

THE MENACE OF BOKO HARAM AND THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE: A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE OF LUKE 9: 51-56

MIKE ENYINWA OKORONKWO

National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to discuss the menace of Boko Haram and the Christian response from New Testament perspective of Luke 9:51-56. The paper first of all provides the conceptual clarification of terms used in this presentation. It also discusses the menace of Boko Haram as a religious and ideological movement in a secular state. Furthermore the paper makes analysis of Luke 9:51-56 as a paradigm for Christian response. Finally, the paper highlights the implications of Boko Haram to the Nigerian nation. The research adopts an inter-disciplinary approach of historical and textual analysis in presenting data. The study upholds that the menace of Boko Haram has caused security threats in Nigeria and the world at large. This has equally made every Nigerian a potential suspect in the international scene. The study suggests that compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, inter-religious dialogue and mutual trust should be the virtues of the Christian response in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Boko Haram, Islamism, Christian Response, New Testament Perspective

INTRODUCTION

About few years back, the interest on Boko Haram was parochial and limited to the concern of the residents of the upper Niger and Benue. The concept was less understood and appreciated; and the group itself was conceived less dangerous to occupy a place in the national security agenda. But today Boko Haram has metamorphosed into a 'household monster that emotively evokes dread and insecurity. The name has become synonymous with violence and terrorism. More worrisome is that its exceptional national security threat is showing no sign of dwindling despite the repeated claims of the Nigerian government to be at top. Its victims are without boarder. It is now a nightmare of every Nigerian, especially the Christians living in the northern part of the country.

Christians are continually confronted with the reality of persecution from Boko Haram, including the disruption of worship and other religious activities, the destruction of Churches and Cathedrals, the brutal dehumanisation and murdering of fellow brothers and sisters. In the face of such dilemma, opinion varies on Christian response to the threat. The general body language is naturally "the survivalistic instinct" approach. Some have opted for a strict application of the principle of self-defence, others for alternative approaches ranging from a non-compromising and combative attitude to physical retaliation. However, the position in this essay is that the menace of Boko Haram a more serious intellectual analysis and spiritual discernment. The approach should equally take into consideration the socio-ethical and religious demands on the shoulders of Christians as followers of Christ (take up your cross). Consequently, one of the New Testament texts (Lk 9:51-56) is preferred as a paradigm for Christians. The Christians are reminded in this paper to model their judgement and actions on the New Testament ethics of Luke 9:51-56, which demands nothing less than forgiveness and non-retaliation. Hence non retaliation, non-reprisal, re approachment and dialogue are among the best possible options presented here as a Christian response.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

This section of the paper will occupy itself with the clarification of some basic concepts. The intention is to familiarize readers with appropriate understanding of the on-going discourse.

The essay examines the concept of Boko Haram, and identifies the group with Jihadi Islamists, whose primary aim is to destroy the secular character of the nation. Any force that could be on the way to obstruct the realisation of the said objective is considered potential enemy, and worth destroying. This invariably labels the Christians the primary victims of Boko Haram. The essay further addresses some of the responsibilities of the different governments in Nigeria, conscious of the fact that Christians are also identified with the institution.

One of the findings is that Boko Haram, though with some height of difference, is like many other militant groups in Nigeria born out of but to grow beyond the natural. The paper finally invites all to “a total return.” It calls on all to sincerely uphold the ethical demands tenets and demonstrate the willingness and honesty to talk and listen to one another for the salvation of the human race.

THE CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF BOKO HARAM

It is true that the full knowledge of the group, Boko Haram, is still in the bud, a lot could be learnt from its name. Boko Haram, describes itself as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (group/community committed to propagating the Prophet's teaching and jihad). But it is commonly known as and called “Boko Haram” because of some of its tenets that show aversion to “Western Education”, thus the saying “Western Education is forbidden!”

However, from the self description of the group, two principal ideas can correctly be associated with it – dawah and jihad. These two concepts are invariably retraceable to Islamism. In other words, the members of the Boko Haram are Jihadists among Islamists. And by way of interpretation, the Jihadists are unrepentantly committed to armed struggle and violence as the best option to achieving its goal – the Islamisation of the whole world.

Important to note is that Islamism is not, strictly speaking, Islam but a cluster of fundamentalist movements within Islam. They stick to a common view that some “preferred elements” within Islam, as defined by them, are ‘true’ Islam; that this ‘true’ Islam’ is holistic, and embraces all aspects of Muslims’ life. Their holistic attitude is equally ruled by their belief of the absolute indivisibility of the trinity: Din (religion), Dunya (way of life), and Daula (government). The indivisibility is supposed to be permanent and eternal and ought to be interpreted globally.

Secondly, the Islamists take their legitimacy from a double source: ideology and religion – from the leader of the group, and above all, from Allah. All actions undertaken are then perceived as a call to religious duties.

Thirdly, Islamists always advocate for a return to the ideals of the “Madinan model” under Prophet Muhammad or the classical era of the first four Caliphs (Khulafa al-Rashidun).

Fourthly, the reason for the “return” is found on their belief that the existing world order is erroneous and repressive; erroneous because it does not correspond to Islamic principles; and repressive because non-Muslims occupy Muslim territory defined in terms of politics, economics or geography, or because Muslims live under severe repression by their own (anti-Islamic) governments. So, the restoration of the Caliphate is the primary goal of all Islamists, irrespective of their sectarian membership.

The means to the ‘return’ is far-reaching, ranging from propagation, peaceful indoctrination, political struggle to violence including assassination, hostage taking, terrorism and suicide actions, and even the massacre of civil populations.

The rhythm would therefore depend on the leader of each sectarian group – some opting for violence, others non-violence, and with a very insignificant number assuming the role of quietist. That notwithstanding, terror is proven to be the preferred means.

The Islamists may be political, missionary or Jihadi. One of the shared-character among these streams is the validation of their respective activism on the traditions and the teachings of Islam as contained in the Qur'an and authoritative commentaries. For them, Islam is not so much a religion of the book or of peace but a religion of law.

The political Islamists (al-harakat al-islamiyya al-siyassiyaa) aim at controlling political power at all levels through constitutional political activism. They give priority to political reform, and theoretically eschew violence but foreign occupation. The actors of the group make issues out of Muslim misgovernment and social injustice.

For the missionary Islamists (al-da'wa), the preservation of the Muslim identity, the Islamic faith and moral order against the forces of unbelief lie at the heart of its charter. The actors are missionaries (du'ah) and the Ulama. They address issue of the corruption of Islamic values (al-qiyam al-Islammiyya) and the weakening of faith (al-Iman). Their priority is on a form of moral and spiritual rearmament as instrument for individual virtue, which is invariably considered the condition of good government and of collective salvation.

The Jihadi Islamists are the armed militant group, whose conviction of Islamisation is rooted in Islamic armed struggle (al-jihad). They are internal militants struggling and combating nominally Muslim regimes considered impious; irredentist, fighting to retrieve power from non-Muslims, and redeem land under foreign occupation; and globally combating the West. They make issue of the oppressive weight of non-Muslim political and military power in Islamic world and give priority to armed resistance. They are the real fighters (al-mujahid) that breed violence all over the world. And it is within this group that the Nigeria's Boko Haram would pinch its tent.

BOKO HARAM AS A RELIGIOUS AND IDEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT IN A SECULAR STATE

Boko Haram has a double-source legitimacy that portrays its ideological and religious characters. It bears on the insistence of many eminent scholars and politicians that Boko Haram is not principally an ethno-religious but a complex group with bunch of ideological elements without good religious background.

The grievance of the group, one must admit, is not primarily against any religion as such or ethnic group, but the state and its constitutional secularism. But by objectifying the state, and identifying the rest of the Nigerians as products of the secular State, including its own members, Boko Haram declares all its primary potential victims - Christians, Moslems and other believers, the ruling classes irrespective of where they come from - North, South, West or East. Even the Sultan is not outside its terrorist list. Boko Haram is simply and essentially fundamentalist.

Boko Haram jettisons all that is "west", as a product of a secular Society. Its insistence is on the total Islamisation of the country. Its argument is on the prevailing economic and political dislocation in the Nigeria's nationhood. According to the group, the whole Nigerian state must abandon secularism for an Islamic state. The present democratic process is also perceived by the group as a foreign system based on 'Western values and education', which has resulted in ostensible corruption, poverty, unemployment and the continued suppression of "true" Islam. This therefore must be rejected and fought at all cost.

The group's operation under the umbrella of Islamism gives it some advantage of international links. It enjoys financial and logistic supports from many other international terrorist organizations. The hypothetical linkage of the group with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Shabaab, and other terrorist organisations becomes plausible.

However, the uncomfortable truth about the situation is that Boko Haram is in Nigeria. The group is maiming life and property, systematically undermining and destroying the Christian religion, the political and economic institutions of the State. It has created extra concern for security, and could have the capacity to turn Nigeria into Afghanistan especially with their undeniable connections with AQIM and al-Shabaab. And Nigerians are the primary target. Dealing with the group, therefore, becomes an enigma, for life and humanity is at stake.

THE NIGERIA'S RESPONSE: 'DIALOGUE, MILITARY FORCE AND COUNTER-VIOLENCE AS A FAIL RESPONSE

When Chinua Achebe of Nigeria published the book, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, it appeared to many that the erudite scholars was pushing the logic too far. But today all would seem to join to celebrate that thought-provoking assertion that "the trouble with Nigeria is a failure of leadership." Thus a critical study by Matthew Kukah in 2009 identified eight major factors that have catalyzed Boko Haram. Among these are: a) prevalence of lawlessness and criminality in the country; b) failure of governance; c) failure and fracture of politics; d) prevalence of violence; e) influence of external ideologies, f) illiteracy and poverty; g) the dwindling value of Western education and h) the influence of modernization on local culture and values. Re-echoing Kukah, Chris Ngwodo, describes the emergence of the group as a product of the maturation of long festering extremist impulses that run deep in the social reality of Northern Nigeria. The group itself is an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos."

However, the Government's efforts to curb the menace of Boko Haram are on record. Different forms of committees both from the Government and private sectors were constituted with the principle mandate to examine and make some possible recommendations to bring the situation under control. To be mentioned also is the prominence of security in the country's internal policy, and the recent and consistent upsurge in the budget for security; strict control on the borders of Nigeria, especially on the Niger-Chad-Cameroon axis; the attempt by the Government to open dialogue with the sect; the investigation by the presidential committee, the jailing of some of the kingpins of the sect including the trial of some top politicians thought to have some links with the group; recommendations from international community calling for diplomatic engagement, military and intelligence support for Nigeria, and the classification of the Islamic sect as "Terrorist Organisation," and as an "emerging threat" to the world. There is now virtually police, military and para-military presence in every part of the States. Tanks are daily rolled up and down the civilian neighbourhoods. But Mohamed MostaphaOuldBachir, a professor of Islamic movements and militancy at a Moroccan university, recently advised that counter-violence or military actions cannot erase the militant ideology of Boko Haram. That notwithstanding, the question bordering many minds is whether all these paraphernalia are actually addressing the issue, whether the Governments are doing the right things, and/or doing them at the right time.

The fact remains that Boko Haram has consistently appealed to the impoverished, alienated, jobless northern Muslims. The youths see themselves as a generation without future, swimming in life devoid of hope and opportunities. Their elected representatives have abandoned all the electoral promises but to reap the huge economic dividends of the office under a foreign system intended to represent the voices of those who it seemingly expropriates. These youths are veritable field for Boko Haram to graze. And little, very little and so little has so far been achieved in tackling the underlying conditions that has continued to encourage the existence of Boko Haram. So, the challenge for the governments is to go on "retreat;" to seriously and urgently redress the socio-economic imbalance and remain proactive in its responsibilities. Otherwise the existence of such group would continue to persist, irrespective of all the police, the military and para-military presence be it in the North, South, East and West of the country. The governments are to be more

focused on what is achievable and that, which is indeed its responsibility: change the present economic policy by lifting the standard of living of citizens and creating job, change the socio-economic injustice and political corruption that creates a supply line of willing Boko Haram adherents, then Boko Haram would be less appealing.

Governments should make youth agenda a priority in its policy. It should focus on youth before extremism takes root. They should make the youths and their problems priority, and adopt ambitious programmes with social, economic, and intellectual dimensions in order to face the violent ideology embraced by many young people. An environment should be created for the youths to express their opinions and discuss their aspirations and hopes.

The governments must sincerely believe in a culture of dialogue because confrontation did not pay off. They should understand that it is only comprehensive, civilised honest and respected dialogue involving the all segment of the society including youths and the intelligentsia of the nation that could bring the group under control. Consequently, Islamic scholars, Islamic opinion and religious leaders should be appealed to, and reassured of Government support to actively take up the challenge of meeting Boko Haram members, discuss the doctrinal differences and engaging them on the true meaning of jihad, thus re-educating them. It should be a dialogue which gives every party total freedom to express its opinion in a reasonable manner and in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue. Hence the urgent need to reduce the grip of the security apparatus and open bridges of love and openness to every young man carrying destructive ideas which destroy, tear apart and fragment communities becomes imperative.

The Christians as well, counting themselves as the primary victim of Boko Haram should equally be reminded of their identity, which is rooted in the word of God, in their Holy Writ and in the teachings of the Church and the Magisterium, hence the plea for the New Testament of Luke 9:51-56.

THE NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE (LUKE 9:51-56)

The pericope, Lk 9:51-56, identified as an older tradition and found only in the Third Gospel, concludes the Galilean section (4:14--9:50) and introduces the 'travel narrative section' (9:51-19:48). It presents the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem as a premeditative and purposeful event, and offers the reader (Christian) the opportunity to assess some issues bordering on individual and social relations.

The passage opens the journey with the verb *poreu, omai* "to journey", which occurs not less than four times (*poreu, omai*: vv. 51, 52, 53, 56) with the repeated references to Jesus' determination to go to Jerusalem. The verb is associated with "Jerusalem" (v.51) and unnamed village, ("another village" [v.56]) at the beginning and end of the periscope, and within the body of the narrative, Samaria (v.52) and Jerusalem (v.53) with a sense of immediacy. It further betrays the eschatological settings of the narrative events.

The dramatic personae in the narrative setting are Jesus and his disciples, though the two, John and James, were singled out, probably for their uncompromising and intolerant posture. The text equally points circuitously at the unhealthy rivalry between the shrines of Mt. Zion and Mt. Gerizim (cf. Jn 4:20) and its socio-cultural, political and religious consequences (vv. 53, 54; cf. Jn 4:9).

Generally, the text makes a challenging demand on the disciples of Jesus (Jews) on their relationship with the Samaritans. It revisits the ancient animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans, and confronts the disciples with the hostility of a Samaritan village and Jesus' response.

The teaching serves for instruction and model to the disciples. The Jesus of Luke simply tells his readers that becoming a disciple demands self-disposition and determination to join Jesus on the journey to Jerusalem, and to

demonstrate the spirit of restraint and non-retaliation even in the face of hostility (9:51-56).

The force of the ethical demand for restraint and non-retaliation becomes more instructive in relation to the predominant motifs associated with the passage:

- Thus the announcement of Jesus' journey (poreu, omai: vv.51, 52, 53, 56) and face (to. pro, swpon: vv. 51, 52, 53) indicates his resolve to embark on a journey whose destination is Jerusalem (vv 51, 53), a destination that would be firmly rooted in the divine purpose (cf. 9:31).
- The text is clustered with vocabulary relating to discipleship – to send (v. 52:avpeste,llw), messenger (v.52: av,ggeloj), disciple (v.54: maqth,j) – an indication of the text genre as paraenesis, and the Sitz-im-Leben located within a missionary context (cf. 9:5). The motif of the prophetic sending (cf. Mal 3:1; also Lk 7:27; cf. Mk 1:2) has some co-textual parallelism, which can be drawn between John the Baptist and the disciples as forerunners for Jesus' public ministry – thus the rare description of disciples and of John himself as "messengers" (7:24, 27); being sent before his face (1:17, 76; 7:27); and to prepare or make ready for him (1:17, 76; 3:4; 7:27).
- The verbouvde, comai (v.53) strongly suggests the rejection of Jesus through his messengers. The refusal of the Samaritan village to receive Jesus and his company is prophetically projected as a futuristic Jerusalem incidence. It betrays the rejection of the Jesus' message by his own people. It also alerts the disciples of the opposition and hostility that will form part and parcel of the 'Way to Jerusalem'.
- The disciples' presence and role on the journey closely linked to John the Baptist's: The disciples first appear as those who share both John's role as Jesus' messenger (v 52; cf. 1:17, 76; 7:27) and John's misunderstanding of Jesus' ministry, as though it were preoccupied with judgment and condemnation (v 54; cf. 3:9, 17; 7:19-20).
- There is equally some OT echoes from the stories of Elijah (v.54) and the Nazarene rejection (4:16-30), thus predisposing the reader for inter- and co-textual interpretation of the events.
- The stress on the principle of non-retaliation: The emphasis on the seriousness of the teaching is read and understood by its swiftness: Jesus turned (stre, fw) and rebuked (evpitima, w) (v.55). Incidentally, v.55 is the climax of the pericope. Pulling the motifs and echoes, the passage serves a narrative unit of the single-minded orientation of Jesus, which his followers must come to share, as he begins the divinely ordained journey to Jerusalem. The interest is on the necessity of universal salvation of all humankind beyond the geographical, racial and religious borders of Israel.

TEXT ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF LUKE

V.51 - Jesus' Decision to Go to Jerusalem (v.51): The early introduction of the verb sthri, zw (to set up, to fix, to establish) together with the noun to pro, swpon (face) demonstrates the seriousness of Jesus' decision to journey to Jerusalem as a divine and prophetic vocation, notwithstanding any opposing force. The idea of fulfilment (sumplhro, w - to fulfil) and ascension (avna<lhmyij - taking up; receiving) in the text underscores the connection between the death of Jesus and his ascension to God, especially in view of Elijah typology (9:54; cf. 2 Kg. 2:9-11; Sir 48:9; 1 Macc 2:58). Jesus' exodus and avna<lhmyij will therefore be a reference to the whole sequence of events ranging from the moment of the firm decision to travel to the point of his ascension. So, Green argues, the narrative shift demonstrates the necessity of the journey as a divine purpose, rooted in Luke's Christology of the ascension and the preparation for the challenges of discipleship. The formulation (v.51) is simply biblical, prophetic, christological and missionary. So Luke

from the onset invites the reader to reminiscently appreciate the meaning of Jesus' exodus – passion, death, resurrection and ascension.

It is also important for Luke within the context of 9:31 that the final event must take place in Jerusalem (vv.51, 53); the epicentre for the consummation of the divine will; the sacred space that establishes the order of the world, around which human life is oriented. Therefore, Jesus' radical message, in Luke's thinking, must be fully positioned against the 'old established world order'. The new worldview presented by Jesus must be taken to Jerusalem, the culture centre, the sacred space of the Jews. This, Luke achieves through this narrative piece that "intertwined narratological, theological, and dramatic interests".

vv.52-53: Jesus Sends Messengers Ahead of Him and the Messengers are rejected- The assignment of the disciples is very definite in the text. The disciples are to go ahead of Jesus to arrange for his stoppage at a Samaritan village en route to Jerusalem. But it is not a surprise that the messengers are unwelcomed. The ancestral socio-cultural and religious hostility existing between the Jerusalem and Samaria makes the friendly overtures from the camp of Jesus more likely to be rejected or at best received with suspicion and hostility. So, the rejection will be interpreted historically as opposed to moral obstinacy or opposition to the gospel. It is an inherited racial prejudice against Jews that is at work. The messengers will on their return narrate their unhappy experience (v.53; contrast 9:48b) in the camp.

The animosity of the Jewish-Samaritan parties is rooted in the rivalry shrines of Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Zion, and on other bunches of disputes concerning the right way to interpret the scripture, the true faith, messianism, and above all, who is the real Israelite (cf. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 20:118-138; John 4:9-20), and also the Samaritans' outright rejection of the 'Jerusalem-centered salvation history'.

The Jesus of Luke and his entourage could have shocked their fellow Jews (cf. Jn 4:27) as well as the Samaritans (cf. Jn 4:9) by refusing to bypass the region of the Samaritans, taking the circuitous but preferred route of Galilean through Transjordan. Instead, they journeyed into Samaritan territory.

The observation by Green on the literary and theological parallelism between vv 51 and 53 may further suggest another, or at least an additional nuance for the rejection. That Jesus is rejected precisely on the terms in which his prophetic resolution had first been expressed is reminiscent of Jesus' rejection by the people of Nazareth (4:16-30). Like the Nazarenes, these Samaritan villagers rebuff Jesus because they cannot accept his understanding and embodiment of the divine purpose.

v.54: James and John Ready for Retaliation: The hostility of the Samaritans would provoke some reaction from the quarters of the disciples. According to Marshal observers that the deployment of akou, santej (hearing) rather than ivdo, ntej (seeing) could have literarily served Luke better. However, the use of participle aorist "seeing" is strongly defended in this essay as the best in achieving the literary and theological purpose of Luke. It can be correctly interpreted in two senses: i) James and John are among or the protocol officials, who made the failed diplomatic move. They now relive their ordeal as they recount the disappointing experience. ii) Otherwise the use of the verb can be understood in an intensive sense: James and John are so emotionally touched by the narration that they transcended the level of hearing to seeing, that is, picturing the entire incidence. They are so overwhelmed that they can no longer wait but to ask for permission to retaliate. ivdo, ntejis therefore an expression of the inner feeling of disappointment and the cry for redress. The natural instinct is then to go beyond the very missionary instruction of Luke 9:5. The deep emotional hatred towards the Samaritans is overtly expressed by James and John with some kind of emotive range of expressive techniques: - ~ora, wto see; qe, lwto will; le, gw to command; katabai, nwto call down; avnali, skw to consume; to, pu/r fire; o~ ouvrano, jheaven.

However strong the feelings of the disciples may appear, it still represents their inadequacy. The transfiguration scene has so soon been forgotten (9:28-36) and the teaching on the divine necessity of his rejection is yet to be understood. They are yet to learn the collocation of "power and authority" with "rejection," hence they continue to act assertively and wrongly.

Scholarship consensus is that the retaliatory spirit demonstrated by the disciples would have been informed by Elijah's typology, and John the Baptist's misunderstanding of Jesus' mission as one that brings the fire of judgment (3:9, 17; 7:19-20). Should the readings of some MSS be taken into consideration as explanatory gloss, making a direct reference to Elijah, scripturally justify the capacity to act otherwise? Green draws the readers' attention to the parallelism between the other two camps (the Baptist and the Disciples): the disciples indicate their misunderstanding of Jesus' mission and their misappropriation of his authority by replicating John's error in thinking that messianic authority would be incarnated in a mission of judgment (cf. 3:17; 12:49-53; 17:29), by thus assuming that their own exercise of power would include the capacity to command fire and dole out judgment, and, thus, by making too easy an equation between Elijah and Jesus. While in reality Luke has used Elijah-material to portray Jesus (most recently in v 51), but Jesus is not Elijah (cf. 9:19-20, 33-36). Again, the affinity between the Elijah-story and the Samaritan rejection of Jesus may have been obvious to the disciples, so that their proposed action against the Samaritans would seem to have had scriptural sanction. But Luke's presentation of Jesus uses Elijah both as type and antitype. But the ignorance of the disciples on this crucial time of the mission may not necessarily be counted as disparagement, but a learning process. Strictly speaking, the disciples are full participants in the divine mission (v.55).

v.55 + [56a]: The Meeting Point: Jesus Lectures on Restrain and Non-Retaliatio : The surprise in the narrative is neither in the refusal of Jesus' stopover in Samaritan village, nor the disciples' demand for retaliation, but Jesus' action and teaching along the journey. Jesus initiates the friendly overture, which is unfortunately turned down. He equally refuses to act to the script of his disciples, who are poised to fight his course but humanly. He simply turns (stre, fw) and rebukes (evpitima, w) the disciples accordingly, as if they were representatives of a diabolic mission (cf. Mk 8:33). The rebuke reveals that the demand of the disciples places them in a natural and an undesirable state vis-a-vis the supernatural and divine will.

The above notwithstanding, the content of "Jesus' rebuke" may continue to worry scholarship. The reader is reminded that the use of *strafe*, *ij* (stre, fw – to turn) together with or without *peti*, *mhsen* (evpitima, w - to warn, rebuke) is understood conventional within the context of rebuke (22:61; 23:28). Secondly, the content of the rebuke is not contained in the more original witness. For Marshall, the verb is self-sufficient and self-explanatory; hence readers should not probe beyond the surface level of the text. Even though some attempts have been made by redactors/commentators in a number of MSS to make up the deficiency by phrasing in such ideas as: (a) "you do not know of what spirit you are," and (b) other would add: "for the Son of Man did not come to destroy souls but to save them" (compare Luke 19:10). The intention of such additions could be interpreted as a single effort to read out the underlying soteriology in the text.

v.56: The Journey Rejoined and Jesus Moves to Another Village: The journey is now rejoined and Jesus will move to another village (v.56), having demonstrated through his teaching and action an extraordinary compassion and mercy that will be matched both by the exemplary behavior of other Samaritans in the journey narrative (10:25-37; 17:11-19) and the proclamation and reception of the message of the kingdom of God in Samaria (Acts 1:8; 8:5-26). But Luke still in his literary style leaves the reader at wonder on the next village Jesus and his disciples have gone to (cf. 9:5; 10:10; Acts 13:51), probably in Samaria. Some scholars are inclined to believe that in view of the rebuff Jesus did not enter Samaria, but went along the Galilean side of the border into Peraea (cf. 17:11). More important

for Luke is that at the end of the episode, Jesus and the disciples follow the principle of 'no retaliation'.

LUKE 9:51-56 AS A PARADIGM FOR A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

The text analysis and interpretation betrays the primary focus of the pericope– the salvation of humanity, irrespective of race, religion, sex or status. The chief concern is not about the Jews or the Samaritan but the totality of human race. In other words, the central interest of the Jesus of Luke is his salvific mission is all inclusive - the disciples, the Jews and real and imagined 'enemies' of the Jewish race. By extension, the call for salvation is for the entire human race, Christians, people of other religions, and even the enemies of Christianity (bless those who cause you).

Jesus' presence, actions and reactions in the text have pulled down the ancient barriers of animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans, between the Christians and people of other beliefs. It prefigures the mandate to evangelise the entire creation (Mk) It is a divine mandate for the actualisation of mission to all (2:32; 3:6) including Christians and the members of Boko Haram. It is seen as a successful attempt to restore the broken humanity; to mend the distorted human and socio-cultural relations, to recall the lost humanity to grace. It presents a model that challenges all Christians to seek first the salvation of all creation and make it the driving and controlling force in addressing the challenges of Boko Haram.

Luke's understanding of the action of Jesus is equally revealing. He reminds his audience, thus in the words of I Peter that the scripture is a double edged sword. It should be read and applied cautiously with the sense of 'type' and 'antitype'. In other words, certain actions and thoughts, though scripturally sanctioned (cf. the Western reading of the v.54), may not christologically and soteriologically be beneficiary for the salvation of the human race – the summus bonum. Therefore, as Christians draw their inspiration from the scripture, it must be read, understood, interpreted and applied with the spirit of achieving the ultimate goal for creation. That is to say, the salvation of the members of Boko Haram should also form that part of our scriptural reading and understanding, for Christians are called to be the bearers of the good news for the human race.

The text invites all to follow Jesus. It reminds its readers of what it takes to follow Jesus along the journey – self-determination, patience, endurance, tolerance and sincerity of purpose. A Christians, like the disciples, should be ready and willing to listen to the instructions of Jesus on discipleship, follow him all through the journey, and observe all the demands of discipleship with unbiased interest for the formation of faithful followers. It is an invitation to act foolish and contrary against the standard of the world. It includes the readiness to forgive and forget the past animosity. It is an ethical demand rooted in the the invitational, unfathomable and boundless nature of God's forgiveness (cf. Is. 1:18). Hence Bishop Kukah argues, "if we first understand that it is God who first forgives us, then we must leave the doors of forgiveness forever open, seeing the sinner with the beckoning eyes of ones who is lost and whose return is a restoration for the larger society." So discipleship, to which every Christian is called, requires a reconstruction of the self within a new web of relationships. It requires a radical resocialisation and a new understanding of human relation formed around Jesus.

Again, Jesus' courage to extend olive branch to the Samaritans ought to count in the official handling of the challenges of Boko Haram. The Christians should set the table for dialogue and extend the hand of friendship to members of Boko Harm. Like Christ the master, Christians should send real messengers to Boko Haram, make friendly overtures irrespective of the negative prejudice and animosity between Boko Haram and the Christians. In all and above all, Jesus condemns unfriendly reaction to unfriendly action. He warns against returning evil for evil (cf. Lk 6:27-38). All business with Boko Haram must and should be guided by the principle of 'no retaliation', 'no reprisal'. Provocation is not a sufficient reason to act outside the principle. The message is that the time is no longer Elijah's, no longer the

Baptist's. It is no longer a time to call fire and thunders from heaven but to understand and appreciate the spirit of which Nigeria is made, and to believe and live out the mission of the Son of Man – the salvation of humanity.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The essay goes a long way to explore the meaning and understanding of Boko Haram with the conclusion that the group is fundamentalistic. It has one primary objective of Islamising Nigeria, or simply put: to throw the Koran into the Atlantic Ocean. Even if its actions are interpreted within the context of socio-economic and political justice, its approach is not only anti-human and anti-social but has left many scares on the nation's psychic. Its method is outside limits. It is contrary to the 'rule of the game'. Its use of unconventional weapons for a probable just war is devastating.

The citizens, especially Christians, now live through the persecution of Boko Haram. The destruction of live and property, the burning of churches and cathedrals, the premeditative assaults on the Christian faith, the brutal dehumanisation and murder of Christians, even in their places of worship are among the vexing challenges of the Christians in particular, and the nation at large. The body language would then tend more naturally on the "survivalistic instinct."

But the experience so far has proved that violence and/or counter-violence can neither be a solution nor a match to any challenging situation, irrespective of the quarters from which it emanates. Christians are then enjoined to judge and be judged, act and react as in the spirit of the Gospel which they read and believe in. Their response to the challenging situation is a test of their faith and conviction. Hence they called upon to appreciate the Jesus' event of Luke 9:51-56 and its ethical demand of tolerance, non-retaliation and forgiveness be a guiding principle and model for the Christian response to Boko Haram. Sometimes such gospel can be in conflict with the popular opinions and the natural human instinct. But it is a revolution, argues Kukah. It is senseless and absurd. It is the foolishness of God but wiser than human wisdom. That is the Christian's cross; the cross of salvation.

REFERENCES

1. The phrase is lifted from the 2013 Easter Message of the Bishop of Sokoto in Nigeria. Cf. "Matthew Kukah calls for amnesty for Boko Haram in Easter Message (READ), posted by Y!Associate Editor (Op-ed) in Lead Story, Politics on April 2, 2013, <http://www.ynaija.com/matthew-hassan-kukah-from-amnesty-to-repentance/> (accessed on 10.06.13)
2. Josiah Idowu-Fearon, "Boko Haram: What all believing Christians and Muslims must do" Vanguard, On February 12, 2012 In Special Report <http://www.vanguardngr.com/category/special-reports/> (accessed on 26.03.12)
3. Quoting from Hasan al-Banna, Idowu-Fearon argues that the ideology of Islamists, which may not be far from that of Boko Haram is as follows:

Allah is Our Lord.

Mohammed is Our Leader,

The Koran is Our Constitution

Jihad is our way

Martyrdom is our Desire (cf. Husain, 2007:52) [Italics mine].

4. Cf. Idowu- Fearon argues that it is the first step to the Islamisation of the world

5. The Islamic mission of conversion (al-da'wa), which exists in two main variants, is exemplified by the highly structured Tablighi movement on the one hand and the highly diffuse salafiyya on the other.
6. The activities of the revolutionary Mahdism, the 'Maitatsine' uprisings of the early 1980s, the constitutional debates in 1977 which polarised the country, the formation of Izala (Society of Removal of Innovation and Reestablishment of the Sunna) and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (Shiite Movement) were instances of Islamic fundamentalist agitation against the secular state. See also Matthew Hassan Kukah, "Boko Haram: Some Reflections on Causes and Effects" in Simon O. Anyanwu and IsidoreNwanaju (eds.), *Boko Haram: Religious Conflict and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, Vol. 1. (Owerri, Edu-Edy Publications, 2010, pp. 1-29) 10-12.
7. Cf. SaxoneAkhaine, 'Why CAN is against dialogue with Boko Haram,' *Guardian*, Monday, 26 March 2012, http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/index.php?option=com_content&... (accessed on 27.03.12)
8. AbimbolaAdesoji, *The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria*, <http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/afsp/article/viewArticle/330>
9. TaiwoAdisa, "Boko Haram's funding traced to UK, S/Arabia..." *Nigerian Tribune*, Monday, 13 February 2012, www.nigeriatribune.com/35888-boko-harams-funding-traced-to-uk-sarabia-sect-planned-to-turn-nigeria-into-afghanistan-arrested-kingpin-opens-up.htm (accessed on 13.02.12)
10. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/world-africa-13843967>
11. Kukah, "Boko Haram: Some Reflections 2010," 14-24.
12. Chris Ngwodo, "Understanding Boko Haram – A Theology of Chaos", <http://www.nigeriaplus.com/understanding-boko-haram-a-theology-of-chaos-by-chris-ngwodo/>"Understanding Boko Haram – A Theology of Chaos: by Chris Ngwodo". *Nigeriaplus.com*. 2010-10-06. (Accessed 13.03. 2012).
13. Lagun Akinloye, "Nigeria's 2012 Budget: Consolidation, Growth and Employment?" in *Think Africa Press*, 15 December 2011, <http://thinkafricapress.com/nigeria/2012-budget-consolidation-growth-employment> (accessed on March 7, 2012)
14. Jibril, "Obasanjo Extends Olive Branch to Boko Haram" in *Think Africa Press*, Mon, Feb. 13, 2012; <http://thinkafricapress.com/nigeria/obasanjo-extends-olive-branch-boko-haram> (accessed March 7, 2012)
15. OkeyNdiribe, "FG sets up white paper panel on Boko Haram", in *Vanguard*, October 22, 2011, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/10/fg-sets-up-white-paper-panel-on-boko-haram/> (accessed March 7, 2012)
16. Camillus Eboh, "Nigeria Islamist sect member given 3 years in jail" *Reuters Africa*, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJOE7B504S20111206> (accessed April 18, 2012)
17. AdebisiAdedapo, "Boko Haram: Ndume Faces Fresh Charges," in *This Day*, Dec 08, 2011, <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/boko-haram-ndume-faces-fresh-charges/104368/> (accessed March 8, 2012)
18. Patrick Meehan and Jackie Speier, *BOKO HARAM Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland* U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, November 30, 2011, http://www.scribd.com/doc/74286783/Homeland-Security-Committee-Report-Boko-Haram-Emerging-Threat-to-the-U-S-Homeland?secret_password=1sq5dweo8gt9mkb9t5fj (accessed 21.04.13)

19. Olawale Rasheed, "Boko Haram: Amnesty and Jihad Interpretations," Tribune, Sat. 20.04.2013, <http://tribune.com.ng/news2013/index.php/en/component/k2/item/9933-...> (accessed 21.04.13)
20. Rasheed, "Boko Haram: Amnesty and Jihad Interpretations"
21. Heinrich Kahlefeld, "Dreizenter Sonntag Lk 9,51-62: Bibeltheologische Vorüberlegungen" in Konrad Bauymgartner & Otto Knoch (eds.), *Unsere Hoffnung – Gottes Wort*, (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Josef Knecht, ²1991, (435-440)) 435; cf. I Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978) 405.
22. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 402-403.
23. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke. The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997) 400. Green extends the same to the immediate periscope, vv.57-62.
24. Note: "Jesus' journey": "to go," "while going," "his face was going," "they went" (poreu, omai: vv.51, 52, 53, 56); and "Jesus' face": "he set his face," "he sent messengers before his face," and "his face was going" (vv. 51,52,53)
25. The paper may afford the author the opportunity to comment on the verse at a later stage. stre, fw de, evpitima, wshould simply be understood and interpreted as "rebuked".
26. Green, *The Gospel*, 402.
27. Cf. the Hebrews *simpanim 'el to turn towards, against'* (cf. Ezk. 6:2; 13:17; Je. 3:12; 21:10; Ez 6:2 et al.).
28. Green, *The Gospel*, 403.
29. Cf. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke. International Critical Commentary (ICC)* (London: T&T Clark ⁵1896) 262.
30. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke, Sacra Pagina Series Vol 3*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991) 162
31. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 404
32. Incidentally, this is the first time in Luke that the word Samaritan is appearing. It is true that Josephus argued that the journey Jesus is about to make through Samaria is a direct and regular route taken by pilgrims to Jerusalem, and could take about three days' journey (Jos. Ant. 20:118 par. Bel.2:232; Vita 269). It does not rule out the unfriendly relationship between Jerusalem and Samaria.
33. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969) 352-358; Joachim Jeremias, "Sama, reia, Samari, thj, Samari/tij" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9 Vols. ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, transl. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 7:88-94 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1972-1981) E-Copy.
34. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 162
35. Green, *The Gospel*, 405.
36. It is understood beyond mere saying to include the sense of "command" (cf. 6:46).
37. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 406.

38. The evocative nature of the wording of the suggested action is betrayed in the typology of Elijah as witness by many MSS (w`jkai. VHli, ajevpoi, hsencf. Robinson-Pierport Majority Text, Atlanta: Original Word Publishers, 1991, 1995). It is an allusion to 2 Kg. 1:10, 12, where Elijah states: “if he is a man of Godkatabh, setaipu/r evktou/ ouvranou/ kai. katafa, getai, se.”
39. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 404.
40. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 405-406.
41. Marshal, The Gospel of Luke, 407.
42. (1) kaiei=pen(Ouvkoivdateoi[oupneu,mato,jevsteu`mei/j];and (2)kai.ei=pen(Ouvkoivdateoi[oupneu,mato,jevste\ o~ga.rui~ojtou/ avnqrw, pououvkh'qenyuxa. javnqrw, pwnavpole, saiavlla. sw/sai. (vv.55b-56a)
43. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 406.
44. Erich Klostermann, Das Lukasevangelium. Handkommentar zum NT, 2nd. ed (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Paul; 1929), 112.
45. Rudolf Otto et al., The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man; a Study in the History of Religion (London: The Lutterworth press, The United society for Christian literature, 1938), 18.
46. Kukah, "Matthew Kukah calls for amnesty for Boko Haram in Easter Message..."
47. Cf. Green, The Gospel of Luke, 395.

