

LK 9, 46-50: BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON AN ALL-AFRICAN WAR AGAINST INDISCIPLINE, CORRUPTION AND POLITICAL INEPTITUDE

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Abstract

No one doubts, as the contemporary social political handwriting on the African walls indicates, that Africa is in the throes of moral crises. Unethical acts and indiscipline are quite common place in virtually all the countries of the African continent. Heinous crimes, in fact, do interpenetrate border after border everyday unchecked. The African society is generally and fast yielding to unspeakable and pernicious sadism. This article adopts the socio-critical method as represented in the studies of recent African biblical scholars (Abe 1986; Manus 1986, Onah 1991, Olubunmo 1991, Young III. 1993). It seeks to interpret the gospel of Jesus as recorded in Lk. 9, 46ff and parallels from the perspectives of contemporary African social-political contexts. At the same time, it attempts to sensitize African biblical scholars to become socially engaged critics who must re-read the Bible in order to discover the Lord of Life in the midst of moribund and decadent socio-political realities, which rather demean than promote integral human development in Africa. These objectives shall be achieved by exposing the meaning of the Logia Jesu on the conduct of some of the men who acted the scenes in Luke's Gospel drama. Lk. 9, 46ff and parallels are not only proofs of the lack of understanding on the part of the first disciples but offers insight into the level of indiscipline that had prevailed among those earliest flesh and blood disciples of Jesus and the solution he provided to arrest their inordinate cravings. Reading the Gospel of Luke in the light of Africa's crumbling social ethic, the paper underlines the contribution of biblical theology towards the consolidation of sound political ethics for the peoples of Africa in the post-independence period. The paper expects that avoidance of anti-social and reprehensible conducts will not only promote cultural freedom but genuine political stability and economic liberty needed in Africa in the 21st century.

1. Introduction

The war against indiscipline declared in Nigeria by a former Head of State, Major General Buhari and his lieutenant, Major General Tunde Idiagbon, in 1984 needs to be waged totally in all Africa today. Major General Sanni Abacha has extended the crusade to include a vigorous campaign against corruption. The operation is now

tagged War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (*WAI-C*)¹. Whether the programme is a mere cosmetic, or a window-dressing by Nigerian leaders, the fact that one of the repressive military regimes in Africa with its ugly human rights records, recognizes the urgency of an ethical revolution makes it awesomely long overdue as whole Africa's present reality calls for analysis and reflections from interdisciplinary angles. For African Christians, reflections on the significance of the Bible on current African history, especially on the political, economic and social dimensions of life in the African continent, is adjudged timely as it is auspicious.

2. The African Context

There is today a convergence of ideas in both the historical and the social sciences about the appalling African situation. Africa, a giant in the two-thirds world, an opinion-leader in the Black world with most of her states already in the second quarter of their first century as independent nations has, in recent years, been experiencing a remarkable fall in the standard of the moral and ethical life led by her citizens. The ethical conduct of African peoples, Traditionalists, Muslims and Christians, leaves much to be desired. The rate at which the commission of anti-social crimes and other socio-political evils are invading the traditional values of the various ethnic groups who inhabit the African continent has increasingly become alarming. Indeed Africa is in a state of moral break-down. Everywhere and in all walks of life, Africans, especially the elites, exhibit such wanton acts of indiscipline which are themselves the reflections of a much deep-rooted social malaise.

The disturbing lack of commitment to a viable ethical base and the consequent absence of moral rectitude in both the military organizations in nations like Zaire and the Central African Republic where the military are mutinous and often on the rampage, and the moral bankruptcy in the Public Service in places like Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon where there prevails a negative understanding of the Civil Service as 'Whiteman's job' and the public fund as 'National Cake' remain detrimental to the holistic development of the African nations the peoples' personality and psyche. Quite innumerable and unprintable vices are reflected in the crimes against humanity being perpetrated in Rwanda's pogrom and 'ethnic cleansing', Burundi's continuing blood-letting, the senseless and brutal carnage and ruin in Liberia, ethnic bickerings in post-apartheid South Africa and the internecine wars which were yesterday's stories in Sierra Leone and Angola. Besides, there abound such terrible acts carried out in forms of arson to cover up fraud, 'kick-backs' from over-invoiced contract awards - official forgeries, drug trafficking, money-laundering and international duping regularly drum the ears of an observant African and outsiders. What about Africa's image? Is there a good portrait left?

On the home-front of some of the nations, there is despicable and crass greed for rank among the political class often leading to the abuse of political power as is recently exhibited in the Ford-Kenya intra-party wranglings which had left some persons dead in Nairobi. What about the stultifyingly bewildered and powerless electorate or the politically deprived in their own nations? What about the disregard for the sanctity of human life exhibited in both daylight and night robberies with violence, the regular occurrence of the dastardly acts of hired hitmen and assassins in

1. See for example, Mk. 6, 52 and parallels.

Africa's big cities such as Accra, Lagos, Doula, Kinshasa, Kigali, Luanda, Nairobi and Pretoria? How many Africans restore the international communities' respect for her peoples? How may we measure the consequences of our actions on our spiritual, human and material development? Indeed these are some of the *Lasterkatologe* (Catalogue of evils) with which Africans have notoriously become associated in spite of myriads of the revivalists' open-air rallies, electronic churches and the evangelists' and pastors' bells jingling and clinging all over the African villages, towns and cities. These sagging situations have compelled no one else but the Secretary-general of the United Nations, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, an African himself, to launch a programme of Special Initiative on Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, in April 1996. Apart however from the political side, African social scientists are the more worried. In an essay written in the *International Herald Tribune* of August 4, 1994 captioned 'Decaying Parts of Africa Need Benign Recolonization', Prof Ali Mazrui, the erudite political scientist had x-rayed the horrifying events that make headline news in contemporary Africa. I agree with him that much of contemporary Africa is in the throes of decay and decomposition. But he observes pessimistically that dependent modernization achieved during the colonial administration is being rapidly eroded away.

The frightening events in Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia reveal that Africans have failed to unite for economic development and political stability. Rather the problems of war, famine, ruin and refugeism stare many Africans on the face. But instead of Mazrui's despondence expressed in his call for 'external recolonization' under the 'banner of humanitarianism', I sue for an ethical revolution, that is, the declaration of an 'All Africa War Against Indiscipline', in all its ramifications in order to avert the spreading 'cancer of chaos'. Then after the prosecution of such a 'war' a programme of Pax Africana would be inaugurated. Where the regional economic blocs cannot prosecute this war, the Organization of African Unity should take over. As a rehabilitation programme, it should aim at the promotion of regional integration and human development?

3. The Story, Lk 9, 46-50

Along the road to Jerusalem, the *terminus ad Quem* of the Lord's mission on earth, we are treated to a narrative discourse on the disciples' engagement in egoistic squabbles over status, position, rank and above all, ambition in the kingdom they expected Jesus to establish in Palestine of their days. Their contention was: Who was the greatest? And their second egoistic behaviour is read in v. 49 where they envied a man who performed exorcism in Jesus' name. For them, the Christ event must be exclusivistic.

These monopolistic, individualistic and exclusivistic acts and similar conducts like Judas's greed and avarice, Peter's thrice denial of Jesus and the desertion of the disciples *es ta idia* after Jesus's crucifixion, are evidence of indiscipline and crass egoism within the community. Is it impious to critique such texts? Would it be regarded irreverent to show the other side of the coin? Or is it improper to apply the method of foundational historical criticism on the Gospels in the African context? No, for if the foundational criticism aims at exposing the misdeeds of our idealized historical and religious personalities, it is the better so that the excesses of those who make history for generations yet unborn can be curbed. In that light, the exposition of biblical texts which speak of the 'indiscipline' of Christians in antiquity is by no

means a radical exegesis. But rather informed by the criteria of foundational historical critical approach, it is an objective evaluation of Christianity's past which is needed to correct the vision of our present.

Such a venture is hoped to open up useful vista for out self-appraisal as I challenge Africans to engage themselves in an all-out War Against Indiscipline, Corruption and political ineptitude. The lessons Jesus had taught the errant disciples still remain a challenge to all of us in Africa today. Let us unveil the text in order to reread it in the light of Africa's present day condition.

4. Lk 9, 46-50: Its Context

Luke 9: 1-50 is indeed a long passage. The point of interest encapsulated in the passage is the stress laid on the relationship between Jesus and the disciples and the moral lessons he imparted to them. There is a christological bias in Luke's presentation. He intends that the disciples will, through these lessons, come to an understanding of Jesus' person and work.² In spite of all, Luke literarily delays the account of Jesus' revelation to the disciples until his public manifestation and exaltation by God through his *Anastasis* as Lord of history and the Christ.³ In this passage, Luke omits some Synoptic parallels, for example, the account of Jesus' visit to Nazareth in Mark 6: 1-16;⁴ the narrative of John the Baptist's death in Matt. 6: 17-29⁵ and the entire block, Mk. 6: 45-8: 26. Except for these omissions, Luke follows Mark consistently. The omissions are not without purpose. It is Lucan artistry to delete such unconnected materials from his *Vorlage* in order just to create a structure whose framework is the revelation of Jesus' own ethic to his followers.⁶ Here the evangelist's own preoccupation is seen at work. He takes it upon himself to use this small group to expand Christian morality concerning evils which man and society are riddled with.

The context in which the passage is located is divisible into six pericopae.⁷ The first treats of the mission of the disciples which culminates in the manifestation of Jesus' power in feeding the multitude (9: 1-17); then the narrative of Peter's Great Confession in which Jesus' suffering is predicted and shown as a paradigm for the disciples to emulate (9: 18-27). Immediately after this unit, yet another pre-passion narrative is given, that is, the Transfiguration (9: 28-36) which is followed by the cure of an epileptic boy (9: 37-43a); and the second prediction of the Passion (9: 43b-45). Finally, 9: 46-50, the pericope under study, deals with the disciple's strife.

In sum, my submission is that the passage is located in a larger context composed around two outstanding christological themes; namely the identification of Jesus as

2 E.E. Ellis, 'La Composition de Luc 9 et les sources de sa christologie,' J. Du Pont et al., (ed.), *Jesus aux origines de la christologie* (Gembloux, 1975) pp. 193-200.

3 Cf. Acts 2: 26; 17: 16ff. his is a theme I have instructively argued elsewhere, see my 'The Areopagus Speech (Acts 17: 16-34) A Study on Luke's Approach to Evangelism and Its Significance in the African Context', in Amewowo, W et al (eds) *Les Actes des Apotres of les jeunes Eglises, Actes du Deuxieme Congress des Biblistes Africains* (Kinshasa, Zaire, 1990) pp. 197-218; also in *Aths* 14, 1985 pp. 1-18; *Revue Africain de Theologie (RAT)* Zaire, 13, 1989, pp. 155-170.

4 Already Mark has provided a parallel to this in 4: 16-30

5 Also see Lk. 3: 19-20.

6 Cf. I.A. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Exeter, The Pasternoster Press, 1978) pp. 348-349.

7 We exclude here Lk. 9:51ff, a large passage of its own probably with its own source which treats of the Lucan travelogue.

the mighty Suffering Son of God and Luke's invitation of the disciples to disdain vaingloriousness and emulate the Lord in humble service; themes which undoubtedly go back to *the Sitz im Leben* of the primitive Christianity where Luke sees the moral principles enunciated as the absolute command of Jesus.

5. Exegesis

A brief exegesis of Lk. 9: 46-50 will be offered in two sections; namely vv. 46-48 and vv. 49-50. Instead of a verse-by-verse exposition, the line of thought in each sub-unit will be discussed together. The Greek text, in its transliterated form, is given along with the version of the New English Bible. I have chosen this version because of its clarity and accuracy for rendering the original Greek into a readable prose. Two final stages will consummate my task; namely an observation in which an overview of the exegetical proceeds is presented and the conclusion in which I try to relate the findings to the African context.

A.vv. 46-48: The Saying Against Strife about Personal Status

(46) *Eiselthen de dialogismos en autois, to tis an eie meizon auton.*

(47) *Ho de 'lesous eidos ton dialogismon tes kardias auton epilabomenos paidion estesen auto par' heauto*

(48) *Kai eipen autois, Hos ean dexetai touto to paidion epi to onomati mou eme dechetai, kai hos an eme dexetai dechetai ton aposteilants me ho gar mikroteros en pasin humin huparchon autos estin megas (GNT³).*

(46) A dispute arose among them: which of them was the greatest?

(47) Jesus knew that was passing in their minds, so he took a child by the hand and stood him at his side,

(48) and said, 'whoever receives this child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me receives the One who sent me. For the least among you all - he is the greatest.' (NEB).

The story in Luke has, as usual, moved degrees further from its traditional source. He abbreviates the Markan text before him and recasts the original question Jesus put before the disputant disciples with rather an editorial cliché: *Eiselthen de dialogismos ...* (a dispute had arisen among them). Then with the interrogative formula *to tis an⁸*, Jesus queried the disciples over their own estimation of their position in his ministry? However, the disputants were contending over who might be the greatest among themselves, namely in the sense of rank, status and authority⁹. There is here, and it is quite Lucan, a deliberate report of the disciples' misconception of Jesus' true mission¹⁰. Jesus had not come to found an earthly kingdom where his disciples shall pontificate nor a state where they shall become Vice-Presidents, Ministers, Commissioners and Director-Generals.

For Luke, Jesus knew right away the contention in the minds of the disciples. We can suppose that the circumstance depicted was a conflict about rank in the kingdom,

8 For the grammatical function of the 'potential optative', see, M Zerwich, *Biblical Greek*, ET by

9 And so Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 395.

10 The important verbe, '*oida*' (eidenai) to know in this verse has three variants: a perfect present participle (eidos): a post participle (idon) and a third, the present participle from *gnoskein*, to know, to recognize. The first is supported by the most ancient and dependable sources: p. 75, B. 700, Syrc cop sa etc; the second by A.C.D.W.f13, Byz lect. Ita, vg and the TR. The third is poorly witnessed by f, and 1365. Along with the GNT³ (UBS), I prefer the first reading which has by far the best Manuscripts attestation. This is therefore my working text.

the status of Jesus within it and the statuses of his close disciples. The disciples were equating the kingdom with social organizations, big-time business concerns where men contend for positions and rank. The squabble was so exacerbated that to settle the agitation in their minds¹¹, Jesus like a sensitive leader, takes advantage of chance illustrations and coincidences. He stands a child before them. In Mark, Jesus is described as carrying the child in his arms - *enankalizomai*¹². Luke reports that he set - *epilambanomai* - a young boy beside himself - *par'heauto* - which, according to Marshall, 'suggests honour for the child'; an action which has a double moral for both the self-assertive disciples and a society that denigrated the value of the infant. The simple-minded infant becomes a symbol for simplicity and sincerity of purpose in the Lukan community.

The line of thought progresses towards a *logion Jesu* - an exegetical note which some commentators have wrongly considered the basis for Jesus' action¹³. Some authors are, however, agreed that the saying is a two-part *dictum*. The first strophe: Whoever receives this child in my name received me - suggests that Jesus constitutes the boy an equal with himself. According to JDM. Derrett, irrespective of intellectual quality, the boy is fit to bear the charisma Jesus himself bears.¹⁴ Therefore whoever welcomes and cares for a child is serving God¹⁵, for the child in his littleness, immaturity and need for assistance calls for the fatherly love of God. Here again the redactional hand of Luke is significant. While Mark speaks of 'one such child', Luke tells us of 'this child'. What after all is the import of Lukan redaction? I agree with IH Marshall, among others, that the saying in Mark is a reference to popular negative attitude towards children in general¹⁶, while in Luke, the saying is addressed to disciples and their conduct in both inside and outside the community. The crux of the saying is therefore that anyone of them willing to welcome / care for a child would do the same to Jesus. For Jesus, children have a place in God's saving counsel. Jesus shows his disciples that amidst the preoccupations of the adult members of the society for positions and statuses, the quality of children and their statuses make them heirs of the kingdom. Much has been penned on the place of the child in the Ancient Orient.¹⁷ According to A Oepke, there was a deficient understanding of childhood in antiquity. In Hellenism the child is a *nepios* - a babe, - one without power and significance. The child is without understanding and is self-willed¹⁸. It inclines to naughtiness and needs sharp divine and human discipline¹⁹ to walk in the path of God.

11 See JDM. Derrett, 'Why Jesus Blessed the Children' (Mk. 10: 13-16 par), in *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983) 1-18.

12 See for example, R Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, ET by John Marsh (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1972) p. 66, 142-144; E Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1968), p. 109; and H. Schurmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testamentum, Bd. 1 (Freiburg 1969) p. 577.

13 Derrett, art. cit., p. 17.

14 On this sense of the verb, see, W Grundmann, 'Dechomai', *TDNT*² (1964) 50-54.

15 Marshall, op. cit. p. 396.

16 Cf. for example, A Oepke, 'Pais,' *TDNT*⁵ 639-657.

17 See Isa. 3:4.

18 2 Kgs. 2: 23-24 Cf. also AO Nkwoka, *St. Mark 10: 13-16 Jesus' Attitude to Children: An Exegetical and Theological Study*, M.A. Thesis (Department of Religious Studies, University of Ife, December 1983), pp. 64-66.

19 Cf. GM Sifakis, 'Children in Greek Tragedy,' *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 26 (1979) 67-73 especially at pp. 68-69.

In Judaism *qatan* (child) is senseless, it is like a fool or an imbecile. Judaism, unlike African traditional beliefs does not accept the innocence of children.²⁰ From the Gospel tradition we know that Jesus is opposed to this low estimation of children common among the people of his time. For him, and like African elders, children are modest and unspoiled. Adults should rather discipline themselves to 'become like little children'.

The end-phrase, *epi to onomati mou* may best be rendered, 'on my behalf'. It qualifies the action of welcoming the child. The service envisaged seems to depart from the motivation of the pericope. Jesus states that to welcome a child is to receive himself, an affirmation which supposes a special *logion* on the value of the child, as well as the sanctity of humility, values which Africans so dearly cherish. According to Luke, serving the child becomes for Jesus service rendered to himself.²¹ And besides, for Luke, Jesus identifies with the little ones, the needy, and shows this kind of ministry as one which a disciple is obligated to pursue instead of craving for status and vain ambitions in life. Is here not implied a sound warning to African elites who trample on the masses in order to climb to the top?

The second strophe introduces the *Shaliach motif*,²² which reflects a tradition consistently transmitted throughout the Gospels. Perhaps it is pertinent here to remark that the Fourth Evangelist more than any other has a special interest in the fact that Jesus is the one who was sent by the Father.²³ Consequently it is an evangelical counsel that accepting Jesus is indeed accepting the Father who has sent him.²⁴

The verb, *dechomai*, acquires a different nuance in the unit. This time, it refers to 'obedient acceptance of Jesus as Lord than to a charitable service performed to him'.²⁵ The point of interest here is that unto a *logion* on the child as an object - lesson has been appended a clause from a 'Shaliach' tradition of later Judaism. The purpose is merely christological. Luke sees Jesus as a 'messenger' of God. This accords with the perspective of Jewish tradition, the emissary of a man is as the man himself.²⁶ In the other words, the ethic Jesus transmits to the disciples has itself become a code of conduct given by the Father to all peoples.

The climax of the *Logion Jesu* is given in v. 48b. For Jesus, the person who is least in their midst (mikroteros: comparative for superlative)²⁷ is the greatest (megas). Indeed here is a *crux interpretum*. To lighten the burden of comprehension, I wish to employ the interpretation offered by H. Schurmann for whom 'the least' refers to the child.²⁸ In a society averse to the worth of the little ones, Jesus challenges the conscience of those who have taken the decision to follow him to forget the desire for personal prestige. He urges them to show concern for those

20 Here, see also, GB Caird, *Saint Luke*, SCM Pelican Commentaries (London, SCM, 1977) p. 135.

21 See K.H. Rengstorf, 'Apostolos / Shaliah,' *TDNT*¹ (1964) 419-447.

22 This is a theme that recurs some thirty-nine times in the fourth Gospel; see for example, Jn. 2: 17, 34; 41; 34; 5; 23; 24; 30; 36; 37; 6: 29, 38, 40, 44, 57; 7, 16, 18, 29, 8: 16, 26, 29, 42, 4: 10; 36 etc.

23 Cairds, *idem*.

24 Marshall, *op.cit.* p. 397.

25 Grundmann, *art. cit.* p. 53.

26 See M Zerwich and M Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1 (Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1974) p. 216 and also for more comments on the grammar for the positive or the comparative; see, BDF 245.

27 Schurmann, *Des Lukasevangelium*, pp. 576-577.

28 And so Nkwoka, *St. Mark 10: 13-16*, pp. 107-109

whom society relegates to the margin for such are great in the eyes of God. As it stands, in this unit, Jesus employs the child as an object - lesson to discipline the errant disciples.

He uses the figure of the child as a *haggadah* to illustrate the nature of his kingdom and how to gain access to it. For him, one like the child is a true heir to the kingdom. Therefore the discipline demanded of the adult Christians is that like a child they must eschew all vices in order to possess the kingdom given by God who has sent Jesus as a free gift.²⁹

B. Vv. 49-50: The Saying Against Monopolistic Egoism.

- (49) *'Apokritheis de Ioannes eipen, 'Epistata, eidomen tina en to onomati sou ekballonta diamonias, kai ekoluomen auton hoti ouk akolouthei meth' hemon.*
- (50) *eipen de pros auton ho 'Iesous, Me koluete, hos gar ouk estin kath' human huper humon estin. (GNT³)*
- (49) 'Master,' said John, we saw a man driving out devils in your name, but as he is not one of us we tried to stop him.
- (50) Jesus said to him, 'Do not stop him, for he who is not against you is on your side.' (NEB)

This list narrates of the monopolistic reaction of the disciples to the exploits of the strange exorcist they met in the course of their ministry. By means of the catchword, to *onomati*, Luke links together the two *pericopae*. Also the motif of 'welcoming others' lies at the centre of this unit. While the first unit treats of discipline within the Lukan community, the latter focuses on discipline *ad extra* - outside. John, an influential member of the Twelve, gives a report of a non-disciple who exorcized demons in Jesus' name and how the disciples had tried to prevent him. Luke tells us that Jesus refused to question the stranger's credential. Luke has, as K. Aland's Synopsis shows, abridged much of the Markan material³⁰ since his major preoccupation is to focus on the attitude expected of the disciples to the less fortunate in the society.³¹ Some authorities deny the authenticity of the story.³² For me, like the first saying, it is primarily didactic. Its *Sitz im Leben* is in the missionary commission of the Twelve. In that circumstance, Jesus' reply is proverbial and is roundly couched: as you minister to the people, anyone who is not opposed to you is certainly on your side.³³ Once again, Jesus makes it clear that service for the kingdom disallows jealousy, greed, strife, parochialism and ethnicity or club mentality, or racial prejudice and discriminations of all sorts common-place in contemporary Nigeria.

6. Observations

Luke 9: 46-50 and parallels are indeed complex with regard to the morals they impart. From what was otherwise a presentation of the disciples' act of indisciplines

29 See Mk. 10:14 for the congruence of the expression *me kolueta*

30 K. Aland (ed) *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek English, Edition*, (Stuttgart, EBS, 1979, Third Edition) pp. 158-159.

31 For such authors and their arguments, see, Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 398

32 Ibid. p. 399.

33 See W. Baird, 'The Gospel According to Luke,' in C.M. Laymon, *The Interpreters One - Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville and New York, Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 672-706 especially p. 687.

emerges a fundamental dominical paraenesis on humility, on call to unalloyed duty and service to the under-privileged and the marginalized. My foundational exegetical approach has helped unearth, on the one hand the disciples' self-seeking conduct tempered, on the other hand, with Jesus' ethical pronouncement on the dignity of Christian service and labour. Evidence of the disciples' lack of understanding is seen in their argument concerning greatness. Jesus' intervention in their broil provides occasion to bear once more with their ineptitude. By their time, they did not understand. But from their misconduct we are made to be taught. The men of our time and society are very much mirrored in the narrative. This is alluded to in the exposition of the African situation in Section II above. Among other things, the strife betrays the disciples as self-conceited and self-centred ambitious men whose likes are seen everywhere in Africa. For sake of inordinate desire and self-aggrandizements, they had huzzled for self-comfort, power and security, all that constitute the hallmark of contemporary waves of indiscipline in Africa.

Naturally where there exist self-importance and arrogance, jealousy and intolerance flourish. This situation explains why the disciples challenge the strange exorcist. To them, he was intruding himself into their circle and as more gifted, they suspect he could deprive them of their wished-for statuses. But Jesus' proverb shows that anyone who knows and loves God, He is always willing to accommodate as an ally irrespective of group identity, once he / she is doing God's work. This evangelical openness is quite revolutionary and relevant to everyday experience in modern Africa.

7. Conclusion

Historical critical exegesis or foundational historical criticism has one thing which commends its suitability. It blends with Third World's social-critical approach to biblical studies. In this case, it has sought to re-interpret the relevance of Lk. 9, 46ff and its hermeneutical implications within the African socio-political culture. This 'light' application of the method to provide theological grounding of a programme of action meant for Africa of the year 2000 leads me to pronounce on some of the obvious implications of the study.

Having read the bleak signs of the times in contemporary Africa, and having weighed them on the balance of the gospel, I make bold to state that Lk. 9, 46-50 teaches us that indiscipline is incompatible with Christian life and praxes. What the Lukan Jesus had taught his immediate followers is still ever meaningful to all of us who profess faith in Him throughout the length and breadth of the African continent. Our society has gone steep into unspeakable crimes. The Dominical sayings in Lk. 9, 46ff and elsewhere in the Gospels indicate that authentic Christian life is a continuous warfare against all forms of indiscipline, corrupt practices and inhuman governance. The 'war' must be waged to a finish if the kingdom of God must be allowed to dawn in Africa of the 21st century. I believe strongly that free and healthy African societies must rely largely on traditional African moral values enlightened by Christian ethical principles in order to remain stable and open to the emergence of a new Africa, ethically rejuvenated and capable of making her own unique contribution to worldwide culture and able thereafter to speak with an authentic African voice. Christians and all men of goodwill, irrespective of religious affiliations in Africa, must come to recognize that in God's kingdom there are no ranks. In the Reign of God there are no distinctions: the first shall be last, the last

first and the servants rank as high as the masters, if at all there be masters. In short, there is no seniority in the kingdom nor is there room for greediness, unbridled ambition, selfishness, class antagonisms and ethnic segregations, some of the current banes of the African societies. The love of Christ dismantles all barriers, suspicion and prejudice. Indiscipline is an aberration in Christian life. Christian ethics must be let to catalyze public policy. To sum up, I wish to stress that what has not yet been appreciated in our person-to-person dealings is the theological implication of Christian discipline in the African community of nations. For Christians, discipline and religion should be seen as both complementary in the call to become God's People, the *ekklesia*. Indiscipline shows a lack of spiritual wholeness and psychological disorientation.

Jesus's challenge to the disciples must therefore continue to stimulate our quest for a disciplined and ordered society. It is in such a milieu that the African humanity can perfectly become divine and her divinity put realistically at the service of humanity. Indeed, Lk. 9, 46-50 as a whole is a *logion Jesu* against indiscipline addressed to the earliest disciples. It still challenges African Christian conscience. African Christians should see their conduct reflected in Jesus' condemnations of all the dirty deals which many Africans and their leaders over-value as progress and cleverness. A message and a challenge to African Christians is conversely a message to all Africans.