

In Search of a Samaritan: The Risk-Taking Motif in Luke 10:30–35 as a Paradigm for African Socio-Economic Development

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Abstract

This article relates Luke 10:30–35 to the situation of Africa in her drive from a state of underdevelopment to a state of development. From the perspective of African Biblical Interpretation, the model of risk-bearing or risk-taking is used to illustrate and interpret Africa's present state of misery. The article suggests that two important requirements are needed for Africa to relocate herself on her initial trajectory and thus complete her journey: the need for a "risk-taking Samaritan" (or simply, a "risk-taking" or "good Sama") and the need to ask the right questions. The article concludes that African success greatly depends on the question "To whom am I a neighbour?"

Key Terms

Luke 10:30–35; Africa; development; African biblical interpretation; risk; Good Samaritan

1 Introduction

Since the beginning of independence, African countries have embarked on a journey towards development. To facilitate this, many countries have designed strategies, such as the Cameroon Vision 2035 (Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development 2009). African Churches have also continuously preached messages of hope; the hope that "all will

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be well.” Unfortunately, such messages have sometimes appeared insufficient, because they are not often accompanied by relevant developmental actions.² The issue is not simply that Africa is oppressed and retarded on its way to development, but also that those who have the ability to *see* and *do* either remain passive or seem comfortable with the *status quo*. A bird’s eye view of the continent shows widespread elements of despair.

The current situation of Africa seems similar to that of the man whose journey from Jerusalem to Jericho was cut short by robbers (Luke 10:30–35). Although those who had the capacity to intervene arrived at the scene and saw what had happened, they decided not to act. Jenkins (2006, 69) agrees that this attitude might not be very different from the passivity exhibited by the world official agencies *vis-a-vis* the stalemate of Africa. However, the main problem for Africa may no longer be that she is robbed of her resources and left half-dead without any hope of intervention. Rather, it seems to be that Africans are outward looking, expecting some “Good Samaritan” to arrive from somewhere. This article postulates that the Good Samaritan is not necessarily an outsider, but could even be an insider. The Good Samaritan is the one who is willing to take the risk involved in *seeing* and *doing*. It is meaningful action that may successfully lead Africa to its intended destination.

This article adopts the African Biblical Hermeneutic Approach (ABHA), using African Biblical Interpretation (ABI) as a method.³

² One of the reasons why African churches may be failing in their responsibility could be that although they have an idea of how to combine preaching with developmental action, they lack the appropriate means to initiate and drive such action (cf. Myers 2012). However, the churches still have the prophetic voice that alone can provoke meaningful action (Nyiawung 2010a).

³ Nyiawung (2013) observes that there has been a growing interest in reading theology with a focus on the African worldview. He proposes a possible starting point from which biblical exegesis in particular and theology in general could be done in order to become effective and relevant for African people. In the process, he galvanises various contextual methods used by scholars interested in African biblical studies into an umbrella approach, which he refers to as the African Biblical Hermeneutics Approach (ABHA). He argues that this approach enables exegetes interested in the African context to initiate a dialogue between the text, the original audience and the original context, on the one hand, and the context of the present-day audience, on the other hand. He thus identifies four characteristics of ABHA: (1) it places emphasis on the context of the audience; (2) it is an invitation for the re-training and empowerment of African exegetes, as well as those interested in African biblical studies; (3) it is about the contextualisation of biblical exegesis; and (4) it uses relevant reading scenarios,

Although Nyiawung (2013) has defined what ABHA is (and what it is not) and has provided guidelines for the use of ABI, he does not offer an example of how to use this method. This article is therefore an attempt to fill this gap by offering an ABI of Luke 10:30–35, focusing on Cameroon.

The article is divided into two parts.⁴ The first part deals with the reading of Luke 10:30–35 from an emic perspective,⁵ that is, reading and understanding Luke 10:30–35 from the perspective of first-century Mediterranean society. In this reading, not much attention is paid to how the passage has so far been interpreted. The focus is also not on the authenticity of Luke 10:30–35. Rather, Luke 10:30–35 is adopted as an authentic text (cf. Esler 2002, 199; Snodgrass 2008, 359). As a reading that proceeds from an insider perspective, it gives a clear understanding of the relationships and attitudes that were characteristic of the first-century Mediterranean world.

The second part of the article rereads and applies Luke 10:30–35 to the African context through the model of risk-taking. It focuses on two main issues: firstly, a description of the African context through the lens of Luke 10:30–35; and secondly, the contextualisation of Luke 10:30–35. Here, risk-taking is offered as a paradigm for the socio-economic development of Africa. A correlation is made between the African context

models and theories from the African context in order to better understand, assimilate, interpret and apply Bible texts in the African context. For an effective application of ABHA, he proposes two methods: the inculturation method and the African Biblical Interpretation (ABI) method. He further suggests four main steps for ABI: (1) understanding the text in its context; (2) using relevant contextual reading scenarios, models and theories to interpret the text; (3) understanding the present-day context of application; and (4) applying the results of the findings to the context of the present-day audience.

⁴ These two parts are not in contradiction with the methodology of ABI. Rather, the first part of the article represents steps 1 and 2 of ABI, while the second part represents steps 3 and 4 (see previous footnote).

⁵ According to Nyiawung and Van Eck (2012) the terms *emic* and *etic* relate to the way in which a reading is carried out. Emic is related to *phonemics*, which are categories of thought and explanations as they are given by the group being studied (Elliott 1993, 129). It is thus an anthropological term that refers to the report of a narration from the “natives” point of view. According to Moxnes (1991, 251), an emic reading is a cognitive pattern of what is supposed to happen, including what actually happens. As for the term *etic*, it relates to the word *phonetics* and has to do with how an external investigator classifies systems that differ from his or her own. In short, while an etic reading refers to the analysis of a text from an *outsider’s* point of view, an emic reading is one that proceeds from an insider’s perspective (cf. Van Aarde 2006, 367; Nyiawung 2010, 125).

and the context of first-century Palestine.

2 Reading Luke 10:30–35 from a First-Century Mediterranean Perspective

The context of Luke 10:30–35 is the context of first-century Mediterranean society. Our concern is equally with the history and life of the characters in the passage, as reflected in their attitudes, character and lifestyle. Malina (2001, 16) has observed that the first-century Mediterranean world operated on certain values that could be summed up under four major social institutions, namely politics, religion, kinship and economy. These were fixed forms of social life that did not necessarily exist independently of each other. Considering that these institutions overlap, the context of Luke 10:30–35 will be described from the perspective of socio-cultural and religious, as well as economic and political institutions.

At the time of Jesus, religion was one of the main distinguishing factors between the Samaritans and the Jews (cf. Van Eck 2014, 62).⁶ While Jews worshipped at the Temple in Jerusalem, Samaritans worshipped at the temple on Mount Gerizim. The destruction of the latter temple by John Hyrcanus (128 BCE) and the city of Samaria (107 BCE) increased the enmity between Judeans and Samaritans. According to Funk (1996, 175), the “labels Samaritan and Judean stood in considerable tension with each other.” The Jews of the Second Temple period understood God in terms of holiness (cf. Lev 19:2). In order to preserve holiness, laws concerning purity, keeping of the Sabbath, fasting and the observance of certain feasts were observed. These were thought to determine who was welcome in God’s presence. Only Israelites without blemish were allowed to enter the Temple, and “for someone to enter the temple or for a priest to attempt to undertake his duties in the temple in an unclean state would be a terrible sacrilege” (Fiensy 2007, 162).⁷

⁶ Blajer (2012, 75) observes that the terms “Samaritans” and “Jews” can be used in three different ways, namely in an ethnic, in a geographical and in a religious sense. The term “Samaritan” was used by Jews either to reference this ethnic group or as a derogatory insult to a fellow Jew who had allowed himself to become polluted. For Jews, this label could easily result in a loss of honour in society, and could even lead to political impotence, because to call somebody a Samaritan was an insult (cf. John 8:48). This article uses the two terms in each of the three senses as indicated.

⁷ According to Num 19:11–22, contact with a corpse caused defilement for seven days (cf. Ezek 44:25–27). In spite of this, Jews were permitted to bury a neglected corpse

Economically, it was a society where time, goods, wealth and services were limited. Funk (1996, 174) mentions that priests and Levites belonged to a cult that contributed to the economic well-being of Jerusalem. Stooping down to attend to a fallen and half-dead person, pouring (not dripping) oil and wine on that person’s wounds, would have been considered an irrational waste of economic resources. Politically, priests were part of the upper-class authorities who governed the Temple cult, while Levites were their associates. They provided music, incense, sacred bread, Temple curtains and adornments. They also carried out administration for national business, including kosher meatpacking and banking.

3 Risk-Taking in Luke 10:30–35: An Emic Reading

“Risk-bearing” or “risk-taking” is a term that is used widely in the world of finance and economy. It has two components: exposure and uncertainty (cf. Holton 2004). It is about painful outcomes and the level of pain associated with such outcomes. It involves the potential of deriving some gain or loss from certain actions; hence, the idea of consequences (cf. Sayers, Hall and Meadowcroft 2002; Berg 2010). Risk thus refers to being exposed or being vulnerable to uncertain consequences that are associated with favourable or unfavourable outcomes. These three elements of exposure, uncertainty and outcome are important for this article.

The idea of risk-bearing in Luke 10:30–35 is better understood when the various characters involved in the passage are grouped into three categories: (1) the road, the robbers and the victim; (2) the passive Temple leaders and the active Samaritan; and (3) the victim and the innkeeper (cf. Blajer 2012, 159).

3.1 The characters in Luke 10:30–35

3.1.1 The road, the robbers and the victim

There was a significant difference in altitude between Jerusalem and Jericho that caused discomfort. This road was notoriously dangerous because it led through the rocky Judean desert, which provided a hiding place for robbers and all kinds of outlaws (Snodgrass 2008, 345). Consequently, it was often referred to as “the way of blood” (cf. Wilkinson 1975, 12). Josephus (*J.W.* 2.125) further attests that for security

(Snodgrass 2008, 355). Moreover, Jewish laws were suspended when life was endangered (cf. Hultgren 2000, 97).

purposes, travellers often carried weapons to protect themselves (cf. Blajer 2012, 162). As for the robbers, the narrator does not show much interest in their identity. He rather uses them to portray the various types of risks that are found in the passage, as discussed in this article.

The victim is a nameless man with no mark to identify him (Scott 2001, 56), but he is probably a Jew.⁸ The description of his helpless nature changes the picture: he has been stripped naked with no indication of his status; he is left half dead. He is in a helpless predicament that begs for attention, compassion, concern and love. One imagines him echoing Ps 121:1 (NIV): “I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?”

3.1.2 The Temple leaders and the Samaritan

The priest and the Levite arrive on the scene. They see the man, but do not act. They pass by. They are introduced into the scene by the name of the office they bear—an indication that they were not risk-bearers, at least not for the victim. They were persons of high esteem, because as leaders they held positions of prestige in the Jewish community (Blajer 2012, 167). Thus, it would have been expected that if there were to come any assistance or prompt action, it ought to have been from them. They were persons of means (cf. Bailey 2012, 292; Kendall 2006, 170), but they did not wish to take any responsibility. Although Esler (2002, 192) suggests that they did not want to run the risk of uncleanness in accordance with Mosaic Law, they would also surely have been aware that the same Law made allowance for exceptions, from which the victim may have benefited.

A Samaritan who sees and acts is introduced into the scene (Luke 10:32). He is identified through acts of risk-taking. In fact, he is full of action. He wishes to see the victim assume full life, unlike the priest and Levite, who have a different view. They think only of their own safety. They might equally be attacked by the same robbers. They wish to gain time to satisfy their own selfish needs. Their focus is personal comfort. Hultgren (2000, 96) argues that the distinction between the Samaritan and

⁸ From an emic perspective, the immediate context of the parable is Jewish, which is why it is not necessary to indicate the victim’s identity. In effect, the Jewish audience understood the situation of the victim, which was in line with biblical tradition whereby Jews went to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate major feasts. Besides, many Jews lived in Jericho and the man in question was travelling from one Jewish city to another. Blajer (2012, 160) confirms that the victim was in all likelihood a Jew (cf. Funk 1974, 32; Ramaroson 1975, 535).

the religious leaders “is a matter of the heart and compassion, not of law and office.”

3.1.3 The victim and the innkeeper

The victim is carried to a πανδοχεῖον, which is an open, free-for-all rest house. He is handed to an innkeeper. It was rare at the time for Jews to use a πανδοχεῖον (a Roman inn) because of the need to maintain their ritual purity. Since they would not for any reason want to defile space, time or matter, they would not lodge in such an environment. The result would be exclusion from one’s circle of existence until readmission, which was effected by means of a ritual ceremony of inclusion. Jews preferred to use a κατάλυμα, which was a rest house reserved for Jews only (cf. Luke 2:7), where their purity rules were maintained.

On the other hand, it might have seemed appropriate for the victim to be taken to the πανδοχεῖον. Bailey (2008, 32) concurs that from its Greek root πανδοχεῖον is a combination of the word “all” (πᾶς, πᾶσα, πᾶν) and the verb “to receive” (δέχομαι). In other words, it was right for the victim to be carried to a commercial inn, where he would receive proper attention, unlike what he would get from a κατάλυμα, which was a simple lodge (cf. Fitzmyer 1981, 409).

3.2 *Categories of risk in Luke 10:30–35*

The story of Luke 10:30–35 is one of risk-taking. There are three types of conflict in Luke 10:30–35: (1) conflicts of ethnic interests (risk of egoism); (2) conflicts between personal interest and humanitarian interest (risk of altruism); and (3) conflicts of innocence (risk of foolhardiness).

The risk of egoism can be defined as that which is selfishly undertaken, considering only one’s fame, personal interest, popularity, possessions, identity and/or security. It is usually the product of a mindset established by society as to what defines a person’s personality. By refusing to rescue someone in need, the priest and Levite act from an egoistic perspective. As leaders, they have ethnic and religious power; they have oil and wine used in the Temple for sacrifices (Lev 23:13); they have time and their emotions at their disposal; still, they refuse to offer any help. They see, but they pass by. The adverb ὁμοίως (“likewise”) indicates that they share the same reasons for not risking their position. The priest has already passed by. The Levite likewise refuses to make a difference and thus fails to become a hero.

The risk of altruism is taken selflessly on behalf of others, or for the intention of making someone successful, healthy, better. This is the case with the innkeeper and the Samaritan. Firstly, the innkeeper receives a Samaritan into the πανδοχεῖον and agrees to render him services. He is aware of the animosity between the Samaritans and the Jews; yet, he decides to keep them both overnight. Secondly, there is no guarantee that the Samaritan will effectively return to him as promised. What if the expenditure is not refunded? He would have put his job as well as the activities of the πανδοχεῖον at risk. Thirdly, he risks rejection by graciously confirming the honourable position that the Samaritan has acquired. He thus becomes the client of a Samaritan! Fourthly, for a Samaritan to help a Jew was a risky venture for both of them. The verb ἐσπλαγγίσθη (“moved with compassion”)⁹ fully expresses the altruistic nature of the Samaritan’s risk. This verb functions in contrast to the verb ἀντιπαρήλθεν (“passed by on the other side”), from which one can infer that the priest and Levite simply lacked the compassion that would lead them to take a risk for another person.

The Samaritan portrays altruistic risk in several ways. First, he risks his time. Unlike the Temple leaders, he sacrifices his time as a result of his compassion and concern for human dignity. The old adage “time is business” means little compared to the value of human dignity. While the others focus on time for the sake of religious activities, he focuses on time for humanitarian purposes. He sacrifices his time to offer time to the victim. He uses the time available to restore life so that life can continue. After having spent time to take care of the man’s incapacitation, he drops him off at the inn and still promises to return.

Second, he risks his resources. He is generous with his first-aid elements, his donkey, his energy, his emotions and his money. He diminishes his economic situation and endangers his trade by emptying his resources for humanitarian reasons.¹⁰ He does not withhold anything that could bring restoration to the injured man.¹¹ He offers a “blank cheque” to

⁹ The position of ἐσπλαγγίσθη in the passage speaks for itself. In fact, Blajer (2012, 179) remarks that it “is preceded by 68 words and followed by 67, thus, making it the center of the unit.” This verb expresses the Samaritan’s attitude of readiness to risk all that he had in order to meet the needs of the victim.

¹⁰ It may not be an exaggeration to qualify the Samaritan’s risk as utilitarian.

¹¹ Snodgrass (2008, 360) estimates that the two denarii given to the innkeeper could be sufficient to provide room and board for about two weeks (cf. Hultgren 2000, 99). Oakman (2008, 44) concurs that it represented “about 1 per cent of an ancient Palestinian family’s annual budget.”

the innkeeper: “whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back” (Luke 10:35b, RSV).

Third, he risks his identity. In a group-oriented community like the one assumed by Luke 10:30–35, the Samaritan has traversed beyond the ordinary, crossed the frontier and risked his identity for the sake of compassion. In fact, he has gone out of his way to run extraordinary risks that insiders did not usually run for their own kindred.

Fourth, he risks his life. He does so in four ways: (1) he does not seem to care about the potential negative reaction of the victim after his healing or even about that of bystander Jews; (2) he cares even less about becoming a target of the same robbers, although he carried expensive items (oil and wine) with him; (3) he assures the security of the victim at his own expense (how did he know that the innkeeper would receive him?); and (4) he does not care that the innkeeper and even other travellers at the inn could accuse him of having attacked, beaten and stripped an anonymous Jew. His actions are spectacular: he has gone above and beyond what was necessary in order to save a Jew!

Fifth, he risks his religious identity. He was also subject to the Law of Moses, just like the priest and the Levite (cf. Num 5:2; 19:11–13). He sees, like the others did (καὶ ἰδὼν), but his response is with ἐσπλαγγίσθη.

Finally, the risks of the victim should also be considered. In the first place, the victim risks foolhardiness. He is aware that the road is treacherous and dangerous with numerous hiding places for bandits (cf. Snodgrass 2008, 345); yet, he risks travelling alone.¹² In the second place, he risks rejection because he has been attended to by a Samaritan. He receives treatment in a πανδοχεῖον and not in a κατάλυμα (cf. Luke 2:7; 22:11; Mark 14:14). He risks his identity. In fact, he risks being rejected by his community after his healing process, because he has defiled his state of ritual purity and allowed himself to be touched by an impure person. As a result of his condition, he is vulnerable and needy in every sense of the word: he has been robbed of his identity, his pride, his possessions, his purity, his honour and all he could rely on to pride himself as a Jew. Yet, he must complete his journey!

¹² The road was “desolate and rocky.” Josephus (*J.W.* 2.125) attests that when the Essenes used this road, they carried arms to protect themselves from robbers (cf. Hultgren 2000, 96; Blajer 2012, 162).

3.3 *Concluding remarks*

To speak about passing “on the other side” is not to imply ignorance or to vindicate the priest and Levite. Rather, when compared to the Samaritan’s compassionate action, it can be established that all three saw: two were passive, but one was active; two were egoistic, but one was altruistic. The compassion that moved the Samaritan to action is in sharp contrast with the disconnected spirit of the priest and Levite, which was possibly motivated by historically based factors and religious regulations. They are the fearful, conservative supporters of the status quo. The African continent is in search of unfearful, risk-taking and proactive persons like the Samaritan, who will embrace the destiny of the continent with the totality of their being.

4 Risk-Taking: A Paradigm for the Socio-Economic Development of Africa

4.1 *Understanding the African context through the lens of Luke 10:30–35*

The context of Africa, read through the lens of Luke 10:30–35, is that of a victimised and “Dark Continent” caught in the struggle for development (cf. Nji 2018). Briefly defined, development is the process of advancement or change that is geared towards improving human living conditions (cf. United Nations Development Programme 1995, 23). Viewed from this perspective, the path of Africa towards its socio-economic development can be likened to that of the man on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho (Luke 10:30–35).¹³ Unfortunately, just like the victim in the narrative, Africa has been stripped naked. Its resources have been exploited, internal peace has been disrupted by ethnic conflicts, and political instability has resulted from numerous military coups. In fact, the picture of Africa today is that of poverty, misery and pain, amplified by climate change and its effects (cf. Nyiawung 2010b, 294). At the root of all this one can identify

¹³ One could suggest that the victim’s journey was a move towards welfare. As compared to Jerusalem, Jericho seems to have been one of the best oases in the Jordan valley because of its riches and splendour (Deut 34:3; Judg 1:16; 3:13; 2 Chr 28:15). This is one of the reasons why it seems adequate to see the frustration of Africa from the perspective of the victim in the hands of “robbers.”

two types of “robbers,” namely “external robbers” (ER) and “internal robbers” (IR).¹⁴

In effect, ER are especially the colonisers, superpowers and other hostile powers who, over the years, have extracted as much profit as possible from vulnerable African countries (cf. Blajer 2012, 214). On the other hand, IR are those described by Awung (2011) as kleptocrats. They are African leaders whose governments (with the complicity of the elite) are characterised by rampant greed, corruption and human rights abuses. Unfortunately, just like the priest and Levite, IR provide more security for themselves than for the citizens.

Whether caused by the ER or (with the complicity of) the IR, the situation in Africa is deplorable. For example, as a result of the lack of security, features like civil strife, social unrest and political violence have become commonplace in Africa, hindering development. The bleakness of Africa can be explained from socio-cultural, religious, economic and political perspectives. Socio-culturally, Africa is a high-context society, just like first-century Mediterranean society.¹⁵ This is manifested in the multiplicity of its ethnic groups, its languages and its forms of dress. For example, Cameroon alone counts about 250 ethnic groups, and the variety of these groups accounts for the diversity of its languages and dress. Beidelman (1970, 30) opines that in Africa, as elsewhere, language is a powerful tool in the spread of information (cf. Nyiawung 2010b, 127). Regrettably, since the period of colonisation, African people have been robbed of these important tools of cultural identification. They have been groomed to believe that being civilised means to talk, eat and dress like the colonial master. This justifies the present promotion of African studies as a way of reconstructing African identity through the rehabilitation of some of its cultural aspects of living (Nyiawung 2013).

¹⁴ It is true that one cannot attribute the situation of Africa exclusively to ER and IR. There are other factors responsible for her hopeless situation. For example, Olaosebikan (2010) attests that Africa is one of the poorest continents in the world due to harsh environmental conditions, corruption, bad governance and huge foreign debt.

¹⁵ High-context societies are homogeneous societies in which contextual knowledge is widely shared by everybody. In contrast, low-context societies often witness social and technological changes, as well as anonymous social relations. Rohrbaugh (2007, 9) argues that for high-context societies to be understood, more background information is required. For him, “high context societies expect listeners to know the context and low context societies expect to have to spell it out.”

From a religious perspective, Nyiawung (2010b) traces the present religious situation of African societies to early missionary activities. Parratt (1997, 3) concurs that “Western missionary Christianity had some serious shortcomings.” Africans were trained to accept that to adopt the Western way of life was an outward manifestation of Christian conversion (cf. Obeng 1999, 23). This conception robbed Christianity of its true value. Mbiti (1990, 1) rightly remarks that Africans were famously religious. Unfortunately, their religious practices were described by missionaries as demonic. Hence, they were compelled to abandon aspects of these practices that were considered incompatible with Christianity.¹⁶ By getting rid of these practices, a vacuum was created, which has become a source for syncretism among many African believers.¹⁷ It is therefore not strange to find Christians sneaking out at night to consult a soothsayer when faced with inexplicable happenings.

Economically, the value of Africa’s rich resources can be seen in Nyiawung’s (2010b, 318) description of Africa as “a continent of raw material for the industrialised nations in Europe, America and Asia (especially China).” This is evident from the rate of deforestation and the abusive exploitation of mineral resources that have left African economies fragile and less competitive. Under the pretext of aid, powerful nations have often provided loans that, in the long run, have further plunged these countries into a situation of eternal indebtedness. This probably explains why many countries in Africa remain poor and dependent. As IR, the systems of governance in most African countries seem to promote corruption and injustice. These systems do not encourage creativity and vision, but promote discrimination and unemployment. Some unscrupulous leaders have even used systems of taxation to rob citizens and enrich themselves. At the same time, African economies have suffered from the effects of pollution, degradation, the deterioration of the ecosystem, global warming and the general process of climate change.

Politically, many African leaders seek their own personal interest. In May 2000, *The Economist* (2000, 1) remarked that African society is susceptible to brutality, despotism and corruption, because these vices are rooted in African culture. It is true that colonial rule involved manipulating

¹⁶ Examples of such practices could include: polygamy, the use of local instruments in worship, the use of traditional medicine and the clapping of hands in church.

¹⁷ Syncretism is a type of compromise whereby two incompatible and irreconcilable aspects from one culture or religion are incorporated into another culture or religion without scrutiny, and without any replacement (cf. Gehman 2000, 281).

tribal affiliation in order to preserve power and encouraging the system of divide-and-rule, both of which have resulted in a politicised traditional leadership that has rendered traditional leaders vulnerable. Political instability has simply become another form of governance, where the constitution is mutilated at will with the complicity of the elite. In short, the political system in Africa is such that people obey out of coercion rather than conviction; it is a system where leaders surround themselves with sycophants who tell them only what they desire to hear (cf. Nyiawung 2010b, 348).

The result is a continent robbed of its identity and left half-dead, with vices such as hatred, enmity, conflicts, corruption, rampant killings, mediocrity, passivity and inertia. It is in this context that the lawyer's question that triggered Jesus's parable becomes relevant for this article: "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29, NIV). However, in the present situation, the most relevant question to direct Africa on its way towards development should rather be: "To whom am I a neighbour?" This is a question of both action and commitment.

4.2 *Risk-taking in Luke 10:30–35: A solution to African socio-economic development*

It is important to observe that Luke does not show much interest in *who* rendered the victim helpless. He is rather concerned with *how* he attracted compassion, *how* he picked his life up again. Rather than strive towards the future, most African scholars have located African glory solely in the past. For example, some African theologians justify contextualisation by echoing early missionaries' neglect of certain aspects of African culture. Economists blame colonising powers for the poor economic situation of African countries. Social critics argue that politics in many African states is controlled from outside. Unfortunately, these reflections encourage escapist tendencies: they shift the blame and encourage passive attitudes. Africa is half-dead and has become an object of compassion. Luke 10:30–35 indicates that the solution to the stalemate in Africa depends on the following key issues: how to find a "good" or "risk-taking" Samaritan—or simply, a "good Sama"¹⁸ with the right characteristics—and how to ask the right questions.

¹⁸ The victim in Luke 10:30–35 never knew where his help would come from. It is the same with the African situation. The name "Sama" may sound African. Yes, of course, it is from the north-west region of Cameroon. But for the purposes of this article, it is also an anonymous name that stands for any and all compassionate neighbours, Africans

4.3 *The “good Sama” and the right characteristics*

The “risk-taking Sama” seems an apt model for the socio-economic development of Africa today. In this context, it does not matter whether the Sama is an outsider or an insider, or both. The point is that the priest and the Levite are not the right examples to emulate. Since the world has become a global village, viable nations must assist weaker ones to cross over to the inn. Like the Samaritan, they must enable others to become like them, without prejudice. After all, Jesus came so that all may have life and have it in its fullness (John 10:10). Considering that all human beings are endowed with the same potential to make things happen (cf. Gen 1:26), the solution to African problems partly lies with Africa herself.

Firstly, Africa is in need of a Sama who is altruistic and proactive, who recognises the worth of love and compassion, who can turn the problem of ethnic, social and cultural prejudice into a useful tool for development. Two years ago, Zamfir (2016) remarked that “Africa is about to ‘turn the page,’ ‘to take off,’ to become the ‘Asia of the 21st century,’ the new ‘powerhouse of the world.’” This is the positive attitude that is needed for Africa today. Unfortunately, Zamfir limited his vision to an “economic miracle.” The solution may not be an economic miracle per se. It may rather involve the nature, method and agents responsible for “take-off.” The Sama must be an altruistic and risk-bearing agent of transformation.

Secondly, Africa needs a proactive Sama. The expression *καὶ ἰδὼν* (“and seeing”) plays an important role in Luke 10:30–35. Many Africans, as well as many international bodies, have spent time *seeing* without reacting. No one can claim ignorance of the situation in Africa, especially when it comes to issues like misery, poverty and illnesses. Development means action. The issue is what we do about the injustice we see around us. Luke 10:30–35 can be seen as a response to the situation in Africa, explaining how one can become a hero. To be a hero is to develop a heart that beats and moves into action.

Thirdly, Africa needs a Sama who is imbued with the spirit of love and compassion—love and compassion for the institutions and for one another; love and compassion that move people to identify each other as

and non-Africans alike. It simply depicts the Samaritan in Luke’s story. Hence, the “good Sama” stands for the good Samaritan or the risk-taking Sama, similar to the “good Sam” described by Funk (1996, 179).

brothers and sisters.¹⁹ Love and compassion are two important values in the context of development, because they inspire justice. Just like action, there is no development without justice. The African elite must therefore rid themselves of egoism and rather be moved by the type of compassion that motivates positive action—action that condemns the political manipulations that are responsible for injustice and inequality. I agree with Asante (2014, 79) that justice is the second miracle that will usher Africa towards development.

Fourthly, Africa needs a “good Sama” who has the will to recognise the value of ethnic diversity. Now is the time for African societies to accept and appreciate the reality of cultural pluralism and thus become sensitive to ethnocentric provocation. The variety of ethnic groups in Africa is a social reality that can be harnessed to promote cooperation and development (Asante 2017, 63). Sadly, the history of Africa has been that of a continent riven by ethnic conflicts (Alabi, 2002, 41; Olaosebikan 2010). For Olaosebikan (2010), it is the home of wars and instability. Ntem (2016) concurs that ethnic conflicts contribute significantly to the present underdeveloped state of Africa (cf. Ikyase and Olisah 2014, 186). Of course, due to their violence, conflicts claim the lives of many people, destroy property and divert human as well as financial resources away from development (cf. Mengistu 2015). To use ethnic diversity as a tool for division is to ignore the fact that people and human relationships are important ingredients for every venture (cf. O’Donovan 2000, 7).

4.4 *Asking the right question: To whom am I a neighbour?*

One of the reasons for Africa’s underdevelopment is that people are asking the wrong questions. As mentioned already, the background of Luke 10:30–35 is the question of neighbourliness: “Who is my neighbour?” This question remains crucial for Africa today. The old paradigm of expecting “a Samaritan” from the outside to drive African development is outdated, because it was focused on the wrong question. This paradigm has shaped African thinking, preventing Africans from asking questions that are most urgent, relevant and contextual. Although the lawyer’s question, “who is my neighbour?,” is important for this article, it no longer seems relevant for African problems, because (1) it focuses on kinship and ethnicity; (2) it

¹⁹ Nyiawung (2010b, 312) describes this as “African solidarity.” For example, when Africans find themselves outside of their respective countries, they consider each other as brothers and sisters, irrespective of where they come from. But this type of solidarity should be such that it moves people to action, and not a type of lip-service solidarity.

encourages segregation and conflict; (3) it leaves room for passivity and laxity; (4) it takes no responsibility; and (5) it encourages laziness and mediocrity.

Conversely, the most important question for socio-economic development in Africa is: “To whom am I a neighbour?” This is a question that leads to other questions, including, for example: “What can I do to have a neighbour?”; “How useful am I to a neighbour?” It is a question that moves one to action. It is a question of justice and governance. The urge to become a neighbour involves crossing those boundaries that separate individuals and becoming an active participant. Luke 10:30–35 presents three people, all of whom saw and made decisions. The priest and the Levite were motivated by the question: “What will I gain if I stop and act?” The obvious answer was probably: “You will rather lose.” The issues of egoism and personal gain are obvious obstacles that prevent the emancipation of Africa. For the Samaritan, the real question was: “What will he gain if I stop and act?” The answer here was: “He will gain life.” The time has really come to seek the “good Sama” who will ask the right questions.

4.5 *Concluding remarks*

Africa is in need of a “good Sama,” who should be bold enough to ask new questions and recognise the value of meritocracy and competence. Now is the time for Africa to grow beyond traditional thinking determined by kinship and to recognise the value of meritocracy. People have sometimes run into problems because their questions breed tribalism, regionalism and an obsession with kinship. For example, employment is sometimes offered to people from a premise of favouritism, driven by questions like: “Where do you come from?”; “What is your name?”; “Who sent you?”; “Who are your parents?” Luke 10:30–35 is a “door-opener” to African peoples; it is a challenge to some aspects of African cultural beliefs and practices; it is an eye-opener to churches and their faithful. Lastly, there is a need for new questions that lead to the right choices. One of the issues raised in Luke 10:30–35 relates to the choices we make. People have a choice between maintaining the status quo and opening themselves up to new challenges. At times, people fear challenges because they fear losing face or causing enmity. It takes a risk-bearer to challenge the status quo and face reality as it is. Although the notion of kinship has positive consequences for communal living in Africa, it has become a significant source of strife. There are very few parts of Africa that are not

involved in conflict, often to the point of people killing each other. Colonial powers are no longer at the forefront of the robbery and the attacks. They are in the background, extracting resources and coercing Africans to do the robbing themselves. These colonial powers destroy people and property; they cause fear and tension; they force people to go into exile; they lure others to organise themselves as terrorist groups, sometimes within the same nations (e.g., Boko Haram in Nigeria and Cameroon); they are behind post-electoral conflicts (e.g., Gabon, the DRC and Sudan). Nyiawung (2010b) has described the consequences of kinship in Africa in the following way:

African attachment to the notion of kinship has also created a climate of suspicion between in-group members and out-group members. Hence, within nations, tribes clash with each other as a struggle for the maintenance of social identity and social pride. For example, there is the case with the Yoruba and the Igbos in Nigeria; the Hutu and the Tutsi or the Bantus and the Nilotes in Rwanda and Burundi; the Bafumbira and the Banyarwanda in Uganda; and the Bali and the Bawock, as well as the Bafanji and the Balikumbat in Cameroon. (p. 313)

A better way towards development is to contemplate questions like: “Who has the capacity to perform action?”; “Who can deliver the goods?”; Who exhibits love and compassion towards others?” It is not about blind patriotism; it is about active compassion that breeds justice and equality.

5 Conclusion

From the perspective of ABI, Luke 10:30–35 points to a new reality, a new order of things, where the walls of ethnicity are broken down and compassion is extended to the needy. This passage is about an unexpected character who becomes a hero, because he helps a victim to recover life.²⁰ It is thus about a redefinition of human relationships that form the very basis of human social structure in God’s kingdom, based on cooperation, not competition. Several years ago, Crossan (1973, 56) described this story as one of reversal. For Esler (2002, 188), it is about the compassionate Samaritan. Oakman (2008, 179–180) has viewed it instead as the story of

²⁰ Funk (1996, 179) has a different view about who is the hero in Luke 10:30–35. He regards the victim as a hero, because he attracts the attention of an outsider and thus re-emphasises the importance of human relationships.

the “Foolish Samaritan,” whose risk-bearing attitude makes him a fool that falls prey to compassion. From an African perspective, the story has been reread as an example of risk-bearing for the sake of others. Accordingly, the story of the “Good Sama” provides the example that is needed to move Africa from the present impasse.

The Samaritan in the story promotes a new way of life for African communities and the world at large. World nations and international agencies must all involve themselves in the process of leading others to cross the line, irrespective of whether they are strong or weak, developed or developing. African communities must begin asking new questions. Africa’s socio-economic resilience does not lie in her glorious past. Instead, it is to be found in her active future, where the right questions find appropriate answers. For this task, Africa needs compassionate, altruistic, risk-bearing and committed people, who are moved by the present situation of the continent; that is, people who are able to see and act, who are ready to initiate situations that can bring African communities together.

For this venture, Africa does not need sympathisers; she needs “doers” in the tradition of Nkrumah and Mandela. She needs people who are not only ready to take the continent to the inn, but who are also able to pay the cost and take her from the innkeeper, so that she can begin a new life.

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²¹ This is a formulation of Cameroon’s bold vision for long-term development that is intended to guide sector and regional policies, national strategies, development plans and cooperation.

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