkpatrick has observed that, "[t]he good Samaritan can be read as rhetorical antipathy

towards Jewish religious leadership. In a post-70 CE context, this is quite possible." This observation partly suggests the rejection of the exclusive role of Jewish community as God's people especially reflected in the rejection of the priests and Levites as heroes in the parable. See Curkpatrick, "The Parable Metonymy and Luke's Kerygmatic Framing," *JSNT* 25, no. 2 (2003): 289–307 (302).

12 In modern times, the power of Jesus' parables has come under close scrutiny. For a critique of the alleged power of Jesus' parables on his ancient audience see Mary Ann Beavis, "The Power of Jesus' Parables: Were They Polemical or Irenic?" *JSNT* 82 (2001):3–30.

13 For the dynamism of border marking along majority and minority ethnic groups see Ana Sierra Leonard, Ajay Mehra, and Ralph Katerberg, "The Social Identity and Social Networks of Ethnic Minority Groups in Organization: A Crucial test of Distinctiveness Theory," *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* 29, 5(2007):573–589.

strict entry policy.<sup>14</sup> Members of a different group are often rejected by the means of an entrenched stigmatization, systemic discrimination, narratives of prejudices and the derogatory treatments of these individuals as the unwanted “other.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, these policies of exclusion are also strictly applied to members of one’s group especially to individuals who fall short of the group’s image. Russell Spears said, “[r]ejecting people who reflect poorly on one’s group is therefore one way of protecting the group’s image, and policing its boundaries ...”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, it is important to also note that even when isolated from the group members of a particular group carried the salient tenets of the group wherever they go, thereby creating borders between themselves and others in every conceived space. On the positive side, Clifford Stevenson and Thia Sagherian-Dickey have studied the social support of intra group membership in coping with intergroup challenges. However, the dynamic re-creation of the border of exclusion of a group through the contacts and interactions of an isolated member of this group provides an intriguing perspective in social identity theory. Concerning this dynamic in social identity theory, Spears observed,

[w]hat is perhaps most interesting ... is that people are acting more in line with group identity (provided this identity is salient), even when isolated from other group members, in contrast to the physical immersion in the group or crowd. This point brings home the power and pervasiveness of group identity: we can be just as much part of the group psychologically even when we are apparently physically removed from it.<sup>17</sup>

This attitude of group marking and border creating principle presents itself in everyday life. The spirit and policies of the group live in the interactions,

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14 There are groups that allow the possibility of multiple memberships. Concerning the dynamism of this multiple membership see Tegan Cruwys, Niklas K. Steffens, S. Alexander Haslam, “Social Identity Mapping: A Procedure for Visual Representation and Assessment of Subjective Multiple Group Memberships,” *British Journal of Social Psychology* 55, 4(2016):613–642.

15 Concerning border marking along ethnicity see Adriana J. Umaña-Taylor, “Ethnic Identity,” *Handbook of Identity Theory & Research*, ed. Seth J. Schwartz et al (New York: Springer, 2011), 791–809.

16 Russell Spears, “Group Identities: The Social Identity Perspectives,” *Handbook of Identity Theory & Research*, ed. Seth J. Schwartz et al (New York: Springer, 2011), 215.

17 Spears, “Group Identities,” 216.

discourses and relationships of its individual member. Significantly, there is even a sympathetic identification with a member of one's group especially a victim of a particular ordeal without directly having physical connection to them. For example, "a woman who reads about a case of blatant sex discrimination in the paper may feel strongly identified with this woman (and women in general) despite having no personal bond with the victim."<sup>18</sup> Through this identification with victims of a crime, borders are crossed by joint solidarity with the victims of the crime in spite of the absence of a physical connection or relationship to the victim. These dual descriptions of these expressions of border marking and border crossing in social identity theory present a powerful tool in the study of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Using this social identity theory, we will look at the two components here – the re-creations of the priestly and Levitical borders on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho – and the crossing of the borders by the Samaritan traveller in his sympathetic identification with the victim of the story – who physically did not come from his social group.

### 3. Border-crossing and the characters of the parable

Postcolonial studies have generally underscored the significant place of border marking and boundary lines of the present global order.<sup>19</sup> Concerning this importance, Mark D. Sherry observed, "Experiences in the contact zones between nations and cultures, or in the borderlands, have also been a major focus for recent postcolonial scholarship."<sup>20</sup> In contemporary studies, for example, there is a perception of borders as a social construct which is primarily shaped by social, ethnic and national factors. In its identity shaping capacity, physical borders directly involved

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18 Spears, "Group Identities," 216.

19 For postcolonial studies in biblical studies see R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation," *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), 64–84; Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003); Sugirtharajah, eds. *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, eds. *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2005).

20 See Mark D. Sherry, "Postcolonialism," *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 1 & 2, ed. Lisa M. Given (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 654.

a high degree of ideological mapping. In this regard, Steve Weitzman has described the “fictionality” of borders.<sup>21</sup> He observed, “By describing borders in this way [as fiction], my point is not that all borders are false or illusory but that they are inventions, legal fictions, reflecting not some external fact in the world but what people believe about the world.”<sup>22</sup>

Considering this fictionality in terms of inclusion and exclusion, border area often disguised the larger sentiments of communities. The policy at national borders is often the sum total of the ethnocentric perceptions and the innate quest to protect the territorial/cultural integrity of a particular community. Significantly, the border area is a volatile location of confrontation between the insider and the perceived outsider who is either welcomed or barred from entrance. At the border, there is the meeting of the familiar and the strange, the domestic and the foreign, the common and the exotic, the trusted and the feared, the civilized and the uncivilized, the accepted and the outcast. According to Sherry,

The borderlands (literally and metaphorically) are sites of transition and displacement where dominant assumptions are unsettled, and new hybrid forms of power and identity emerge. However, borders are sites of exclusion where national boundaries are articulated, examined, and policed. Decisions about inclusion and exclusion at the borders are important statements about conceptions of the nation and its citizens.<sup>23</sup>

In its fictional sense, “[m]aintaining ... border not only demands fences and border patrols; it also depends on ‘border narratives’—stories, rumours, anecdotes that function like urban legends to dramatize the dangers of going to a certain place or engaging in a certain kinds of interaction.”<sup>24</sup> The fictionality of border space also introduces certain elements of subjectivity to the description of border demarcation and fortification. The exclusive character of national borders has come under close scrutiny especially in

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21 Steve Weitzman, “The Samson Story as Border Fiction,” *Biblical Interpretation* 10, no. 2 (2002): 158–174.

22 Weitzman, “The Samson Story as Border Fiction,” 158.

23 Sherry, “Postcolonialism,” 654.

24 Weitzman, “The Samson Story as Border Fiction,” 159.

the light of the precarious colonial history of the present global order.<sup>25</sup>The continuous inflow of immigrants at national borders and the modern rise of terrorism in most countries around the world have generally led to renewed fortification of national borders to combat possibly security breach.

In spite of these security measures, however, national borders in contemporary times have constantly been breached by the introduction of the cyberspace. Through internet interactions, individual and institutions have navigated over the physical borders imposed on them by their respective countries. Describing this border breach, Steven Weinberg observed, “National borders also become irrelevant, as the whole world is connected by a web of fibre-optic cables.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, there is the constant re-negotiation of the national borders in contemporary times because cyber activities increasingly challenged the integrity of these defined national borders. In principle then, cyber transactions go across national space and invisibly bypassing the physical checkpoints of conventional borders.

Beyond this physical border, however, Mike Davis has remarkably suggested the presence of a “Third border” which is primarily located within a national space.<sup>27</sup> In his study of the Latinos in the United States, Davis underscored the presence of an imposing border that directly hinders the total assimilation of the Latinos communities into the mainstream Caucasian society. Traditionally defined in terms of physical boundary lines, Davis notes the intranational character of border space, and the realization that persons in the same place can and do live in separated bordered lives. He observed,

But the border doesn't end at San Clemente. Indeed, as any ten-year-old in East L.A., or Philly's El Norte knows, borders tend to follow working-class Latinos wherever they live and regardless of how long they have been in the United States. In suburban Los Angeles,

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25 See Elsa Tamez, “The Bible and the Five Hundred Years of Conquest,” *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), 13–26.

26 Steven Weinberg, “Five and a Half Utopias,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 285, no. 1 (2000): 108.

27 Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US City* (New York: Verso, 2000).



New Jersey and Chicago, for instance, the interface between affluent Anglo majorities and growing blue-collar Latino populations is regulated by what can only be typed a ‘third border.’ Whereas the second border nominally reinforces the international border, the third border polices daily intercourse between two citizen communities: its outrageousness is redoubled by the hypocrisy ... Invisible to most Anglos, it slaps Latinos across the face.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, Ana M. Carvalho also notes that “[t]he third border, in this case, is not physical but ideological, and functions as an organizer that divides the cultural and linguistic minority from the hegemonic majority (and reproduces the status quo).”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Adam Schwartz observes, “Unspoken policies and mores of language use are tremendous factors in the organization of these third borders.”<sup>30</sup> Consequently, border in this latter sense is not just some physically policed international space, but it occurs in the imposing presence of invisible borders which constantly separate people into different self-interest groups.

From the preceding considerations, the characters in the parable of the Good Samaritan appear to express a remarkably sensitivity to issues of border and border-crossing. The context of the parable itself first suggested this border description particularly in the lawyer’s question on who my neighbour is (v.29). Concerning this test question, John A. Fitzmyer notes that the intent of the lawyer’s question posed to Jesus is to know “[w]here does one draw the line?”<sup>31</sup> Or to put this differently, what are the border markers in determining one’s neighbour? In this regard, the lawyer’s question assumes that neighbourliness needs boundary limits in terms of exclusion and inclusion of persons. “The legal issue posed” by the lawyer’s question, according to Philip F. Esler, “is ‘whom are we Judeans obligated to treat as neighbours and whom not?’” Consequently, for Esler,

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28 Davis, *Magical Urbanism*, 70.

29 Carvalho, “Introduction: Towards a Sociolinguistics of Border,” *IJSL* 227 (2014): 6.

30 Schwartz, “Mockery and appropriation of Spanish in White Spaces: Perceptions of Latinos in the US,” in *The handbook of Hispanic sociolinguistics*, ed. Manuel Diaz-Campos (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 646–663 (653).

31 John Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X–XXIV* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 886.

the lawyer's question "... is a boundary question of an exclusionary type."<sup>32</sup> Working on this premise, the lawyer's question assumes and imposes borders to the conception of neighbourliness. It technically presupposes that neighbourliness is not a category to be applied indiscriminately to the entirety of humanity, but it should be restrictively used.<sup>33</sup> In principle then, by this question the lawyer desired Jesus to place certain border restriction on persons to be included in the category of one's neighbour.

Quite familiar with the traditional border definition of neighbourliness along the lines of Jewish blood, the lawyer's question appears to underscore these particular drawn borders.<sup>34</sup> However, he was not prepared for the unexpected surprise when Jesus extends the border of neighbourliness beyond his restrictive space. Jesus, through the parable, rejected the sentimental borders, and opens up neighbourliness beyond the established borders of his audience. To this end, Arland J. Hultgren observed, "[b]y having a Samaritan as the one who helps the man in need, Jesus breaks down the boundaries between Jew and Samaritan, to be sure, but most of all he makes the claim that whoever responds to human need is a true child of God and an example of love for the neighbour."<sup>35</sup>

Considering this border dynamics, an underlying border-crossing motif lies naturally behind the parable of the Good Samaritan since issues of border marking and boundary line are subtly envisaged in the lawyer's test question. In the parabolic space of the Good Samaritan, however, border-crossing is not purely the marking of physical borders, but it encompasses the attempt by characters in the story to cross over the perceived racial,

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32 Philip Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict: The Parable of the Good Samaritan in the Light of Social Identity Theory," *Biblical Interpretation* 8, no. 4 (2000): 335.

33 Esler also observed, "[w]ithin the context of social identity theory, the lawyer's question raises a key indicator for determining who is a member of the ingroup, and thus deserving to be treated with the warmth and regard owed to ingroup members, and who is a member of the outgroup, and thus susceptible of the stereotypical and negative attitudes and behaviour appropriate in relation to such a person." See Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict," 336.

34 On Jesus' redrawing of God's family away from natural family ties and blood relationship see Fletcher-Louis, "Let the Dead to Bury their Own Dead," 48–52, 66–68.

35 Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 98.

cultic, and social borders. Beginning on the physical border, the parable of the Good Samaritan describes the story of a man who originally travels from Jerusalem to Jericho. The journey in itself is an act of border-crossing since one at least has to cross over the border of Jerusalem in order to reach Jericho. Unfortunately, the victim of the story never was able to make the complete transition or crossing of the border that will ultimately take him to Jericho. He was left half-dead at the border areas, that is, the unnamed foreign space that lies in between Jerusalem and Jericho. Similarly, the character was also on the borders of life and death. He was a perfect example of a character at the border because he lies between the throes of death – and the fainting breath of living. The transition of the character between Jerusalem and Jericho was temporally hampered and the victim of the story was unable to complete his journey. Thus, the victim of this story presumably lies in an unknown locale which is neither Jerusalem nor Jericho, but a foreign space akin to a border area between the two mentioned places.

Similarly, the priest and the Levite in the parable failed to move from their hallowed space to render help to a “half-dead” man on this same road. They were required to live in a constant state of undefiled cultic commitment. In this sense, the priests and the Levites refused to cross over the perceived cultic border because of their possible fears of this contamination and the attending transition from sanctity to defilement which this touching of the corpse will entail (Lev 21:1–4).<sup>36</sup> Since the holiness code laws forbid them touching a dead person, this mosaic demand naturally created a cultic border which these two characters were unwilling to cross. But the priests and the Levites were not character in themselves, but they are representatives of the exclusive marking of the two groups. Even though away from their priestly colleagues and Levite groups – they carry along

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36 Describing the use of cultic protection for the actions of the priests and the Levites, Hanna Stettler observed, “The ‘good Samaritan’ is driven by compassion to love his neighbour (10:33), while the two representatives of the cult, a priest and a Levite, evade this ethical obligation on the pretext of their cultic duties and the purity they wish to maintain (Lk 10:25–37).” See Stettler, “Sanctification in the Jesus Tradition,” *Biblica* 85 (2004), 166. See also Richard Bauckham, “The Scrupulous Priest and the Good Samaritan: Jesus’ Parabolic Interpretation of the Law of Moses,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 475–489; Duncan M. J. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970).

with them borders of exclusivism. Levites and priests are exclusive groups with bordered policies which are usually out of bound for non-members. While the Levite and priest were isolated from their groups – they still maintained and expressed a border – marking which often imposed their ability to accept or reach out to non-members of their groups. As in the cited study of Spears, the isolation of these characters did not stop their identification with the cultic tenets of their various groups.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, while the first border was primarily a geographical one, this second border-crossing is largely a cultic one. However, like the first character, the priests and the Levites failed to cross the cultic border placed upon them by the virtue of their religious offices and their identification to their sacred orders.<sup>38</sup>

In the same way, the thieves in the parable also failed to practise neighbourliness. They occupy the nameless foreign space between Jerusalem and Jericho. In a sense too, the thieves were men at the margin of the society who are socially located at the border. As outcasts, they also occupy the same character zone with the Good Samaritan. Even though they might have been Jews or even Samaritan themselves, Jesus deliberately refused to state their ethnicity. However, for these thieves, the road from Jerusalem to Jericho was the only space where they exercised full power to take whatever they want.<sup>39</sup> Significantly, they are the only violent characters in the parable and sets border between themselves and the victim of the story through their humiliating treatment of him as the “other”. The thieves were the only characters in the parable who were described in plurality. It appears they are an unholy community of outcasts who acted in self-interests and cravings rather than on the consideration for others. In the

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37 See Spears, “Group Identities,” 216.

38 Border crossing often demands the negation of oneself. On this study see Shantanu Dutta Ahmed, “Border Crossings: Retrieval and Erasure of the Self as Other,” in *Between the Lines: South Asians and Postcoloniality*, eds. Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 337–50.

39 In comparing these thieves to other characters in the parable, Jeanne Steven-Moessner observed, “[t]he robber exhibits the infantile if not immoral position: what is yours is mine. The priest and Levite depict the narcissistic or self-absorbed worldview: what is mine is mine. Perhaps they had pressing responsibilities. ‘The Samaritan, in caring for the neighbour, exhibits the traditionally ‘feminine’ altruistic posture: what is mine is yours.’” See Stevenson-Moessner, “The Road to Perfection: An Interpretation of Suffering in Hebrews,” *Interpretation* 57, no. 3 (2003): 285.

parable, they robbed the victim of his “clothes.” The parable did not tell us that his other belongings were taken, but a reference was made only to his clothes.<sup>40</sup> With all of the insights provided by Esler, the taking of the clothes of the victim by the thieves possibly suggests the desire to possess the refinements of civilization, thus a quest to leave the border space into the named secured communities of Jerusalem and Jericho.<sup>41</sup> However, they went further to beat and even wound the victim of the parable and at the end left him half-dead.

In this parable, a third border, like the one suggested by Davis, appears to exist between the thieves and the victim of the story. This imaginary border directly placed the thieves and the wounded man into two social domains of the victim and the victimizer. As in earlier theory of social identity, competitions and conflicts are important instrument for marking of group’s identity. Interestingly, the acts of violence by the thieves helps to draw the perceived border area around the victim, thus isolating the wounded man and turning him to be an outsider. Technically then, he was placed outside of the perceived social space which collectively marked the inner cohesive feelings of solidarity among the thieves. Similarly, in stealing, the thieves themselves seek possibly to navigate or cross over from their present location at the social margin into the mainstream societies at Jerusalem and Jericho. However, it seems they did not totally cross over into this space because their quest for social mobility was inherently marred by their victimization of another character. Significantly, at the expense of the worth of another person, their hopes to cross over from the margin into the

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40 There is importance in the reference to his clothing. Esler said, “Jesus’ failure to specify the man’s ethnicity is absolutely essential to the situation he establishes and to what transpires thereafter.”

Since people of all types frequented Jerusalem, the mere fact that he was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho did not determine the issue. But the man had been stripped ... clothing was valuable, and this explains why thieves would remove it. Yet this detail was important for two reasons. First, it meant that an observer had lost the chance to assess the victim’s ethnicity by what he was wearing. Although this is an area which would repay further investigation, it seems probable that Judean and non-Judean inhabitants of Palestine could be distinguished by their clothing. Secondly, and more importantly, the man’s nakedness enabled an observer to determine whether he was circumcised or not. If uncircumcised, he was a Gentile and certainly not a neighbour; if circumcised an Israelite or a Samaritan.” See Esler, “Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict,” 337.

41 See Esler, “Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict,” 337.

mainstream societies did not entirely materialized because these violent characters left the parable as “thieves” and nothing more.

Turning also to the character of the innkeeper, Longenecker has described the marginalisation of the innkeeper within the study of this parable. According to him, the innkeeper is a “neglected figure” because interpretative attention is largely on the Good Samaritan rather than on him.<sup>42</sup> Longenecker observed, “Although the extant framing of the story tends to concentrate attention on the Samaritan (10:36–37), the innkeeper himself might well have played a significant role in the story’s original configuration and interlock of meaning.”<sup>43</sup>

While the good deeds of the innkeeper could be applauded, however, like the thieves, he is also located at the border between Jerusalem and Jericho. In this designated space, the innkeeper provides refreshment, care and hospitality to travellers. However, his offers of refreshment and care are not entirely free. In fact, the innkeeper offers no free care, but he monetises the services and help given to the victims in the narrative space. Even though the nationality of the inn-keeper is not given, but it is possible that the innkeeper was also a Jewish person. Significantly, while the Good Samaritan parts away with his money in order to take care of a complete stranger, the inn-keeper takes money to do the same thing. Concerning the ancient mistrust of innkeepers, Longnecker said, there is a “cultural mistrust of innkeepers as despicable characters.”<sup>44</sup> He added,

Innkeepers of the ancient world were not the respectable proprietors of modern-day hotel chains (one hopes); instead, they were distrusted as morally dubious figures who were thought to take

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42 In addition, Longenecker said, “One need only to consult discussion of the story by contemporary interpreters to see that the innkeeper has played virtually no role in the history of interpreting the Samaritan story. His role is usually considered to be wholly parasitic to that of the Samaritan. That is, he appears in the story simply to permit the generosity of the Samaritan to come to fullest light; the Samaritan needs to pay money to someone for the care of the injured man, so the story requires a figure to accept the money. In this way, the innkeeper usually makes no real contribution to the interpretation of the Samaritan narrative.” See Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 426, 247.

43 Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 426.

44 Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 430.

advantage of their clientele in any way possible in order to advance their own prospects.<sup>45</sup>

In spite of this negative perception of the innkeeper, Longnecker undertakes a positive reading of his role in the parable. For example, Longnecker observes that the phrase “whatever more spend” in 10:35 suggested that “[t]he Samaritan expects that, during his absence, costs beyond two denarii will be paid by the innkeeper ...” Viewed this way, according to Longnecker, the innkeeper will be going an extra mile in his care for the victim of the parable, thus suggesting his generous caring spirit.<sup>46</sup>

On the other hand, it is also possible to read this same phrase in light of the duplicity of the innkeeper who might extort the condition of the victim in the story in the absence of the Samaritan. The point here is that the Good Samaritan anticipates that the innkeeper’s bills will be inflated or upwardly reviewed and adequately planned for this financial exigency in line with the dubious reputation of ancient innkeepers. Even though this is a parable, but one cannot help asking whether this inn-keeper could have accepted to care and cater for the victim of the story if some money was not given to him?<sup>47</sup> Would he have used his resources for compassion if he was not paid? In fact, the answer appears to be a “no” because at the end of the story when Jesus asked who was truly a neighbour to the victim of the story, the name of the inn-keeper was clearly not mentioned.<sup>48</sup> The inn-keeper cared and

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45 In spite of his recognition of the “dubious character” of the innkeeper, Longenecker still insisted a positive reading of this particular innkeeper of the Good Samaritan. However, this positive reading refuses to apply to this particular case the questionable reputation of the innkeeper, and hence ignores the possible part that this assumed cultural understanding ultimately has on the desired representation of the Good Samaritan. See Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 432. On the other hand, James R. Royse has shown the negative connotation of inn-keeping in Philo and later Jewish writings. See Royse, “A Philonic Use of *pandocei/on*,” *Novum Testamentum* 23, no. 1 (1981): 193–194.

46 Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 440.

47 The common temptation to allegorize Jesus’ parable has led to the contemporary perception that parables have only one point of corresponding relationship to reality. In contrast, Klyne Snodgrass has said, “Parables cannot be limited to having one point, as popular as that notion has been.” See Snodgrass, “A Hermeneutic of Hearing Informed by the Parables with Special Reference to Mark 4,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14, no. 1 (2004): 61.

48 Longenecker downplayed Jesus’ closing question by his emphasis that the present closing frame of the Good Samaritan parable has been adjusted to now fit Lukan gospel

looked after the victim of the story but it was done from the point of view of a paid compassion or a care that anticipated payment. Consequently, in the image of the inn-keeper, one sees the monetising services and ventures at the border space which often monetises humanitarian services by placing value on money rather than human lives. In fact, this self-styled place of help often degenerates into exploited schemes that take cares of victims, but also monetises the help they render to these victims.<sup>49</sup> Even though the story ended without hearing the perspective of the inn-keeper or any speech from him, it appears the inn-keeper was not afraid to touch or minister to the “half-dead” man because he anticipates payment from the Good Samaritan.<sup>50</sup> Technically then, the inn-keeper did not cross over the border because his care and love for the victim of the parable expects some financial remunerations.

However, among these characters that inhabit the narrative space of the parable, the character that stood out above other characters was the Good Samaritan. First of all, he crossed the geographical border. Racially speaking, he has no business being on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho because he is not originally from these two places. As per ethnicity or nationality, he is from Samaria, a town closely associated with the half-breed and thus located outside of the sanctimonious space of Jerusalem and Jericho. Based on his ethnicity, this character is possibly an illegal person on this terrain because it is purely a Jewish domain envisaged by the mentioning of these two key locations. For instance, in Luke 9: 51–56, the narrator describes the Samaritan barring Jesus from entering their town,

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interests. See Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 422–427.

- 49 According to John Donahue, inn-keeping is “a profession that had a bad reputation in antiquity for dishonesty and violence.” See John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 133.
- 50 Longenecker also describes the “trust” arrangement and not the writing of contract between the innkeeper and the Samaritan [Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 440]. Here too, the emphasis in the present form of the story is to show the willingness of the Good Samaritan to trust a cultural perceived crook fellow. Thus, the present form of the parable is to characterize the Good Samaritan and to show his magnanimity in entrusting resources to a person who is culturally perceived to be a questionable character.



thus suggesting the deteriorating tensions between these two groups.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Jesus normally does not mention names of places in his parables. I think the reason Jesus mentioned the two locations in the parable was primarily to underscore the geographical dislocation of this Samaritan character. Even though Samaritans possibly could move freely in the first-century Jewish Jerusalem and Jericho, he has no legal space in this terrain. Josephus reported the case of the killing of Galilean pilgrims by Samaritans near the Samaritan village of Ginea at 52 C.E.<sup>52</sup>

Considering this tension, one can say that the Samaritan in the parable belongs to the town of Samaria, and his act of travelling between Jerusalem and Jericho definitely constitutes an act of border-crossing in itself. Even though he is not a refugee or an immigrant *per se* but geographically speaking he is dislocated from his home space to a foreign space. Yet, in this foreign space, he exercises a noble spirit which extends help to a person in need.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, the Good Samaritan was willing to cross from the border of perceived sanctification to defilement. Even though the Samaritans are perceived as sinners some of them practiced a strict Jewish observance on defilement, yet the character in the story went from the border of secured piety or perceived holiness to a region of possible defilement or even contamination.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, if Longenecker's assertion is right that in the Good Samaritan's touching of the half-dead character lies also the fear of contamination with the "dreaded evil eyes" because they are assumed to possess sick, wounded and dying persons, then we could

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51 See Andrew E. Arterbury, "Breaking the Betrothal Bonds: Hospitality in John 4," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 76.

52 See Arterbury, "Breaking the Betrothal Bonds," 77.

53 There is a redemptive element in border crossing. For this study see Leticia A. Guardiola-Sáenz, "Border-crossing and its Redemptive Power in John 7.53–8.11: A Cultural Reading of Jesus and the Accused," in Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, eds. *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 129–52.

54 To this end, Esler observed, "The position taken by the priest and the Levite, however defensible legally, is simply not part of his moral universe. There is no sign at all in the text that the Samaritan's response represented an embodiment of what Lev. 19:18 requires. The whole issue of

the obligation imposed by that part of the Mosaic law was simply immaterial to him ..." See Esler, "Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict," 343.

even imagined that the Good Samaritan's touching of the half-dead man placed him further into an arena of spiritual possession.<sup>55</sup>

Thirdly, he extended compassion to persons outside of his ethnic circle. Esler observed, the story of the Good Samaritan “drives one to conclude that compassion which transcends legally sanctioned ethnic boundaries and discriminations when faced with real human need is a superior form of human behaviour than continuing to live within their limits.”<sup>56</sup> He had compassion on the victim of the story. It is interesting here that he himself is a victim. There is a common victimhood between these two characters. He was a victim in the world of the audience of the story who in the sacred sense of common victimhood reach out to the victim of Jesus' story. In the mentioning of the Good Samaritan's compassion for the victim of this parable in verse 33, the Good Samaritan moved from the group of a stigmatized minority to a group of all victims in respective of their ethnic identities. He sided with the victim against the thieves, the priest and Levite of the story.

Similarly, the Good Samaritan parted with his money and his willingness to move from financial abundance to penury or even bankruptcy. Concerning this generosity, Stevenson-Moessner said, “[t]his Samaritan with unqualified generosity expends himself for the needy.”<sup>57</sup> He gave his money to take care of the victim in the story and he uses his donkey to aid a complete stranger. He uses his bandage, oil and wine on tending the wounds of a complete stranger. In fact, the comfort of riding on his donkey was now replaced with his walking by the side of his own donkey while a total stranger enjoys its comfort. He placed the victim in the story at the care of the innkeeper, thus appearing to make a detour from the primary reasons for his journey, thus inconveniencing himself (v.35).

Similarly, he also inconvenienced himself in the inclusion of the welfare of this victim in his schedules and programmes because he has to go back that way in order to check the wellbeing of this stranger on his way back from his trip. It is a direct incursion into his plans, time and programmes. In all these

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55 Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke10:30–35),” 437–438.

56 Esler, “Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict,” 343.

57 Stevenson-Moessner, “The Road to Perfection, 284.

different ramifications, the Good Samaritan shows a willingness to cross the several borders in order to meet the victim of this parable in his place of need. Esler said, “neighbour’ ... is someone who ignores group boundaries ... to assist anyone who has need.”<sup>58</sup> John Nolland said, “... more typically the sense of group loyalty and loyalty to God found expression in firm boundaries for the reach of neighbor-love ...” in Jewish community, but the parable of the Good Samaritan “supported a total abolition of boundaries to love of neighbour.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, through this parable, Jesus refutes the human tendency for border fortifications and the narrowed definition of neighbourliness around one’s race, religion and creed. Significantly, he broadens the scope of neighbourliness and directly encouraged a borderless conception of human interactions and relationships. In this parable, “Jesus thus calls for a movement from a group-oriented ethic to a universal one.”<sup>60</sup>

#### 4. Border-crossing in Luke-Acts and the parable of the Good Samaritan

Concerning the importance of border-crossing in the New Testament, Priscille Djomhoué observed, “Border-crossing was intrinsic to the New Testament understanding of the faith ...”<sup>61</sup> In Luke-Acts, for example, the geographical borders are clearly defined in terms of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the end of the earth (Acts 1:8), and the early church is represented as crossing these marked borders.<sup>62</sup>

Significantly, borders whether physical or ideological played a subtle importance in the telling of Luke’s stories. For example, Luke describes

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58 Esler, “Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict,” 345.

59 John Nolland, “Luke 9:21–18:34”. *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 35B (Dallas, Texas: Word, 1993), 583.

60 Esler, “Jesus and the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict,” 345.

61 Priscille Djomhoué, “Manifestations of Ecumenism in Africa Today: A Study of the Mainline and Pentecostal Churches in Cameroon,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8, no. 4 (2008): 366.

62 The subtle echo of motifs within the parable of the Good Samaritan appears to reverberate in Luke. Considering this possibility, Bruce Longenecker observed, “the Samaritan story performs functions far beyond those given to it by the Lukan frame, to the extent that the literary context in which the parable currently resides appears to be a secondary feature.” See Longenecker, “The Story of the Samaritan and the Innkeeper (Luke 10:30–35), 425.

Jesus' ministrations to some lepers at the border of Samaria (Lk17:11). Luke wrote: "Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus travelled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, 'Jesus, Master, have pity on us!'"<sup>63</sup> In this text, the border region was the place for the outcasts of the two communities namely the Samaritans and the Jews from Galilee.<sup>64</sup>

Conscious of this border dynamics, Luke also tells the parable of the praying Pharisee and the tax collectors in 18: 9–14 thus further illustrating a heightened perception of divided or bordered space between these two characters. In his prayers, the Pharisee presented his self-righteous deeds before God, and compared himself to the neighbouring tax collector. Interestingly, though they both shared the same temple space, the self-righteous Pharisee created a moral border which inevitably turns the tax collector into an outsider.<sup>65</sup> In fact, the sacred space is here spilt into two with the Pharisee on one side and the tax collector on the other. The passage reads:

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'" "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God ..."

In this parable, it is significant to also note that both of them came to pray in the temple and thus suggesting that they both stand in the same cultic space and also talked to the same God. However, the Pharisee placed the

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63 In the same way, Luke also placed the blind beggar at the gate/border area outside of the town of Jericho (18:35–43). It appears border areas of Israelite towns were foreign places designated for the outcasts.

64 See Stanley E. Porter, "Luke 17:11–19 and the Criteria for Authenticity Revisited," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1, no. 2 (2003): 201–224.

65 See Kilgallen, "The Importance of the Redactor in Luke 18, 9–14," *Biblica* 79 (1989): 74.

tax collector outside of this space, and arrogantly placed himself at the centre of the sacred space. In doing this, the Pharisees created boundary lines around himself thereby monopolizing God and isolating the tax collector. Located at this margin of the sacred space, the tax collector is alienated from his immediate neighbour. In fact, the Pharisee reinforces in the sacred space the boundary demarcation which had divided and placed himself and the tax collector into two different spheres. Consequently, this particular praying Pharisee fenced himself in a self-created border against a perceived historical sinner or enemy, and also brought into the sacred space the same social border marking which had readily separated them into two different camps.

Similarly, the parable of the importunate widow in 18:1–8 also has this subtle border dynamics. Stephen Curkpatrick has described the widow as an “audacious” character.<sup>66</sup> He said the parable of the “audacious widow (18.2–5) has clear resonances with the gospel’s themes of inclusion and justice for liminal ambiguous persons.”<sup>67</sup> In this parable, the widow sought justice from a difficult judge who is said to have no fear God or man. After refusing her justice for a while, the judge in the parable decided to give justice to this widow because of her persistence “coming” or “crossing over” to his space in order to disturb him. Concerning this parable, Jesus said,

In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. <sup>3</sup> And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, “Grant me justice against my adversary.” For some time, he refused. But finally, he said to himself, “Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!” (Lk 18:2–5).

Here too, the judge and the widow lived in the same town or geographical space, however, both of them are also situated in the different side of this town. In short, there is a clear-cut boundary between the two of them. However, the widow in the parable keeps crossing over the imaginary boundary from her world to the world of the judge in order to ask for

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<sup>66</sup> Curkpatrick, “A Parable Frame-up and Its Audacious Framing,” 22–38.

<sup>67</sup> Curkpatrick, “A Parable Frame-up and Its Audacious Framing,” 22.

justice from him. He decided to secure for this widow justice not because he believes in her just cause, but because he wanted to stop her from crossing over the border in order to disturb him. In a sense, the judge in the parable wanted to keep or maintain the boundary lines between himself and the widow. He deliberately intended that by helping her to seek justice she will remain in her side of the town, and thus keeping the border between them.

In another story in Luke (18:15–17), little children were brought to Jesus. However, Jesus' disciples refused these little children into the adult space and seek to directly maintain the border between the adult space and the world of the children. In many societies, there is a boundary line drawn between the world of little children and the world of the adult life. In contrast to this norm, Jesus requested that little children should be allowed to cross over into the adult space. In this regard, Jesus accepted the crossing over of the imposed border and the sharing of the same space by both the young and the old, thus removing the perceived cultural boundaries separating these different age groups.

In a similar sense too, other stories in Luke suggests this subtle border dynamics. For example, on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus wants three of his disciples (Peter, John and John) to see his glory. On the top of the mountain, they cross over into another realm and saw Moses and Elijah together with Jesus. The boundary lines between heaven and earth appeared breached and the glory of Jesus was displayed for these disciples to see. However, rather than enjoying this displayed divine glory, and to participate in this non-boundary experience, Peter requested that the three persons Moses, Elijah and Jesus be separated and placed into three different tents. For Peter, rather than one big tent for these three persons, he advocated a kind of borders around these three persons (9:33). In this way, Peter acknowledges and saw a discontinuity between these three persons and thus imposed a boundary around these three representations/stages of divine revelation.

Looking to Jesus' parable again, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus also engages the subtle interest in border. In this parable the rich man by his luxurious life naturally imposed or created a border between himself and Lazarus. According to this parable, Lazarus was placed at the rich

man's gate and barred from the table of the rich man. In a reverse order after their deaths, the boundaries created in life were also maintained in the hereafter life by the presence of a "gulf" or "chasm" between the rich man and Lazarus that cannot be crossed. Abraham to this effect said, "And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us" (Lk 16:26). Consequently, for Luke, border-crossing is only possible in life at the moment when one is still alive, but it becomes impossible to bridge the fundamental gulf that separates the rich and the poor in the hereafter.

These occurrences of border consciousness in the preceding areas suggest that border places occupied a subtle importance in the reporting of various stories in Luke. Importantly, Luke represents Jesus crossing borders in order to reach people at both the margin and the centre. In this sense, Jesus crosses cultural, ethnic, social, economic and geographical borders imposed by the social relationships in the first-century Jewish world. For Luke, Jesus' ministry is directly empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out these cross-border evangelistic activities. In the context of this bigger picture, the story of the Good Samaritan receives additional importance in its attempts to underscore the need of rendering humanitarian care across the borders to space occupied by historic enemies.

## **5. Conclusion**

The modern world is increasingly divided by self-created borders. There are African migrants physically crossing borders across the Mediterranean Sea and through the Sahara deserts for greener pasture. There also cybernetic, colonial, imperial and ideological borders which often had restricted the humanitarian pursuits of wellness for all members of the human race. Of course, these modern borders imposed a limitation to our innate call for love and compassion to all race, ethnicity, religion, and creeds. There is the need to cross these borders like the "Good Samaritan" in this parable to proclaim the message of the kingdom. Ironically, the kingdom of God has

no borders; it should be in everywhere and every place.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Luke said that the kingdom of God should break forth from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and to the end of the earth. There is the need to be like the Good Samaritan who crossed geographical border, imposed cultic restrictions, financial difficulty, and social inconveniences in order to meet the need of a total stranger. In terms of social identity theory, he rejected the narrowed prism of his own ostracized human condition as an ethnic minority in order to identify with victims outside his ethnic groups. The solidarity of the Good Samaritan goes beyond ethnic confinements to encompass all victims everywhere in respective of their religion, colour and race. The simple Christian message here, is a call, in this sense, to love people beyond our ecclesiastical, doctrinal fences or even religious borders.<sup>69</sup>

Border-crossing appears to occupy a defining place especially in a crafted narrative space of the Good Samaritan where the unexpected hero of Jesus is the unnamed Samaritan rather than a Jewish priest or Levite. In this way, Jesus himself, loosely speaking, has also crossed the border, and has helped us to go over and beyond the limiting boundaries of our innate human prejudices which often place people at the other side of the border via our feelings of religious exclusiveness and racial superiority. Of course, Jesus through this parable exposed the hypocrisy of his own society, and also by

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68 Concerning the problem of borders and the kingdom of God, John D. Caputo said, “The kingdom ought to be as hospitable as possible, in the spirit of that impossible story about a very strange wedding feast, a veritable hatter’s party, where the distinction between who is in and who is out in the kingdom starts to look a little mad. I am very interested in the question of the borders of the kingdom, of its inside and outside, and its politics, a question that also spills over into other important questions about the borders that divide the ‘religions of the Book,’ or the borders between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, between the community and the excommunicated, between theism and atheism, theology and atheology, and in general between religion and what has been called in a devilishly delicious phrase ‘religion without religion.’ Are there rigorous walls around the kingdom? Do they have border patrols there? Do they have a problem with illegal immigrants? Who is in and who is out? Is anyone there who rightly passes for an atheist? The guidance we get from the story is that the insiders are out, and the outsiders are in.” See Caputo, “The Poetics of the Impossible and the Kingdom of God,” *Postmodern Theology*, ed. Graham Ward (Malden, Manchester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 480.

69 For the use of the gospel message to address the exclusive border definition particularly in Indian caste society see A. Maria Arul Raja, SJ, “Breaking Hegemonic Boundaries: An Intertextual Reading of the Madurai Veeran Legend and Mark’s Story of Jesus,” *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2006), 103–111.



extension the hypocrisies of our modern high-fenced walls, which often divide communities in the same neighbourhood – and pitch themselves unfortunately against one another.

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