

## Chapter 5

### Luke 9:18-22: An emic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke

*The main problem ... for readers of the Bible, then, is that we do not know what we do not know. The spare descriptions of context in the Bible often leave us without the essential ingredient for understanding the message.*  
(Rohrbaugh 2007:9)

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Ancient texts like those in New and Old Testament texts are described by anthropologists as “high context” documents,<sup>98</sup> because they are written within the context of the ancient Mediterranean world (Elliott 1993:11; Rohrbaugh 2007:9; Van Eck 2009b:13). The first-century Mediterranean authors of the texts of the New Testament presume a “high” knowledge of their context on the part of their readers. Consequently, little or no background information is given to these texts in order to explain the respective *raison d’être* of, for example, Jesus’ attitude, as well as that of his followers and opponents. Modern readers, most of whom are from “low context” societies, need knowledge of the “missing” information in these texts in order to understand these actions. To “fill in” this “missing” information, social scientists argue that a reading of ancient texts necessitates anthropological, cross-cultural and social scientific models and theories to avoid ethnocentrism. The latter is called an etic reading of the text, and will be attended to, later.

This chapter focuses on an emic reading of the Lukan text. An emic reader can be compared with a court magistrate whose objective is to understand the different parties involved in a dispute from their own point of view, irrespective of the possible presence of witnesses (in this case, Luke the narrator). What follows is such a reading (understanding) of the Lukan story of Jesus and the conflicts that he faced, from the perspective of a “high

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<sup>98</sup> High context societies are homogeneous societies in which contextual knowledge is widely shared by everybody. Changes are rare in such societies. “Low context” societies, on the contrary, often witness social and technological changes as well as anonymous social relations. For high context societies to be understood, more background information is required. Rohrbaugh (2007:9) spells out this difference clearly: “High context societies expect listeners to know the context and low context societies expect to have to spell it out” (Rohrbaugh 2007:9).

context” reader. This implies that the contemporary reader becomes a member of the high context society of Luke’s gospel, reading Luke’s gospel from a “native’s point of view”.

The emic reading in this Chapter will consist of re-narrating the story of Jesus in Luke, focusing on the relationships that he established with the various characters in Luke’s story. The following relationships will be attended to: 1) Jesus’ relationship with the disciples, 2) his relationship with the Jewish elite, 3) the relationship between Jesus and the Roman elite, 4) his relationship with the Jewish peasantry, and 5) the relationship between Jesus and non-Jews. An emic reading of Luke’s gospel through the lens of these relationships enriches the contemporary reader’s understanding of the interaction between Jesus and his contemporaries. It also identifies and describes the conflicts that resulted from this interaction.

In describing the above identified relationships, the following questions will be kept in mind: Why was Jesus in constant conflict with his contemporaries? What was the nature of these conflicts? What was the drive behind the reactions of his opponents? What was the reaction of Jesus? These questions will help in an emic reading of Jesus’ actions, reactions and decisions amidst a climate of conflict and tension as a result of the misunderstanding of his person by his opponents.

## **5.2 JESUS’ RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DISCIPLES**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

In a more generic sense a disciple is a follower of Jesus. In Luke’s story of Jesus the reader is introduced to several followers of Jesus. For instance, those who followed Jesus as disciples were beyond the number twelve: some women followed him (Lk 8:2; 24:22), there existed what Luke simply calls “disciples” (Lk 6:13, 17; 19:37; 39) and there are the seventy (or seventy two) others whom he sent out on mission (Lk 10:1-12). However, “disciple” in this study will be understood as the twelve (Lk 6:13; 8:1; 9:1) whom he chose and called *apostoloi* (Lk 6:13), also referred to in the gospel as *mathetai* (Lk 8:22; 9:18; 10:23).

### **5.2.2 Jesus and the disciples**

By inference, the first encounter between Jesus and the disciples is during the call of Simon, who is immediately joined by James and John (Lk 5:10-

11).<sup>99</sup> This happens within the context of a fishing expedition. Having spent a fruitless night of fishing, Jesus appears and instructs Simon to cast his net for a catch. Simon's (reluctant) obedience to this attempt yields fruit. Simon is astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and kneels before Jesus to apologise for his incipient reluctance. Jesus' reaction is to ask Simon to follow him. Although Simon does not seem to know who Jesus was, he decides to leave everything and to follow Jesus, probably influenced by the miraculous catch he had experienced. According to Luke 5:11, James and John join Simon in his decision.

Before the next disciple, Levi, is called (Lk 5:27), Simon, James and John are witnesses of large crowds coming to Jesus to hear him and be healed (Lk 5:15). They are also present when Jesus heals a man with leprosy (Lk 5:12-14) and a paralytic (Lk 5:17-20, 24-26). Both these persons come to Jesus for healing; the latter is brought by his friends (Lk 5:18-19). After their respective healings, the leper is sent to go and show himself to the priest, and the paralytic went home praising God. With regard to the healing of the paralytic, the three disciples also witness a controversy between Jesus and "the Pharisees and teachers of the law" (Lk 5:17) from all over Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem. The content of the controversy is the question of the authority to forgive sins, a controversy Jesus clearly "wins", since everybody present is amazed and praises him (like the paralytic; Lk 5:25).

Three differences can be indicated between the narrative of the calling of the disciples and the narratives of the two healings and the narrative of the crowds coming to Jesus for healing. Jesus approaches the disciples, and after they have witnessed the catch of a large number of fish, Simon (as the *primus inter pares* of the three disciples) reflects on his "sin" (Lk 5:8), after which he is invited to follow Jesus. The leper, paralytic and the crowds of people, on the other hand, approach Jesus, and after the respective healings have taken place, they praise Jesus, but do not follow him.

Levi is called in Luke 5:2. Just as it was the case with Simon, Levi left everything and followed Jesus. Levi further responds to Jesus' call by offering a feast in his house. The result of this feast is that the disciples are accused

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<sup>99</sup> Although Jesus' call is directed to Simon alone (α πο\_ tou~ nu~n α) nqrw&pouv e!sh| zwgrw~n), Simon's partners' James and John also left everything and followed Jesus (Lk 5.10-11).

(in the form of a question) by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, of mingling with sinners (Lk 5:30). Jesus immediately sides with his disciples and defends them (Lk 5:31). This riposte of Jesus leads to a further question (now directed at Jesus) by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They want to know why the disciples that Jesus has chosen to follow him ignore fasting and prayer (Lk 5:33). They thus clearly identify the disciples with Jesus.

This identification of Jesus with his disciples by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law was affirmed by the disciples themselves in the next micro narrative (Lk 6:1-5). While walking with Jesus through a grain field on a Sabbath, it is they who act in an “unlawful way” by plucking and eating heads of grain on the Sabbath (Lk 6:1-5). The reluctance of Luke 5:5 is clearly absent, and they do not even have to be invited by Jesus to do something. Now it is not Jesus who speaks blasphemy (Lk 5:21) by forgiving sins (Lk 5:20) or accepts an invitation to eat with tax collectors (Lk 5:29), but the disciples themselves that do something that upsets the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They are now doing what Jesus has been doing since he called them. They are, however, not yet able to defend their actions. When they are confronted by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, it is again Jesus who comes to their rescue by answering the question directed at the disciples (Lk 6:3-5). In his answer Jesus goes so far as to identify his disciples with the priests in the days of David. According to Jesus, his disciples have thus replaced the officials of the temple.

To identify himself further with his disciples, Jesus then, in the next micro narrative (Lk 6:6-11), does what the disciples did: he also transgresses that which is supposedly unlawful on a Sabbath by healing a man with a withered hand. Now, it seems, it is not the disciples anymore that are following the lead of Jesus, but *vice versa*: Jesus is following their lead. To confirm his confidence in his disciples, Jesus then chooses nine more of his followers and calls them “apostles” (Lk 6:14-16).

Having appointed his disciples, Jesus then starts to teach them specifically (Lk 6:20) while addressing a large crowd (Lk 6:17). Jesus’ teaching (Lk 6:20-49) starts out with an announcement of a change of order: the needy, the hungry, the weeping and the persecuted will be blessed with

joy (Lk 6: 21-23), while those who now have everything will lose it all (Lk 6:24-26). Jesus then spells out what attitude he requires from them (Lk 6:27-49) as the new “priests” (Lk 6:4): they must love their enemies (not like the Pharisees and the teachers of the law; Lk 6:27), give to everyone what they are asked for (Lk 6:30), and lend without expecting to be repaid (Lk 6:35). Also, others are not to be judged (Lk 6:37-38). In short, they must be merciful just as their Father is merciful (Lk 6:36). They must be good trees that bear good fruit (Lk 6:43-45), that is, what they say and do must not contradict one another (Lk 6:46-49).

In Luke 7:1-50 Jesus then sets the example of what he taught the disciples (and the crowd) about putting words into practice. He gives what is asked for (by healing the centurion’s servant; Lk 7:1-10), and blesses those who weep (by restoring the widow’s son; Lk 7:11-17). The changed order that was promised is also practised and realised: the sick are healed, the blind see, lepers are cleansed, the lame walk, the deaf hear and the poor receive good news of the kingdom (Lk 7:21-22).

At this stage of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples it is clear that an intimate relationship has been established. Peter calls Jesus teacher (Lk 7:40), the disciples travel with Jesus wherever he goes (Lk 8:1), they receive knowledge of the kingdom that others do not (Lk 8:9), and are called Jesus’ brothers because they put into practice what they are taught (Lk 8:21). Who and what they think Jesus is can only be speculated on, since the narrative is silent in this regard. What they do know is that Jesus’ ministry is about a new order (Lk 6:20-26) that includes teaching and healing. They have also thus far experienced that Jesus’ ministry, and their part therein, has created conflict with both the Pharisees and scribes, and Jesus’ own family. Finally, in their one-on-one conflict with the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus has come to their rescue without exception.

In the narrative of the calming of the storm (Lk 8:22-25) the first cracks in the supposedly solid relationship between Jesus and his disciples appear. While Jesus is asleep in the boat (Lk 8:22-25), a storm breaks out and swamps the boat. The disciples start to fear and are not able to handle the situation themselves. Their fear is expressed in the words “Master, Master, we are perishing” (Lk 8:24), to which Jesus replies “where is your faith” (Lk

8:25a) after he has calmed the storm. Instead of calming down also, the disciples are amazed and full of fear of what just happened. And then comes the same question that was asked by the Pharisees in Luke 5:21: “Who then is this?” (Lk 8:25b).<sup>100</sup> Just as the Pharisees, they do not know who Jesus is. Although they have accompanied him during his ministry, witnessed him perform miracles and received special teaching, their understanding of who Jesus is entails nothing more than that of the Pharisees. Jesus, however, pushes on with his ministry by exorcising a demon-possessed man (Lk 8:26-39), healing a woman who had been the subject of bleeding for twelve years (Lk 8:43-48), and raising Jaïrus’ daughter to life (Lk 8:40-42, 49-56) in the region of the Gerasenes.

Jesus then sends out his disciples to do what he has been doing, in spite of what happened in the boat during the storm. They receive power to preach, exorcise demons and heal the sick (Lk 9:1-2). From Luke 9:6 it can be deduced that the disciples are successful in their mission. When they return from their mission, Jesus takes them to Bethsaida to withdraw by themselves, probably to rest for a while (Lk 9:10). Crowds, however, follow them. Jesus then, as was the case in Luke 6:6-11, does what the disciples did just before their return: he teaches and heals the sick. Thus, again it seems – as was the case in Luke 7:40 to 8:21 – that the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is on track.

This situation changes dramatically in the micro narrative of the feeding of the five thousand in Luke 9:12-17. Late that afternoon, after Jesus preached and healed the sick, the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowd away to go and find food and lodging. Jesus’ response to the disciples takes on the form of a challenge: “You give them something to eat” (Lk 9:13). This challenge, if Luke 9:1-6 is taken into consideration, is supposed to pose no problem for the disciples. After being empowered by Jesus (Lk 9:1), they had no problem to do what Jesus was doing. Now they have the chance again. But they fail. Jesus has to feed the crowds. It seems that his effort with the

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<sup>100</sup> Knight (1998:98) argues that, the question surrounding Jesus’ identity in the miracle of the storm actually prepares Peter to legitimate Jesus as the Christ of God (Lk 9:20). This is debatable, since the question of Jesus’ identity already comes to the surface in Nazareth (Lk 4:22), again in Luke 5:21 (with the Pharisees) and yet again in Luke 7:20 (with the question of John the Baptist). However, it is the first time that the disciples bring the question of Jesus’ identity to the fore.

disciples was to no avail. The best they can do is to distribute what they receive from Jesus (Lk 9:16).

After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus' ministry in Galilee is drawing to a close. In Galilee he calls and trains the disciples. Unfortunately, these disciples seem not to understand who he is. This misunderstanding, or even non-understanding, of the disciples concerning who Jesus is, exemplified by the feeding of the five thousand, most probably triggered Jesus to inquire from them who the crowds and they themselves say he is (Lk 9:18-19). The speculation of the crowds varies: Jesus is seen as John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets of old. Peter's answer (as *primus inter pares*), on the other hand, seems clear cut: Jesus is "the Christ of God" (Lk 9:20).<sup>101</sup> Without any comments on the answers given, Jesus warns the disciples not to tell to anyone that he is "the Christ of God". Why? It is most probably because Peter's answer was not correct. Or maybe because his understanding of what the designation "Christ of God" really entails, is not correct. This caution of Jesus is followed by what sounds like a full disclosure of the meaning of his person and the implication of his ministry: He is the Son of Man who will suffer rejection from the elders, the chief priests and the scribes. Even though this will result in his death, he will be raised on the third day. This is who Jesus is. The one that will suffer, die, and be raised to life. This revelation of Jesus is immediately followed by a teaching to the disciples (Lk 9:23-27). To follow Jesus, to be his disciple, means to deny one's self and to take up one's cross, like Jesus is going to do.

About eight days later Jesus takes Peter, James and John up onto a mountain to pray. While Jesus is praying, he is transfigured, and two men, Moses and Elijah, appear alongside Jesus, talking to Jesus. The content of their conversation is Jesus' going to Jerusalem and what will happen there – an affirmation of what Jesus said was going to happen to him (see Lk 9:22). Peter misunderstands the whole scene, proposing to build three booths so as to remain in the company of the three. Now it becomes clear why Jesus made no comment after Peter's confession of Jesus being "the Christ of God". As

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<sup>101</sup> Among all the titles with which Jesus is identified in Luke's gospel, three times he is addressed by different disciples as "Lord": Peter (Lk 5:8), James and John (Lk 9:54) and the disciples (Lk 11:1). He is called "Master" three times also: by the disciples (Lk 8:24), Peter (Lk 9:33) and John (Lk 9:49). Peter, however, identifies Jesus only once as "the Christ of God" (Lk 9:20).

“the Christ of God” Jesus will suffer and die. Because Peter did not understand this, Jesus asked the disciples to keep quiet, so that they do not present Jesus as “the Christ of God” in a wrong way. They will therefore have to change their perception of Jesus. And if this is not enough, a voice from heaven affirms what Jesus was trying to tell them. Jesus is God’s Son, and they have to listen to him – they have to understand that they have to change their perception of who Jesus is. But they still do not want to accept this, therefore they keep quiet concerning what they had seen (and heard; Lk 9:36).

The next micro narrative (Lk 9:37-45), where Jesus heals a boy with an evil spirit, confirms this state of affairs. The disciples are unable to cast a spirit from the possessed boy. Although empowered by Jesus to do so (see again Lk 9:1), they have no control over the spirit. The reason for this is clear: Jesus and his disciples are not part of the same mission anymore. Jesus therefore again tells them about his forthcoming suffering and death (Lk 9:44). But they do not understand this. Moreover, it is not what they want. They want to be the greatest (Lk 9:46). Jesus’ reaction to this longing of the disciples is, again, to teach them. When one follows Jesus, it is not about who is the greatest. Rather, it is about being like a child, willing to be the least among everybody (Lk 9:47-48). Being the least, however, is not for the disciples. They not only want to be the greatest, they also want to be the only ones that have the authority to drive out demons in the name of Jesus (Lk 9:49), something they actually failed to do!<sup>102</sup> They want to be privileged. Jesus, however, is not willing to have anything of this (Lk 9:50).

Jesus then sets out for Jerusalem (Lk 9:51). There is now no turning back. Accompanying him are the disciples – disciples that thus far have shown that they neither have confidence in themselves nor in the mission for which they have been empowered. Jesus’ mission includes being the least, the denying of oneself, the taking up of one’s cross – even if it implies suffering and dying. For the disciples the mission of Jesus is something else. It means power and privilege. As such, they actually have become an

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<sup>102</sup> As a reminder, the first time was when they could not withstand the storm nor understand Jesus when he rebuked the storm (Lk 5:22-25). The second was their inability either to provide food for the crowd of five thousand or to trust that Jesus could provide it (Lk 9:11-17). Now, they are unable to cast out an unclean spirit, when they had been given the power and authority to do so (Lk 9:1).



obstacle to Jesus' mission. Their quest for greatness has betrayed their intention to follow Jesus.

Luke then narrates two events while Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. The first, Jesus' meeting of a few new possible followers (Lk 9:57-62) depicts what his disciples are like, and the second, Jesus' sending out of seventy two of his followers (Lk 10:1-17), depicts what the disciples should be like. Along the way to Jerusalem, Luke tells us, Jesus meets a few new possible followers (Lk 9:57-62). All of them are pictured by Luke as an example of Jesus' disciples. They are willing to follow Jesus, but are they willing to have no place to lay down their heads? (Lk 9:58). They want to follow Jesus, but first want to attend to the needs of their families (Lk 9:59, 61). Disciples like this, according to Jesus, are not fit for the kingdom (Lk 9:62).

Jesus then sends out seventy two others to prepare his way to Jerusalem (Lk 10:1) with the same mission he sent out the Twelve previously<sup>103</sup>. The seventy two are highly successful: without being empowered by Jesus they are even successful in driving out demons. This is how the disciples of Jesus should be.

As they move on, Jesus teaches his disciples on different topics like love for the neighbour (Lk 10:25-37) and hospitality (Lk 10:38-42). Being on the way with Jesus, the disciples seem to have become aware of their deficiency and the need to have confidence in Jesus. Hence, they requested Jesus to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1). As one who has moved with them, Jesus seems to know the limitations of this request. Consequently, he proceeded to instruct them about God's fidelity, his gracious character and on the need to depend on him (Lk 11:1-13). Next in the series of Jesus' teachings to the disciples is a caution against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Lk 12:1), followed by an admonishment concerning material possessions and covetousness (Lk 12:15), and the worries of life (Lk 12:22-34). This exhortation is a repetition of the earlier admonition in Luke 9:3. Jesus urges

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<sup>103</sup> The similarity between this sending and that of the initial sending of the Twelve (Lk 9:1-6) is obvious. Probably motivated by the urgency of the mission, they are urged to travel light (Lk 10:4; cf Lk 9:3). When they enter a town and are welcomed in a house, they must stay there until they leave that specific town (Lk 10:7; cf Lk 9:4). If they are not welcomed in a specific town, they must leave (Lk 10:10-11; cf Lk 9:5). They are further authorised to heal (Lk 10:9; cf Lk 9:2). However, without being empowered – as it was the case with the twelve apostles in the first mission – the seventy two are successful in driving out demons (Lk 10:17).

them to rely on God for providence, and not to set their minds on matters of food and drink (Lk 12:29-30). Reliance on God actually means to keep focus on the kingdom of God (Lk 12:31). They are further instructed on the need to remain vigilant in the face of crisis (Lk 12:35-48), and are reminded again of his impending death (Lk 12:50).

As Jesus moves to Jerusalem, he continues to teach the crowd and his disciples on the consequences of their eagerness to follow (Lk 14:25-33). In order to avoid future regrets, they are advised to evaluate and count the cost. It entails separation from family, vulnerability, sacrifice and self-abnegation (Lk 14: 26-28). In fact, it is a ministry of absolute renunciation (Lk 14:28-33) and total commitment (Lk 14:34-35) for which they are urged to think thoroughly. By using parables, Jesus continues his teaching as he admonishes his disciples on their stewardship towards him (Lk 16:1-13). It is a teaching on faithful service and the right use of present and available opportunities at their disposal.<sup>104</sup> Before turning to the next parable, that has as its topic “a call to dutiful service” (Lk 17:7-10), Jesus warns his disciples against temptation, the risk of yielding to sin, the consequences of luring someone into sin and the need for forgiveness (Lk 17:1-4). This last warning seems to awaken much more awareness in the disciples with regards to their deficiency. Hence, they once more request Jesus to increase their faith (Lk 17:5). Jesus’ response to this demand is an invitation for self-confidence and humility.

The Pharisees’ question on the coming of the kingdom leads Jesus to mention once more the fate that awaits him in Jerusalem. This is a reminder of the fact that the journey to Jerusalem is meant for the fulfilment of scripture to which the disciples have been schooled. In response to the timing of the coming of the kingdom of God, Jesus intimates hope. Even though the kingdom has already come through his presence in their midst, his future

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<sup>104</sup> Many scholars have argued on whether the parable of the shrewd steward is apt for teaching and if Jesus was not by inference asking his disciples to be dishonest. Knight (1998:120) opines that the reason for which the master commended the steward whom he qualifies as “a likeable rogue” is not easy to discern. For Achtemeier, Green and Thompson (2001:169), it is about the use of wealth for the sake of hospitality. Plummer (1977:380) remarks that it is a passage that has received a variety of interpretations. Whatever the case, the importance of this parable should be evaluated on the basis of Jesus’ conclusion in Luke 16:9. In spite of the dishonest and unfaithful attitude of the shrewd steward, he is prudent in using present opportunities as a means to safeguard the future. It is in this sense that Jesus’ use of this parable as a medium of teaching to his disciples should be appreciated.

coming still remains imminent. Hope for the disciples means the assurance that Jesus will return but before that, suffering awaits him (Lk 17:22-25). However, in order not to be surprised on the timing, the disciples are requested to remain patient, persevering, alert, humble and respectful in their petitions to God (Lk 18:1-14).

The disciples, who have shown a steadily increasing degree of cooperation and understanding since Luke 10:25, however, again behave to the contrary when they obstruct children from coming to Jesus (Lk 18:15-17). They seem to have neglected Jesus' admonition to become like children (Lk 9:47-48) and his caution of vigilance against temptation to sin and to avoid being an obstacle to someone's faith (Lk 17:1-4). It is within this context that Jesus discloses for the last time the consequences of his ministry: suffering, scourging, killing and his subsequent resurrection (Lk 18:31-33). In spite of these explanations, the disciples still do not understand Jesus (Lk 18:34).<sup>105</sup>

This misunderstanding continues to grow when Jesus is acclaimed as king as he enters Jerusalem. This reaction of the disciples makes abundantly clear what their understanding of Jesus' identity was all about. He is the political king that will establish an earthly kingdom. Even though the disciples followed him all the way to Jerusalem, they probably did not understand who he was.<sup>106</sup>

In Jerusalem, the disciples seem passive and reticent when Jesus faces fierce opposition from the chief priests, the scribes and the principal men of the people (Lk 19:45-20:8); the spies (Lk 20:20-26); and the Sadducees (Lk

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<sup>105</sup> Paradoxically, a blind man recognises Jesus and is eager to touch him. When he is healed, he becomes a follower (Lk 18:35-43). It is a paradox because the blind man is healed only once and can see immediately. The disciples, however, are taught over and over again, but still cannot "see". They should be like the blind man, but they are not. Although they can see, they are "blind".

<sup>106</sup> Borg (2006:232) remarks that "the meaning of Jesus' mode of entry is amplified by the realization that two processions entered Jerusalem every Passover. The other procession was an imperial one. On or about the same day, the Roman governor Pontius Pilate rode into the city from the opposite side, the west, at the head of a very different kind of procession: imperial Calvary and foot soldiers arriving to reinforce the garrison on the Temple Mount" (Borg 2006:232). This assertion approves of the words of caution from some of the Pharisees, who were also present among the crowd: "Teacher, rebuke your disciples" (Lk 19:39). They were probably aware of the dangers and implications of the praises that were thrown on Jesus by the crowd of his disciples (Lk 19:38). The crowd's acclamation of Jesus as king risked being misinterpreted and misunderstood. This being the case, the Pharisees were certainly right that the crowd ignored the consequences of their emotional attitude. They saw Jesus as an earthly king, that is, as a national hero. In a nutshell, Jesus entered Jerusalem at the time when his identity was still misunderstood, even by his closest followers.

20:27-40). While on Galilean soil, Jesus came to their rescue on a regular basis when they were confronted by the Pharisees and the scribes (see Lk 5:31; 6:3). Now, when Jesus is confronted, they do nothing. In the face of this opposition, Jesus warns them against the scribes' attitude. It is a warning against the quest for public recognition, exploitation and a pretentious attitude (Lk 20:46). The turning point in Jesus' relationship with his disciples begins with Judas' involvement in Jesus' betrayal and subsequent arrest, an attitude which indicates the fact that the disciples might have had ulterior motives for following Jesus. It is also an attitude that puts their loyalty into doubt and amplifies their ignorance. In spite of Judas' attitude, Jesus decides to spend the Passover with the disciples. Peter and John are charged with the preparations (Lk 22:7-13). During supper, Jesus shares bread and wine with the Twelve. During the meal, Jesus declares that his betrayer was among them, at table. This information shockingly spurs the disciples to portray their quest for leadership and lordship (Lk 22:24-26; see also Lk 9:46-48). They seem not to understand the fact that the ministry into which Jesus introduced them is that of service. Practically, Jesus had demonstrated this by serving them during the meal. After rebuking them, Jesus unveils the privileges that await them. They are accorded dominion over the kingdom as a reward for their loyalty to Jesus in his moments of trial (Lk 22:28-30). Jesus also promises to sustain Peter in the course of his tempting moments. In what sounds rhetorical, he also reminds the disciples how sustaining their ministry have been. Now he urges them to be more alert. Once more, their response "Lord, Lord, here are two swords" (Lk 22:38) indicates that they have misunderstood Jesus. Jesus seems to reiterate about the need for spiritual and not physical preparation.

The next turning point in Jesus' relationship with the disciples is Jesus' last moments before the arrest. As he proceeds with them to the Mount of Olives, he invites them to pray against temptation. This request is soon neglected: while Jesus is praying, the disciples fall asleep. Jesus seems disappointed with this attitude (Lk 22:46). Their enthusiasm to learn (Lk 11:1; 17:5) seems to have been an act of lip service. Jesus' admonitions (Lk 17:1-4; 22:40) seem forgotten and/or neglected. In fact, the disciples seem to prove their real attitude during these last moments. Judas effectively leads

Jesus' opponents to arrest him (Lk 22:47). At his arrest, one of the disciples reacts violently by cutting off the ear of the slave of the high priest (Lk 22:49). This clearly indicates that they still see Jesus as an earthly king of an earthly kingdom that has to be defended by the sword. After Jesus' arrest, no disciple dares to follow Jesus through his trial, save Peter, who later renounces him as was predicted (Lk 22:57, 58, 60, see also Lk 22:34). This stands in sharp contrast with a large group of people, including women (Lk 23:27; 24:1) that do not abandon Jesus. They persistently follow Jesus to the crucifixion and later are the ones that go to his tomb (Lk 24:1). When they go to the eleven disciples to tell them that Jesus' tomb was empty, they do not believe them. They also seem to forget what Jesus told them earlier in Luke 9:22, 44 and Luke 18:32-33, namely that he will rise again. Instead, the women's testimony "seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them" (Lk 24:11). Even Peter, who goes to the tomb himself and sees it empty, does not know what to make of what happened (Lk 24:12). Jesus' foretelling of his death and resurrection all seems forgotten. It seems that the disciples have contracted a memory loss. Three times Jesus predicted what would happen (Lk 9:22, 44; 18:32-33), and still they do not understand.

After the resurrection, Jesus accompanies Cleopas and one of the disciples; yet they cannot recognise him.<sup>107</sup> They manifest their "foolishness" and disbelief (see Lk 24:25) to the full by recounting the experience of the women at the tomb. It is only when Jesus reintroduces himself in word and meal that the two are able to recognise him.

Jesus' relationship with the disciples during these last and trying moments of his ministry seems ambiguous. In Galilee they accepted the invitation to follow Jesus. But at the most crucial moments they deserted him. Their attitude during these last moments proves that, although they (at certain times), showed signs of understanding, they have not been convinced by Jesus. Although they travelled with him, they did not really have confidence in his person, let alone his teachings. This is probably why their attention

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<sup>107</sup> This stands in sharp contrast with the women disciples who followed Jesus all the way from Galilee up till his crucifixion. They have heeded to the advice from the two men they met in the tomb; they have actually remembered what Jesus said about his death and resurrection. By contrast, the male disciples seem to be unable to remember anything. They continue to show their ignorance in Jesus' life and person.

remains divided between what Jesus said and what they thought had manifested.

Luke's narrative ends when Jesus meets his disciples for the last time (Lk 24:36-53). Although they are full of joy seeing Jesus again, it seems that they still do not understand what actually has taken place. Jesus therefore again has to explain to them who he is and what his mission entailed. Clearly they are slow to understand, and quick to abandon Jesus. But Jesus still has confidence in them. He therefore sends them out once again. Their responsibility is to proceed to all nations, preaching about repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Lk 24:47-48). They then return to Jerusalem, praising God for what has happened. In the end, it seems, they do understand who Jesus was and what he set out to accomplish.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion**

The relationship between Jesus and the disciples is that of ambiguity. From Jesus' perspective, it is a relationship of growing confidence, perseverance, consistency and the quest for continuity. For the disciples, it is a relationship characterised by mistrust, uncertainty, misunderstanding and growing faith. In the beginning when Jesus called the first disciples, they seemed enthusiastic and followed him immediately. Quite often this enthusiasm still resurfaces in some of their requests: the request to be taught how to pray (Lk 11:1) and the request for Jesus to increase their faith (Lk 17:5). However, it appears that this enthusiasm was either wrongly motivated in the sense that it went contrary to what Jesus expected of them, or it arose out of instinct or mere anxiety. For instance, when Jesus talked about his death, they seemed to have understood him in terms of the benefit that they will reap therefrom (Lk 9:46-48; 22:24-30). When he talked about his coming kingdom, they became anxious in knowing the calendar of events (Lk 21:7). It was probably time for them to become "great". After having been with Jesus as his chosen followers they were probably sure to occupy positions of greatness. James and John further wished to show their loyalty and readiness to defend Jesus by suggesting a violent solution when the Samaritans resisted Jesus from going through their village. Unfortunately, this was not a solution that fitted Jesus' teaching (Lk 9:50). Children who were brought to see Jesus were immediately

barred from seeing him (Lk 18:15). At Jesus' arrest, one of the disciples wished to continuously defend Jesus. Hence, he cut off the ear of the high priest's slave (Lk 22:50).

These reactions from the disciples indicate that they seemed to have understood Jesus the wrong way. This resulted from the fact that they had probably fashioned their understanding of Jesus according to their own motives. They seem to have misinterpreted the relationship between the person of Jesus and his mission. This probably explains their ambiguous attitude towards Jesus and their reaction to his activities. By not asking Jesus for clarification when they ought to, shows that they probably interpreted and understood him their own way (Lk 9: 45; 18:34).<sup>108</sup>

In other words, their wrong appreciation of Jesus probably led them to lose confidence, either in themselves or in Jesus. Jesus performed many miracles in their presence and gave several testimonies in word and in action. He empowered them with the same authority that he had. Yet, they either misused these powers (violence and quest for leadership) or they lacked confidence in making use of them (Lk 9:13, 40). They even showed a lack of trust in Jesus when they felt frightened by the storm (Lk 8:24). When he entered Jerusalem their misunderstanding of his person becomes influenced with their knowledge of earthly kinship. Hence, Jesus is acclaimed as king (Lk 19:37-38). This lack of confidence, coupled with the fact that their expectations were not becoming real influenced their attitude at the end when they abandoned Jesus. He seemed to have presented an agenda that did not meet with their motives.

In spite of this attitude, Jesus' response is consistent. He probably wanted the disciples to identify him and the nature of his mission *via* his deeds and teachings. When they seemed not to understand, he rebuked, but later continued to teach them. Jesus did not give up in his relationship with the disciples; he kept on fashioning them in accordance with the motives of his mission. After the disciples' first missionary expedition (Lk 9:2-6), followed with

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<sup>108</sup> Any misinterpretation is an interpretation which goes contrary to an expected interpretation. It could simply sound like a misunderstanding from the perspective of the one who claims the right interpretation. If not, it is an interpretation based on the understanding of the person involved in the exercise. Consequently, Luke's judgment of the disciples' inability to understand could be the right approach of what was expected of them. This simply implies that the disciples understood and interpreted Jesus their own way, following their motives.

the impression that they still had not understood Jesus (Lk 9:13, 40), he organised a new mission, in the likeness of the first (Lk 10:1-12). Notwithstanding the flaws that ensued (e.g., misinterpretations, betrayal, abandonment and disbelief), they are the first persons whom Jesus sought to meet after his resurrection. Once more, he renewed his confidence in them by entrusting the rest of what he did into their care (Lk 24:44-49).

The consistency in Jesus' attitude thus resulted in the disciples finally understanding who Jesus is. This is also clear from the story line of Luke's gospel. Emplotted in Luke's narrative, the disciples will be mishandled by the rulers and the synagogue authorities (Lk 12:11-12). They will also be arrested, persecuted, delivered up in the synagogues and prisons and be brought before kings and governors, because of their mission (Lk 21:12). Although not described in the story line of Luke's gospel, this is clear when Luke's plotted time is taken into consideration. If one, at this instance, takes Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, into consideration, it is clear that what is suggested in Luke 12:11-12 and 21:12 takes place in Luke's second volume. This is a further indication that Jesus' consistency in responding to ignorance by teaching and rejection by acceptance seem to have succeeded in the lives and mission of the disciples. As witnesses they finally understood who Jesus was and what the relationship is between his person and his mission. It is in this vein that the disciples' mission is that of continuity, with all that it entails.

### **5.3 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JEWISH ELITE**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

The Jewish elite seem to be Jesus' main opponents in Luke's gospel. The relationship between Jesus and this character group is based on their understanding of who Jesus is. This becomes clear from their interaction with Jesus, Jesus' teaching and deeds, Jesus' appreciation of established Jewish institutions and the attitude of Jesus' disciples.

The main Jewish elite or leaders with whom Jesus interacts in Luke's gospel are the Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, chief priests, elders and lawyers. The relationship between Jesus and the members of this character group is to be understood in terms of the above mentioned groups and in



terms of these group's alliances.<sup>109</sup> Their common feature is that they all opposed and rejected Jesus. Even though it seems that they understood who Jesus was, they refused to validate his activities and recognise his person. Consequently, they found fault in almost all his activities. They mounted and multiplied varied opportunities that led them to misinterpret Jesus' actions. As a result, they mar Jesus, discredit him and denigrate his personality. Finally, he is declared a *persona non grata* and crucified.

### 5.3.2 Brief definitions

The Jewish elite in Luke's gospel is not a homogenous group. It consists of a system of smaller units, whose definition will add clarity to the understanding of its relationship with Jesus as a distinct character group in Luke's gospel. The name Pharisees originates from the Aramaic root which means "separated" or "distinguished" ones. Historically, they stood for an uncompromising observance of their interpretation of the Mosaic Law and thus separated themselves from those who took a moderate approach towards its understanding and application.<sup>110</sup> The Greek word for scribe, *grammateu&v* is derived from the word *gramma* which means something drawn, that is, written letters. It is a term that designates a skill and occupation with varied roles and statutes. Scribes formed a literate group in matters of the Jewish law and custom. This probably justifies why they are often described in Luke in terms of their relationship with other groups like the Pharisees, Sadducees and the chief priests. Regarding the latter, they are

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<sup>109</sup> Powell (1990:93) observes that the relationship between Jesus and the religious leaders is a much neglected topic in Lukan scholarship. This neglect is partly due to the fact that some of the leaders (e.g., the lawyers and rulers) sometimes form coalitions with the Jewish elite that make their identification and their relationship with Jesus difficult and complicated. This study omits the relationship with individual religious leaders such as Joseph of Arimathea (Lk 23:50-53), and concentrates on constituted groups.

<sup>110</sup> The Pharisees stood against the Sadducees because they accepted and endorsed the use of oral tradition in order to strengthen the law. They often turned to the scribes for guidance in applying the law to everyday life. This justifies the fact that, quite often in Luke, they associate with the scribes and not with the Sadducees. Cassidy (1978:122) observes that a great number of scribes were Pharisees. They cooperated with Roman rule and did not see any inherent conflict between Roman taxation and their administration of public order, on the one hand, and their allegiance to the law, on the other hand. They were strong supporters of the synagogue and were the custodians of Jewish tradition and custom. Saldarini (1988:178) also notes that some Pharisees were members of the Galilean governing class (Saldarini 1988:178). Hence, Jesus' relationship with the people became a threat to their position.

especially involved in judicial proceedings. They also seem to have been agents of the temple government, a position which probably gave them power and influence.<sup>111</sup>

Cassidy (1978:116) notes that the original meaning of the term Sadducees is obscure, as well as their history (see Saldarini 1988:302). What we do know is that they stood in contrast with the Pharisees on matters related to the interpretation of the law. They rejected the oral tradition adopted by the Pharisees, as well as the notion of the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees' party was mainly made up of the chief priests, followed by the nobles and some leading men of the society. From Leviticus, the priests had a variety of roles to perform as religious leaders. Temple priests, for example, were responsible for examining persons suspected of uncleanness (Lev 13:6, 10, see Lk 5:14; 17:14). They owned the prerequisite to declare people "clean" (Lev 13:6, 13, 17) or "unclean" (Lev 13:8, 14-15). They also processed people by means of appropriate public sacrifices and offerings to certify their cleanness (Lev 14:10-20).<sup>112</sup> As custodians of the temple, they worked in collaboration with the elders.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Saldarini (1988:155) observes that literate groups like the scribes were often used by governing authorities as advisors, high officials, bureaucrats, judges, teachers and low level functionaries.

<sup>112</sup> According to Malina & Neyrey (1991a:114) the task of the priests in Luke's gospel is to assemble and create a selective reading of Jesus' history to illustrate their claims that he is and always will be a deviant.

<sup>113</sup> In Luke's gospel, there are several character groups that are mentioned alongside the chief priests. These character groups are "the principal men of the people" (Lk 19:47), "the officers of the temple" (Lk 22:52), "the scribes" (Lk 22:66), "the elders" (Lk 22:52) and "the rulers" (Lk 23:13). The understanding of Jesus' relationship with the chief priests begins with the understanding of the relationship between the chief priests and each of these groups. It is clear from the group that led Jesus to the Jewish council that the elders and the scribes were partners to the chief priests (Lk 22:66). The first group of religious leaders that opposed him in the temple were the chief priests, the scribes and the principal men of the people, who probably were the elders (Lk 19:47; see Lk 20:1). At Jesus' arrest, he addressed the chief priests, the officers of the temple and the elders (Lk 22:52). By inference from the group that will later lead Jesus to the council, the officers of the temple are the scribes. Once more, Pilate invites the chief priests, the rulers and the people for consultation (Lk 23:13). It is evident from the above that the rulers referred to are the elders and the scribes. It follows from this analysis that "the principal men of the people", "the officers of the temple", "the scribes", "the elders" and "the rulers" appear as independent groups. The variety in nomenclature demonstrates Luke's knowledge of the Jewish religious system. Consequently, the principal ally group that opposed Jesus in Jerusalem was the chief priests, the elders and the scribes. They all functioned as a team.

### 5.3.3 Jesus and the Jewish elite

The first encounter between Jesus and the Jewish leaders takes place between the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. This comes within the context of healing when Jesus pronounces the forgiveness of sins to a paralytic (Lk 5:17-26). The Pharisees, in the company of the teachers of the law, “had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem” (Lk 5:17, my emphasis). Two possible reasons could have motivated their presence. Jesus’ fame might have aroused their curiosity (Lk 4:14, 37, 40; Lk 5:15) or reports about his sayings (Lk 4:18-30) and his activities (Lk 4:4:31-36; 38-41; 5:1-11; 12-13) might have caught their attention. They probably therefore came so as to bear witness to what they might have heard. In their presence, a paralysed man is lowered down from the roof. The massive turnout of the crowd was a hindrance in getting easy access to Jesus. Jesus’ immediate reaction to these efforts was the declaration of the forgiveness of sins to the paralytic.

This action of Jesus enrages the Pharisees and the scribes. Even though they do not address Jesus directly, they begin to ponder on who Jesus is to have forgiven sins (Lk 5:21). According to them Jesus is usurping God’s prerogative. Jesus immediately perceives their intention. Clearly they are not only concerned with who Jesus is, but especially interested in the authority he claims (Lk 5:25). He further challenges them by granting healing to the paralytic. In contrast to their reaction the crowd that had gathered acknowledge Jesus’ action as they went home amazed while glorifying God. Left with anger and fury, the Pharisees and scribes are later present in Levi’s house where Jesus shares a meal. Jesus’ first disciples and Levi (who has just been called) are part of this meal. The Pharisees and scribes again are angry, pondering over who Jesus is and what the source of his authority is. They especially murmur because of Jesus’ choice of followers. Because they murmur against the disciples, it can be seen as an indirect attack on Jesus. His disciples are incredible; they are described as “tax collectors and sinners” (Lk 5:30). Jesus once more perceives their intention. His response confirms that his company with “tax collectors and sinners” is adequate. Now the Pharisees and scribes decide to face Jesus directly. They observe that his disciples do not fast and pray as John’s disciples do (Lk 5:33). Unlike the first

charge against the disciples, this is an observation. Jesus then justifies his disciples' attitude with a parable that explains their actions. On the Sabbath, the Pharisees multiply the charges against Jesus' disciples. They are accused of plucking and eating heads of grain and rubbing them in their hands (Lk 6:1). Once more, Jesus is not attacked directly. Yet, he still proves his disciples right.

So far, the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders seems to evolve from the question of who Jesus is to that of his choice of followers and his interpretation of religious observance. It would therefore appear that from their first contact they might have had a glimpse of who Jesus was. Consequently, they decide to judge him while ignoring him (Lk 5:30) and raise complementary observations (Lk 5:33), rather than accusing him. Jesus' defence of his disciples also seems to show that his opponents misinterpret religious observance and the Sabbath law. There also seems to be a problem with the credibility of Jesus' disciples which also puts into doubt his own credibility. He does not only mingle with a "wrong" company, but worse of all, he is followed by incompetent and ignorant persons. It also seems to be an attempt to ridicule Jesus' personality as opposed to theirs and that of John the Baptist (Lk 5:33). This initial contact outlines a relationship of contempt, suspicion and jealousy.

With this picture in mind, they seem determined to disprove Jesus to the end. Hence, on a following Sabbath, while Jesus was teaching, a man with a withered hand is present (Lk 6:6). The scribes and the Pharisees are keen to see whether Jesus would perform healing. From previous knowledge, they seem to presume that Jesus would heal. Consequently, they watch him, but do not speak (Lk 6:7). Jesus once more perceives their thoughts. Rhetorically, he justifies the purpose of his Sabbath activities; they are meant to save life (Lk 6:9). As Jesus effectively heals the man, their fury leads them, for the first time, to embark on a discussion on what to do with Jesus (Lk 6:11). Jesus is a threat who must be dealt with. Jesus, however, describes their reaction towards him as a rejection of God's purpose for themselves (Lk 7:30).

In the next micro narrative (Lk 7:36-50), a Pharisee confirms that the religious leaders indeed have a glimpse of who Jesus is. Hence, he invites Jesus for a meal (Lk 7:36-50). Their criticism of Jesus' disciples (and Levi in

particular) during the first meal seems to influence the Pharisee's invitation. This second meal seems a counter to that of Levi. The Pharisee has masterminded Levi's meal, which was even attended by sinners. Unfortunately, the scenario of this other meal is not different. The Pharisee soon becomes crushed with the presence of a woman (another sinner; Lk 7:37), who interrupts the serenity of the meal. Coming into Simon's house, she weeps, wets Jesus' feet with her tears and anoints them. Simon's inner feeling is sarcastic: "if this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Lk 7:39). Accordingly, Jesus again is accused for dealing with a sinner, who is a woman. Still, without being addressed, Jesus responds to Simon's thought. His response confirms that he is indeed a prophet. Another clue to Jesus' identity is added to the Pharisee's knowledge. Beyond what they know him to be, he is a prophet. Jesus then once more strengthens his teaching on the forgiveness of sins, which he offers. He commends the woman's act of courtesy because she offered what his host did not. On the account of her faith, she is saved. Even though these words of forgiveness of sins do not attract another accusation of blasphemy (see Lk 5:21) from the Pharisee, those at table wonder: "who is this, who even forgives sins?" (Lk 7:49). Apparently, Simon does not raise the question, because he already knows who Jesus is.

Simon's criticism of Jesus seems to be based on five counts: 1) Jesus has come in contact with a woman, 2) Jesus has once more associated himself with a sinner, 3) Jesus has again declared the forgiveness of sins, 4) Jesus saves a woman, who is a "sinner" and 5) Jesus is clearly not on their side. So far, the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees appears to be that which is marred with misinterpretations. It is the misinterpretation of what Jesus does, of what his followers are doing and a misinterpretation of his social relationships. The meal ends with the impression that Jesus cannot be appropriated by the religious leaders as Simon would have expected. This actually confirms that he did not come (exclusively) for them, the righteous (Lk 5:32).

As Jesus returns from the region of the Gerasenes, where he had performed an exorcism, the crowd receives him with joy. Jaïrus, a ruler of the

synagogue is probably convinced by what Jesus is doing. Consequently, he falls at Jesus' feet and invites him to his home because his daughter was dying (Lk 8:41-42). Although he is the ruler of the synagogue, he recognises that Jesus is doing what he cannot do. Jesus honours his invitation, but is delayed by a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years (Lk 8:43-48). Jesus arrives when Jairo's daughter is dead. Jesus restores her and gives her back to her parents. Although the ruler of the synagogue seems to have an additional knowledge of who Jesus is, he is told not to disclose his experience. Jesus might have sensed that he could once more be misinterpreted. The consciousness of such misinterpretation probably inspires Jesus to engage in a conversation with his disciples. The conversation is essentially centred on who Jesus is and what this identity entails. During this dialogue, Jesus is identified by Peter as the Christ of God. Taking the cue from Peter, Jesus seems to associate the meaning of his person to the tense atmosphere that already existed between him and the religious leaders. According to Jesus' explanation, there is a tied relationship between his person, his mission and the consequences of the misunderstanding of the relationship between the two. He directly indicates that the elders, the chief priests and the scribes will eventually take the issue of his person and work as a personal challenge. These will reject him and cause him to be killed. Jesus therefore overtly predicts and explains that his mission will be that of conflict between himself and the religious leaders. Although this may culminate in his death, Jesus predicts that his death will not mean the end of the conflict, because he will be brought back to life.

At this point, fury had been nursed by the scribes and the Pharisees and plans were on the way as to what to do (Lk 6:11). Their first solution seems to be a test on Jesus' teaching. Hence, a lawyer tests Jesus on how to inherit eternal life (Lk 10:25), most probably expecting Jesus to validate his application of the law, as well as his self-acclaimed righteous attitude, referred to earlier by Jesus (Lk 5:32; see also Lk 7:41-46). Jesus uses this opportunity to challenge him on their application of the law, which is "inward" looking. At the end of their encounter, Jesus widens the lawyer's view of the law and requests him to emulate this point of view (Lk 10:37). Jesus' new lesson to the lawyer consists of seeing both Jews and non-Jews (Samaritans) alike as

neighbours. The lawyer, as the ruler of the synagogue, seems to have learnt more about Jesus.

While the lawyer fails in his plan on what to do, another Pharisee invites Jesus again for another dinner (Lk 11:37). It is probable that the Pharisees are not satisfied with the setting of the second meal (disrupted by a sinful woman). There is therefore need for correction, because Jesus is not yet on their side. Hostility soon begins when Jesus' host criticises him for eating without washing his hands. Jesus counteracts this criticism with a series of observations of who the Pharisees actually are. Although they expect external ritual purity they are themselves filthy within (extortion and wickedness). Jesus accuses them of injustice, segregation and the seeking of public admiration and recognition (Lk 11:39-44, see also Lk 18:9-14). This is Jesus' first outspoken public criticism of the Pharisees. The meal has once more turned into a disappointment for the Pharisees. The lawyers (who were apparently present at the meal) are given the same criticism (Lk 11:46-52). As a direct consequence, the Pharisees and the scribes resolve to provoke him and to lay in ambush waiting for him (Lk 11:53-54). However, in the next micro narrative, Jesus uses the Pharisees' attitude as a topic of teaching to his disciples. They are hypocrites (Lk 12:1). This is a conclusion based on their earlier interactions. Twice he has honoured their invitation to meals (Lk 7:36-50; 11:37; see also Lk 14:1). But these seemed to have become opportunities for suspicion, opposition and rejection. Jesus has recognised this intention behind their invitations. The invitations were not acts of hospitality. They were occasions to show off and lure Jesus to their side. As such, the meals were a distraction to Jesus' mission.

The next event in the narrative takes Jesus into the synagogue where he heals a woman who has been bent for eighteen years (Lk 13:10-13). This causes the ruler of the synagogue to be indignant. Yet, without addressing Jesus directly, he complains to the crowd (Lk 13:14). Jesus immediately responds to this accusation in which he associates the ruler with the Pharisees. They are both hypocrites (Lk 13:15). The ruler is hypocritical because Jesus has brought back to life the daughter of another ruler of a synagogue (Lk 8:55). This ruler of a synagogue (probably different from Jaïrus), however, stands against Jesus' activities. In what sounds like a

judgment, the crowd then reflects on Jesus' criticism. They appreciate what Jesus is doing, while his adversaries are put to shame. The hypocritical character of the Pharisees is soon confirmed when they inform Jesus about Herod's threats. They wish to protect Jesus, while at the same time, they want to trap him. Jesus' response shows no sign of regret to what he is doing. Instead, it indicates his intention not to divert from what he is doing (Lk 13:31-33).<sup>114</sup> The Pharisees, however, seem to be astute in the use of distracting mechanisms in order to deter Jesus from his mission.

Although the first two meals Jesus was invited to by Pharisees ended in conflict, in Luke 14:1-6 Jesus again accepts an invitation to a third meal at the house of the ruler of the Pharisee's (Lk 14:1-6). This is probably an opportunity for the ruler to correct the mishaps of the first two meals (offered by ordinary Pharisees). The same scenario (as the previous ones) is however repeated. There is a man present who has dropsy (Lk 14:2), and the Pharisees are keen to see what will happen. In a rhetorical way, Jesus lures them to understand why it is necessary for him to heal even on the Sabbath. While the Pharisees and the lawyers (present at the meal) do not respond to him, he illustrates his argument with a parable (Lk 14:15-24). It is once more a challenge to his host (as was the case at the first meal), who did not extend his invitation beyond family members, friends and people of social repute. Jesus' teaching concurs with that which he had earlier administered to the lawyer on the question of neighbourliness (Lk 10:37). Jesus is interested in a change of attitude and in the manner in which religious leaders (in particular the Pharisees and the lawyers), see and appreciate others.

Clearly, Jesus does not seem to succeed in persuading his adversaries through his teachings. Instead, while tax collectors and sinners eat with him, the Pharisees and the scribes murmur. As before, Jesus dispels their murmur with three parables that explain his attitude (Lk 15:4-32). These parables, misunderstood by the Pharisees, focus on their thirst for material possessions (Lk 16:1-13). Beyond being hypocrites, they are also qualified as "lovers of money" (Lk 16:14). Jesus' further teaching on the coming kingdom triggers

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<sup>114</sup> As mentioned already (see footnote 106), the Pharisees' caution to Jesus means that although they seem not to have mingled with politics, they were aware of the political activities of the city.



them to inquire about its coming (Lk 17:20). Although they do not agree with Jesus, they seem to be interested in knowing more. This anxiety does not seem unrelated to the fixed knowledge they have nursed about Jesus (see their concern for Jesus' security against Herod's threats).<sup>115</sup> Jesus' teaching might have touched on an area which they expected him to address. Jesus probably understood the misinterpretation which transpired in their question. Hence, he answers them accordingly: "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk 17:21).<sup>116</sup> This conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees gives Jesus another opportunity to once more warn his disciples against the Pharisees. He uses the context of a parable to indicate in what way the Pharisees seem to adopt a judgmental attitude of self-acclaimed righteousness (Lk 18:9-14).

Jesus' last contact with the Pharisees is when he enters Jerusalem. In this narrative, Jesus' disciples acclaim him as king. The Pharisees, on their turn, urge Jesus to caution them (Lk 19:39). As was the case in Galilee, they fear that the proclamation of Jesus as king would probably attract enmity (similar to the threats of Herod) between Jesus and Pilate in Jerusalem. Jesus' response shows no appreciation. He knows the direction of their thoughts; hence he answers: "if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Lk 19:41)

After this dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees, the Pharisees disappear from the scene.<sup>117</sup> They have shown a certain degree of understanding of who Jesus is. They, however, seem to have identified him

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<sup>115</sup> The understanding of the Pharisees' quest in this section is best illustrated by their eagerness to inform Jesus about Herod's threats of death. This eagerness will later be enhanced by their intimation for Jesus to keep his disciples quiet in Luke 19:39.

<sup>116</sup> Jesus' answer seems enigmatic (Saldarini 1988:180). This verse has not gained unanimity among New Testament scholars in terms of its interpretation. The difficulty stems from the interpretation of the expression *en to v u(mw~n*. If *en to v u(mw~n* is understood as "in your midst", it refers to Jesus' presence among them. On the contrary, if it means "within you", it refers to God's kingdom being situated in their hearts. The latter, according to Saldarini (1988:123) relates to an ethical interpretation of what Jesus meant. However, the former meaning sounds more probable. In the next verses Jesus refers to visible indications such as lightning, light and sky, meaning that he referred to the kingdom of God in terms of his visible presence among them, which they are unable to identify.

<sup>117</sup> Saldarini (1988:178) opines that the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees in Galilee was centred on who is in control of the Galilean society. This argument seems correct because the Pharisees not only show mastery of the Jewish law; they also show through their interaction with Jesus that they are in control of the society. They controlled Jesus' movement and activities within Galilee, and as he moved to Jerusalem. This brings to question their knowledge and understanding of Jesus' identity and activities.

with wrong motives. Their information about Herod's threats and their caution against the disciples' acclamation of Jesus as king seem to infer a wrong misinterpretation of Jesus' identity and his mission. Although they opposed him, they did not really dare to face him directly. They seem to have understood him as an important personality. Hence, the invitations to meals were probably meant to consolidate ties between Jesus and themselves. Unfortunately, nothing went as planned. Jesus is more attracted by those whom they neglect. They probably wished to have Jesus focus attention on them. Unfortunately, Jesus' attention is focused on his mission, as prescribed in Luke 4:18-19. Jesus might not have encountered as many problems with them if he had accepted to take sides and associate with them. Consequently, even though the Pharisees and the scribes seem to know Jesus thus far, they misinterpret his mission. They seem to make a wrong appreciation between Jesus' person and his mission; hence, the disagreement.

With their disappearance from the scene, the scribes now form a new alliance with the chief priests and the elders (Lk 19:47). When Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, he proceeds directly to the temple, where he drives out those who were selling (Lk 19:45). Jesus' attitude clearly affects this new alliance. Beyond chasing people from the temple, Jesus also teaches daily. Their first reaction is a search to destroy him, but they fear the people who are fascinated by Jesus' words (Lk 19:47-48). However, they soon grow in courage and directly face Jesus for the first time. So far, Jesus has been attacked either by way of inner thoughts (Lk 5:21; 6:7; 7:39), grumbling (Lk 5:30), courtesy his disciples (Lk 5:33; 6:1-2) or through a report to the crowd (Lk 13:14). Now, Jesus is faced directly. Their attack is again on who Jesus is and on the source of his authority (Lk 20:1-3). Their questions elucidate on the reasons for the opposition that exists between Jesus and his adversaries. Jesus is not only teaching in public; he heals on the Sabbath and seems to defy the temple. Their questions also touch on prerogatives. Jesus does not have the right to do what he is doing. Jesus' response to them is a counter question on the source of John's baptism. This question of Jesus catches them in their own trap; hence they discuss their response as a team. As a result they declare their ignorance to Jesus' question, which seems to have provoked them to discover that their attack was baseless. In Jesus' question they have a response to their questions. In the parable of the vineyard and the

tenants, Jesus brings the scribes, the elders and the chief priests to rage by criticising them publicly (Lk 20:9-18). In spite of their wish to arrest Jesus, they are, however, still obstructed by the huge presence of people (Lk 20:19, 26; 22:2).

Because of this obstruction, the alliance decides to connive with spies against Jesus (Lk 20:20). The spies' strategy to lure Jesus to error begins with flattering words in which Jesus is acknowledged as "teacher" (Lk 20:21). They test Jesus on the validity of paying taxes. Although Jesus defeats their intention, they still want to have him arrested, but cannot because of the presence of the people (Lk 20:26). The unanimity of the religious leaders' antagonism against Jesus is completed with the introduction of the Sadducees in Luke 20:27-40. They also come to test Jesus (with flattering words) on the content of his teaching. Their test of Jesus is based on the notion of the resurrection, in which they do not believe (Lk 20:27). Rather than providing a straightforward answer (as they might have expected), Jesus responds with an elaborate teaching on the whole notion of the resurrection. This answer defeats their aim. Some of the scribes, however, seem to consider Jesus' response as satisfactory (Lk 20:39). Hence, the Sadducees disappear from the scene and dare not ask Jesus any further questions (Lk 20:40). In spite of the apparent appreciation from the scribes, Jesus then goes on to warn the disciples against their example (Lk 20:46-47). Like the Pharisees, they seek social and public prominence and are economically oppressive. They exploit, rather than defend and protect, the widows.

Another alliance is formed when the scribes, the chief priests and the elders connive with Judas to betray Jesus (Lk 22:47-53). This seems to be an easy breakthrough since Judas (an apostle) later leads the crowd (some of whom had been a hindrance to Jesus' arrest), to arrest Jesus. The Jewish leaders' plans to get Jesus arrested have materialised. Jesus is seized and taken first to the priest's house and later appears in front of the Jewish council where they proceed with a trial conducted by themselves (Lk 22:66-71).<sup>118</sup> The judgment in the council is paradoxical because it takes the form of an inquisition about Jesus' identity. Jesus is judged on the basis of the claim of

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<sup>118</sup> Luke's account in Acts 5:34-39 seems to imply that the Pharisees were present in the high priest's house. This sounds tendentious, since in terms of practice the Pharisees did not agree with the priestly class and their allies, the Sadducees, who quite often influenced most of the council's decisions.

messiahship (Lk 22:67; see Lk 9:20) and on the basis of his relationship with God (Lk 22:70; see Lk 9:22). As a result, they pass Jesus over to the council of Pilate.

During Jesus' Roman trial, the Jewish leaders press hard on their charges. The initial charges that they had hitherto raised against Jesus in their council (Lk 22:67-70) are transformed and interpreted politically. In what sounds like new charges, Jesus is accused of perverting the nation, forbidding the paying of taxes and declaring himself king of the Jews (Lk 23:2-3). Realising that Pilate was rather interested in the third charge, they strengthen their accusation with more emphasis. Jesus is accused of stirring up the people; for teaching throughout all Judea; starting from Galilee and ending in Jerusalem (Lk 23:5).<sup>119</sup> This last charge inspires Pilate to refer Jesus to Herod. While with Herod, Jesus' accusers stand vehemently against him. Herod, however, finds himself incompetent to judge Jesus. Consequently, Jesus is brought back to Pilate. When Pilate calls together the chief priests, the rulers and the people in order to declare Jesus' innocence, they jointly respond: "away with this man" (Lk 23:18). The multitude also shout for the crucifixion of Jesus (Lk 23:21-24). Because of this unanimous front against Jesus, Jesus is delivered up to be crucified (Lk 23:25), and led away for execution. Jesus' predictions on the elders, chief priests and scribes (Lk 9:22; 19:44; 17:25; 18:32-33) have been fulfilled. After Jesus' crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea (a member of the council that pressed charges against Jesus), receives permission from Pilate to bury Jesus (Lk 23:50-52). By giving Jesus a decent burial (Lk 23:53), Joseph seems to dissociate himself from the religious leaders' opinion about Jesus and join the centurion in his remark that Jesus was *δικαιος*.

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<sup>119</sup> Three verbs describe the charge against Jesus: *diastre&fw* (Lk 23:2), *alpostre&fw* (Lk 23:14) and *al'nase&iw* (Lk 23:5). The first two verbs mean mislead, lead away or divert. Jesus is accused of misleading "the people" through his teaching and attitude. He eats and associates with sinners and tax collectors and defies the Sabbath. Through his usurped identity as Messiah and King, he misleads "the people", by drawing them to himself. The third verb means to arouse, incite or stir up. Through Jesus' authoritative teaching and empowerment, he stirs "people" against the religious and political authorities. From the perspective of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, these accusations should be understood in relation to their understanding, interpretation and application of the Shema (Israel's confession of faith): "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4; 11:13-31, see also Num 15:37-41).

### 5.3.4 Conclusion

The relationship between Jesus and the Jewish elite is ambiguous and inconsistent. It depicts the tension that arose between two systems. In Galilee Jesus is challenged because of his social and religious activities. In Jerusalem, the Jewish elite interpret these activities politically.<sup>120</sup> Clearly speaking, Jesus' activities, his teaching, his social relationships, the attitude of his followers and the question surrounding his person and the source of his authority are the building bricks of the Jewish elite's relationship with Jesus. The Jewish elite indeed have a glimpse of who Jesus is. Unfortunately, his actions are in dissonance with their expectations. He constantly reveals his identity through the forgiveness of sins (Lk 5:21; 7:48); by identifying with a woman's touch (Lk 7:40); by healing and raising up the dead (Lk 8:41) and through his teachings (Lk 10:37). He is recognised as "teacher" by the Sadducees (Lk 20:28) and the scribes (Lk 20:39). Yet, no one seems to validate his activities and recognise his public worth.

While they see Jesus as a rival to political leaders like Herod (Lk 13:31) and Pilate (Lk 19:39; 23:1-2), they essentially consider him as a religious opponent (their own opponent). Jesus alters religious observances with respect to praying, fasting, washing before meals (Lk 5:33; 11:38) and the Sabbath law (Lk 6:1, 10; 13:12; 14:4). He also defies and challenges religious authorities (Lk 11:42-47; 12:1; 19:45-48; 20:46). Because of their perception of these actions, the Jewish leaders misunderstand the implication of Jesus' person. He stood as an incarnation of his mission. Hence several times, they lure him in order to divert his attention from his focus. They might have legitimated Jesus' person if he did not preach for a change of order (e.g., their attitude towards material possessions and the teaching on neighbourliness) or mingled with the category of people whom they despised. They also would have validated and recognised Jesus, if he recognised them as leaders and identified with them.

In summary, the relationship between Jesus and the religious leaders is that of suspicion, contempt, pretence, malice, deceit and rejection. Even

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<sup>120</sup> This blend between religion and politics relates to the fact that in Jewish Palestinian society religion was embedded in the political and social fabric of the community. Hence, involvement with religion was in itself a political and social involvement as well.

though they are unable to get rid of Jesus, they use spies and his collaborators. From Jesus' trial, the titles with which he is addressed are used as a source of provocation against him and an offence towards the political and religious systems. In spite of this tension, Jesus is not hostile. With regard to the Pharisees he wants them to change their attitude.<sup>121</sup> They are not mentioned as part of the group that will cause Jesus' rejection. This attitude of Jesus can also be detected right through his arrest and trials. Some religious leaders also stand distinct in their attitude towards Jesus such as Simeon (Lk 2:25-35) and Joseph of Arimathea (Lk 23:50-54). This indicates that Jesus does not seem to stand against the Jewish leaders as such. Rather, he stands against individuals who misuse these systems in order to misrepresent God for their own benefit (Lk 7:30). Notwithstanding, Jesus is a threat to the integrity and the authority of the religious leaders as a whole. He pulls crowds to himself rather than assist the religious leaders in their quest of public recognition. Consequently, he is fit for rejection.

## 5.4 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ROMAN ELITE<sup>122</sup>

### 5.4.1 Introduction

Two main issues seem to characterise the political context of Luke's gospel. Firstly, the gospel is introduced within the context of Roman rule. For instance, the angel's announcement to Mary is about the coming of Jesus,

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<sup>121</sup> The behaviour of the Pharisees seems not to have been commensurate with their status. Franklin (1994:196-197) agrees with Jesus' frustration that: "Luke sees the Pharisees, not as representatives of any contemporary group – though there was no doubt Pharisaic activity in his time – but as figures primarily from the past, as representatives of that group who by their pithy, their zeal, their covenantal seriousness, and their response to Israel's election should have been those *who* would have been expected to respond to Jesus to see the Law and prophecy taken up and fulfilled in him. The tragedy is that they had not, that though they had a natural affinity with Jesus and with the proclamation about him, they had been unable to take on board the newness within the continuity that the coming of Jesus means" (Franklin 1994:196-197).

<sup>122</sup> According to Carter (2006:3) the texts of the New Testament are *inter alia* products of a world dominated by the Roman Empire. At the time of Jesus, that is, from about 6 AD onward, Judea was ruled directly by Pilate, the Roman governor. In contrast, Herod, a local Roman-approved ruler, administered Galilee. The relationship between the Romans and the Jews was that of cooperation, through the Jewish elite and their institutions. It is in this interest that Herod is considered in this study as a member of the Roman elite, because he ruled with Rome's permission and promoted Roman interest (Carter 2006:3). In spite of this relationship, the emperor in Rome was supreme. In terms of religious commitments, the Jews did not compromise with God's sovereignty. Hence, controversy sometimes arose between the Jews and the Romans because of their position *vis-à-vis* idolatry. Dedicated Jews strongly opposed any form of worship that contravened their belief in one God.

who is an agent of God's sovereignty (Lk 1:32-33, see also 2 Sam 7). Mary's own response is a song, which expresses her joy for the overthrow of human rule. Jesus' birth described by the shepherds as good news (Lk 2:11) is situated within the context of imperial rule (Lk 2:1-2). Jesus is identified with political and what seem like aggressive credentials; he is King, Saviour, Son of the Most High and Lord. Simeon testifies that he "is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Lk 2:34). Anna predicts that he will redeem Jerusalem (Lk 2:38). John the Baptist describes him as one with a winnowing fork, who will clear, gather and burn (Lk 3:17). Secondly, Jesus' language in Luke 4:18-22 also sounds political. He will "release" many, because it is the "acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:19). This agenda is about what seems an alternative society, with an alternative rule. Jesus' birth is thus situated within a context wherein Roman rule seems to shape the political, economic and social life of the Lukan context.

This section is therefore centred on the interaction between Jesus and the Roman authorities. This relationship will be understood through Jesus' interaction with Herod, Pilate, the centurions and soldiers, as well as some of Jesus' comments about Roman elite.

#### **5.4.2 Jesus and the Roman authorities**

Two important Roman authorities who will later confront Jesus are announced at the beginning of Luke's gospel. Herod is introduced in Luke's gospel as king of Judea (Lk 1:5) and tetrarch of Galilee (Lk 3:1, 19; 9:7). For Pilate, he is the governor of the Judean province (Lk 3:1). The first contact between Jesus and a Roman authority is within the context of his healing activities in Capernaum (Lk 7:1-10). Jesus meets a centurion by courtesy of the elders of the Jews, who invites Jesus to heal his servant. The elders' request on behalf of the centurion is followed by their comments on the centurion's credentials. In their opinion, he merits Jesus' attention because of his love for the nation. In fact, he had built a synagogue for God's worship (Lk 7:4-5). These comments seem to persuade Jesus. When he approaches the centurion's home, the actions of the centurion confirm the prior remarks of elders about his character. He also confirms his position within the Roman system through the testimony from friends (Lk 7:8). Recognising Jesus as "Lord", he seems to

be convinced that Jesus can heal by word of mouth, even from a distance. Jesus describes this attitude as that of faith (Lk 7:9). On the basis of the centurion's conviction, Jesus heals his servant. This initial contact between Jesus and a Roman authority gives a clue about their relationship with the community. They seem to be rich; some of them are even loving and benevolent. Jesus seems to approve this as the correct attitude expected from authorities.

Jesus' second contact with a Roman authority is through the courtesy of Herod's desire to see him (Lk 9:7-9). As tetrarch of Galilee, where Jesus' activities were centred, Herod most probably has been informed about Jesus and his activities; consequently, he is perplexed (Lk 9:7). He has received varied speculations as to who Jesus is. While some have identified him with John, who might have been raised, others thought of Elijah yet; some others thought he was one of the prophets of old who might have risen (Lk 9:8). Herod, however, is not convinced by these speculations because he knows that he beheaded John. Hence, he wonders: *τί & ν δ ε ε) σ τ ι ν ο υ ( τ ο υ*; His perplexity about Jesus is situated around Jesus' person and the things that he does, which have caught his attention.

As tetrarch, he might have been informed about the shepherds' reaction at Jesus' birth (Lk 2:20), as well as the testimonies of Simeon and Anna. Later, Jesus' person, his teaching, his attitude and his activities have accorded him fame through all the surrounding region of Galilee (cf Lk 4:14, 22, 37; 5:15; 8:40). Jesus is calling disciples (Lk 5:1-11, 28; 6:11-12-16) and challenging religious authorities (Lk 5:21, 32; 6:11). As a result of this, he is gathering a huge following which includes women (Lk 4:42; 6:17; 8:2). He has healed many people among whom is a centurion's servant (Lk 7:10). The most recent of Jesus' activities might have been the impact from the missionary journey of the twelve (Lk 9:1-6).

In respect of these activities, Jesus definitely seems a threat to Herod. The reminder of what he did to John is an indication of what he might do to Jesus; hence, he sought to see him (Lk 9:9). This anxiety transmits Herod's doubts; even though he is not sure about the speculations, he wishes to see the person concerned. Herod seems to have identified a link between what Jesus does and the person of Jesus himself. Herod seems the opposite of the centurion. While the latter believed Jesus without seeing him, the former



seems to cast doubts and wishes to see him. Their intentions are not the same. While the centurion acknowledges Jesus supreme, compared to his own position (Lk 7:6-8), Herod seems threatened. His first reaction is a reminder of what he did to John whom he saw as his rival (see Lk 3:19-20). Herod makes no comments about the other personalities with whom Jesus has been identified, probably because he had no encounter with any of them. However, whoever Jesus is, he wishes to see him.

A verbal report from the Pharisees later confirms the probable reasons of Herod's quest to see Jesus. Their report discloses Herod's plans to kill Jesus (Lk 13:31). This report unveils Herod's initial desire to know who Jesus is and what he is doing. Apparently, Herod's desire to see Jesus has been transformed into jealousy, fear and hatred. Jesus' person and activities seem to provoke a negative impact on Herod, as was the case with John the Baptist whom he beheaded. Jesus, according to Herod, is another rival who has to be dealt with. Jesus' response to the Pharisees apparent attitude of goodwill is a reaction he expects his informants to carry back to Herod. First, he describes Herod as a "fox".<sup>123</sup> Secondly, he is not willing to alter his agenda of activities, but to carry out his task to the end. Lastly, he releases his plans to proceed to Jerusalem. Jesus' response shows that even though he is aware of Herod's hostility, he is determined to ignore his influence on him. He must finalise his activities only when he is in Jerusalem.<sup>124</sup> Nothing seems to distract Jesus from his mission; not even a threat on his life. The Pharisees' report also introduces the political authorities in Galilee as Jesus' adversaries.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, he is faced with political challenges. Spies are charged to trick him and set him against Caesar's authority on the issue of the paying of taxes (Lk 20:20-26). Jesus understands their trap and offers an intriguing answer: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Lk 20:25). It is a response which seems to ridicule both the religious and political authorities.<sup>125</sup> With respect to the right

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<sup>123</sup> By this definition, Jesus thus depreciates Herod's personality and identity, viewing his role as being destructive (see Ez 13:4) and secondary (Cassidy 1978:51).

<sup>124</sup> Keck (2000:116) seems to disagree with this view, arguing that the Pharisees' report was instead a strategy to get Jesus leave their jurisdiction. Whatever the case, Jesus' decision to leave was not dependent on Herod's threat. Rather, it was in conformity with the agenda that he had set for himself.

<sup>125</sup> The fact that the Jewish spies carried a *dhna&rion* with them (Lk 20:24) disproves of their loyalty to the Mosaic Law which they supposedly protected. The coin bore Caesar's

attitude that is expected of the disciples, Jesus predicts the reaction of political authorities as an eventual impediment to their mission. He forewarned the disciples: “they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake” (Lk 21:12). Jesus paints the political leaders as cruel authorities who do not favour the expansion of his ministry. They also are a wrong example of leadership to be emulated by his disciples. With the growing quest of power within the disciples, Jesus also warned them: “the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves” (Lk 22:25-26).<sup>126</sup> This also sounds like a direct critique on the political system of Jesus’ time. Even though Jesus has not yet come into direct contact with the Roman authorities, he has a sound knowledge of their attitude. As oppressive authorities, they accord more importance to what they will reap as personal profit

The first member of the Roman elite that Jesus encounters directly is Pilate (Lk 23:1). Jesus is brought before Pilate by the religious authorities who accuse him on three charges. Jesus is accused for perverting the nation, for forbidding the payment of tribute to Caesar, and for claiming to be king (Lk 23:2). These charges clearly are political, but also distort Jesus’ person and mission. He is presented as a political rival to Pilate. Curiously, Pilate ignores the first two charges that had direct political impact on his rule. Instead, he nuances the third charge and makes it more definite. He asks Jesus if he is “the King of the Jews?” (Lk 23:3). Jesus’ answer triggers Pilate’s verdict: Jesus is innocent (Lk 23:4). Jesus’ opponents, having taken note of Pilate’s digression; then insist on Jesus stirring the people throughout Galilee (Lk 23:5). The mention of Galilee urges Pilate to refer Jesus to Herod. The

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likeness, which attests to the fact that they were partisans of idol worship. The inability of the religious leaders, who sponsored the spies to arrest Jesus or to confront him, is because already they might have fallen guilty of idolatry. Consequently, they remained silent (Lk 20:26). Jesus’ response also ridicules Caesar, because Caesar does not own anything; God owns everything. This point of view of Jesus ignores the sovereignty of Caesar and thereby projects God as proprietor of the world and all that is therein (see Ps 24:1).

<sup>126</sup> According to Schmid & Leaney (1958:269), Jesus’ reference to “benefactors” refers to the Roman emperors such as Augustus, who used this title with reference to themselves.

encounter between Jesus and Pilate presents the latter as a dubious character. Even though he twists the first charges, identifying them in their proper context, he does not remain firm in his decision. He is easily overtaken by the last charge from Jesus' opponents, which is simply a mere repetition of the first charge.

Jesus' first physical encounter with Herod (Lk 23:8-12) coincides with Herod's longing to see Jesus (Lk 9:9), probably to kill him (Lk 13:31). Curiously, Herod who had longed to see Jesus in order to kill him absurdly welcomes him happily (Lk 23:8). His intentions seem to have changed in the course of time. His hope to see Jesus perform some sign instead implies that he either misunderstands who Jesus is, or he might have been motivated by Jesus' indirect encounter with the centurion (Lk 7:1-10). This apparent (mis)understanding of Jesus probably influences Herod to minimise the charges against Jesus, and to develop interest in seeing him perform miracles. However, on the basis of the chief priests' and the scribes' vehement accusations, Herod treats Jesus with contempt, mocks him, dresses him as a king and sends him back to Pilate. Before Herod, Jesus refuses to utter a word, contrary to his attitude before Pilate. Luke remarks that on this account, Pilate and Herod became friends (Lk 23:12).<sup>127</sup> This remark makes this alliance suspicious. By dressing Jesus gorgeously, Herod seems to confirm Pilate's impression that Jesus' principal charge is that he is king of the Jews. Herod, who had sought to see Jesus, finally got his opportunity, but refuses to exploit it. By sending Jesus back to Pilate he seems to affirm that Jesus is innocent.

From this analysis, the relationship between Jesus and Herod is that of rivalry, suspicion, malice and misinterpretation. Jesus' popularity has been mistakenly interpreted by Herod. He discharges Jesus, yet dresses him with attire which misrepresents Jesus and gives of him a specific public opinion. He clearly uses Jesus in order to mend and strengthen his relationship with Pilate.

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<sup>127</sup> Cassidy (1978:95) remarks that during Herod's rule he fought to stay in the good graces of Rome so as to remain in power for as long as possible. This probably justifies why he dressed Jesus in kingly attire before sending him back to Pilate during the trial; an attempt to deceive Pilate?

As Jesus returns from Herod, apparently not condemned, Pilate explains to Jesus' opponents his vain efforts and those of Herod in condemning Jesus. He once more declares his intention to chastise Jesus and to release him (Lk 23:16). Although chastising Jesus was probably a public appeasement to Jesus' accusers, it confirms Jesus' opinion of rulers as cruel. Pilate then, although unconvinced, finally releases Jesus to be executed.

Pilate seems to be capricious in his relationship with Jesus. The inscription over Jesus testifies that Jesus was effectively not a political leader against Rome. As "King of the Jews" (Lk 23:38), he seems to have been killed for religious reasons. However, another centurion's remarks after the crucifixion (Lk 23:47) discredit both Herod and Pilate. Like the first centurion, he confirms that Jesus was *δικαίον*. This remark, *οὐκ ἴσμεν οὐδὲ ἀκούσαμεν οὐδὲ εἶδόμεν οὐδὲ ἔγγιστον ἔσμεν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ὅτι δίκαιος ἦν*, is an evaluation of Jesus' person, his works and all the conflicts that he encountered with his opponents. It also nullifies the charges levied against Jesus and puts into question the validity of both the Jewish council and the Roman judgments. It gives credit to Jesus and valorises his person and work. His comments about Jesus precede his praise for God.

### 5.4.3 Conclusion

Luke presents Jesus' story within the context of Jewish history with two authorities – political and religious – shaping societal life. Luke's description of Jesus shows that Jesus appears to be a threat to Roman rule. Because his activities are likened to those of John the Baptist, Herod sees him as a rival. In his teachings, Jesus disapproves of the approach of the Roman authorities who lord over their subjects and oppress them. Contrary to this approach, he defines leadership as service (Lk 22:26-27). His presence before Pilate and Herod persuades them about the real intention of his activities, yet, he is condemned. Jesus' relationship with the Roman elite shows the powerlessness of the latter in effecting justice. Jesus opposes the Roman authorities and their structures, and does not cooperate with their officers. It is a relationship of challenge and tension, suspicion and hatred. The attitudes of the two centurions seem to indicate that systems in Luke's gospel do not oppose Jesus and *vice versa*; but individuals do.

## 5.5 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JEWISH PEASANTRY

### 5.5.1 Introduction

The peasantry in Luke's gospel are the "common people", for example the fishermen, craftsmen and farmers. They also include those who have lost the sense of being human as a result of some natural or man-made circumstances (e.g., the sick and the poor). They form the category of the peasantry as opposed to that of the elite as studied above in § 5.3. In Luke's gospel, they are called "the crowd", "the people" or "the multitude". They are the people who constitute popular opinion about the person and ministry of Jesus.

Luke's gospel makes a clear distinction between the various categories of this character group, who followed Jesus; especially the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  (people) and what he calls the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  (crowd). Before Jesus gets in contact with the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  and the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ , Luke presents another character group, which is only identified as  $\rho\alpha\nu$  (all). Jesus' encounter with the  $\rho\alpha\nu$  indicates how Jesus should be known and understood. Consequently, the relationship between Jesus and the peasantry is highly influenced by this distinction. Hence, Jesus' relationship with the peasantry will be understood at three levels to mean his relationship with the  $\rho\alpha\nu$  (all); his relationship with the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  (crowd) and his relationship with the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  (people). Specifically, the distinction between  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  and  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  merits special attention. This distinction justifies a short excursion which is intended to clarify Luke's usage of these terms and their importance in the rest of the narrative.

### 5.5.2 Excursion: $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ (people) and $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ (crowd)<sup>128</sup>

From the English translation of the Revised Standard Version (RSV), it is difficult to make a distinction between who is addressed as  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  or "people" in Luke, and who is the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  or the "crowd". Many scholars, including Nestle-Aland in their English translation of the Greek text being used, have fallen victim to this error. For example, whereas Nestle-Aland rightly

<sup>128</sup> Luke's gospel is familiar with both  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  in singular and plural, respectively. For easy reading and comprehension, both nouns will only be used either in the nominative singular or in the nominative plural, as the case might be, irrespective of the cases in which they both appear in the Greek text.

translates  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  to mean people, multiple translations are given for  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ .  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  is translated as “multitude” (Lk 3:7, 10; 5:15; 8:45; 12:1, 13, 54; 14:25; 19:39; 23:4, 48) and “company of” (Lk 5:29) or “people” (Lk 4:42; 5:1, 3; 9:18; 11:14; 13:17). This translation defeats the implicit emphasis of Luke’s vocabulary. Quite often, Luke also uses  $\rho\lambda\eta\sim\gamma\omicron\nu$  to refer to a multitude (Lk 1:10; 2:13; 5:6; 6:17; 8:37; 19:37; 23:1; 23:27). In this case, it is used as a quantifying adjective. He equally uses  $\rho\alpha\nu$ , which goes beyond the simple meaning “all” (Lk 4:15, 22, 36, 40).  $\rho\alpha\nu$  probably refers to a mixture of either  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  or  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ . A brief study of Luke’s use of  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  and  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  will clarify the distinction between these two nouns. This study will be done on the basis of how they appear in the Greek text.

$\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  appears for the first time in Luke 1:10, referring to devoted Jews; that is, people of the Jewish faith or Judaism. This term is used in the gospel of Luke before the story about Jesus is told. The  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  terminology continues unchanged in the same line of thought (although Jesus is already introduced), until Luke 3:7, when the word  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  is used for the people that gather around John the Baptist. In between, Luke introduces another character group, which he simply identifies as  $\rho\alpha\nu$  (Lk 4:15, 22, 36, 40). This group seems to be distinct from  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ , in terms of their relationship with Jesus. However, the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  of Luke 3:7 are members who will eventually be initiated into a new community by John the Baptist. That is why they are addressed as  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ . In Luke 3:21, these have been baptised as  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ .

In Luke 6:17,  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  reappears, with a second meaning. It is used to describe those who came from Judea, Jerusalem, and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. This  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  does not necessarily refer to devoted Jews only. It is a mixed group from all over the region of Palestine. They are simple Jews, devoted or not; Jews, irrespective of status; either proselytes with ascribed or acquired status. From now on, the configuration of the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  remains beyond Judaism as a faith; but continues to centre around the Jews as an ethnic group.  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  appears again for the last time in Luke 24:19 to confirm that Luke uses this term in an exclusive manner to refer to believers in the Jewish faith in particular and the people of Israel as a nation.

The  $\lambda\alpha\omicron i$  are also those whose interest the religious authorities seek to protect; they constitute the nation of Israel. Jesus is accused for stirring up and perverting the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  (Lk 23:5, 14). According to Cleopas and the unnamed disciple, the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  are those for whom Jesus supposedly came (Lk 24:19). Also in the gospel, some authorities are identified as part of the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$ . It is the case of “the principal men of the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$ ” (Lk 19:47) and the “elders of the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$ ” (Lk 22:66).

On the other hand,  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron i$  (in plural) appears for the first time in Luke 3:7 as a distinct inquisitive group that seeks for admission into a new movement which is introduced and led by John the Baptist. Henceforth, the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  continues to be those who listen convincingly to John’s teaching. Jesus begins his ministry in Luke 4 when news about him has spread and will continue to spread throughout the surrounding country (Lk 4:14-15; 37). Jesus becomes famous because of the announcement of his plan of activities (Lk 4:18-19) and its effective realisation that is taking place in Capernaum and beyond. Those who sought him and came to him are the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron i$  (Lk 4:42). These are members of the category announced by Jesus in Luke 4:18, who are being healed, fed and liberated (Lk 4:39; 7:22; 18:43).

Jesus continues his ministry with the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron i$  from Luke 4:42, until when they are joined by the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  for the first time in Luke 6:17. Here,  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  is identified with reference to the disciples: “a great crowd of his disciples”. Hitherto, Jesus’ disciples are known to be his followers. In Luke 6:17, the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  becomes part of the organised and apparently conscious group that follows Jesus. Henceforth, the number of the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  continues to swell as a result of Jesus’ teaching and miracles. Apart from those who are physically healed from their infirmities, sinners and tax collectors also form part of the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron i$ . It is a new community. In Jerusalem, the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  are Jesus’ sympathisers (Lk 19:39). They are a strong force behind him. This is why Judas wishes to betray Jesus only when the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  is absent (Lk 22:6).  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron v$  reappears in Luke 23:48 and resumes its initial meaning as members of the new group that sympathises with Jesus when they beat their breasts and return home with dissatisfaction. This action takes place after the crucifixion. Apparently, the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron i$  has fused with the  $\omicron!x\lambda\omicron i$  to become one group.

In effect, the distinction between  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  and  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  is made clear in Luke 6:17 and 18. Here, Nestle-Aland is faithful to the Greek translation of  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ . First, there is an  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  of disciples and second there is a  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. They both come to listen to Jesus and to be healed of their diseases (Lk 6:17). When their aim has been fulfilled, they are all identified as the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  that sought to touch him so as to receive power (Lk 6:19). This distinction is also made clear in one of the charges against Jesus. He was accused for stirring up the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ ; not the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  (Lk 23:5, 14). Jesus' accusers probably found the charge against Jesus and the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  irrelevant and awkward, because they appeared to have been enthusiastic being Jesus' sympathisers. Consequently, the relationship that posed a threat to the community was that with the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ . Jesus is accused of misleading Israel as a nation. A better accusation would have been that he misleads those who are following him; that is, the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ . The authorities seem to be angry because Jesus is destroying the community of  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  in favour of a new community of  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ .

In spite of the above remarks on  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ , three verses in this regard need special attention, namely Luke 9:13; 22:47 and 23:4. When the disciples realised that it was getting dark, they beckoned Jesus to send away the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  so that they could go and get something to eat (Lk 9:12). When Jesus challenged them, they seemed to have become angry. Consequently, they changed what was initially a worry of concern for a group that they had identified with (the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ ), to an angry reaction. It is a reaction that seems to dissociate them from the group that Jesus is challenging them to feed. The group which they earlier identified as  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  automatically becomes the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ . When Jesus had blessed the loaves and the fish, the disciples are asked to set it before the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ . The availability of provision makes the audience to assume its normal appellation as  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ . This change of attitude simply depicts the fact that although the disciples temporarily claimed to know who Jesus was, they effectively did not still hide their personal feelings. Initially, they were right to address those who listened to Jesus as  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ , but their later appreciation of the same  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  as  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  demonstrates ignorance.



Luke reports in Luke 22:6 that Judas agreed to betray Jesus only when the *ο!xlov* is absent. It is then curious and erroneous that he leads an *ο!xlov* to arrest Jesus (Lk 22:47).<sup>129</sup> Two possible reasons could explain this apparent contradiction. The first probability comes from the composition of the *ο!xlov* in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' arrest. Horsley (1993:95) remarks that ordinarily, the crowd was a mass of the common people from the rural folk and the urban poor, who were all economically dependent. The arrest of Jesus coincides with the period of the Passover festival in Jerusalem. During this period, the normal community of citizens were joined by thousands of their peers who were pilgrims from the surrounding towns and villages. Incoming pilgrims for the purpose of the Passover festival might have heard and seen Jesus without having had a personal experience with him. It is therefore possible that they might have easily been convinced by the authorities to stand against Jesus. Consequently, the composition of the Jerusalem "crowd" in Luke 22:47 is different from that of Luke 22:6.

Secondly, the contradiction is apparent because Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples, had also been part of the "*ο!xlov*"; he has even been referred to by Jesus as an apostle. His identity became distorted only when he went into negotiation with the religious authorities to betray Jesus. It might have been the custom for the authorities to manipulate people to work or act in their favour. Before Jesus' arrest, some people were already manipulated as spies against him (Lk 20:2).<sup>130</sup> This being the case, the *ο!xlov* in Luke 22:47 were surely a manipulated *ο!xlov* like Judas himself. Since the authorities had originally feared Jesus' audience, they seem to have thought of a better strategy, which consisted of distorting the *ο!xlov* that followed Jesus from Galilee in order to get access to Jesus.

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<sup>129</sup> Traditionally, the term "crowd", had a negative connotation, referring to a mob. In Jerusalem it was a constituted group that often rose and stood against the poor treatment from the rulers. In the absence of a legitimate vehicle through which the ordinary people could express their grievances, the outcry from the "crowd" served that purpose. According to Horsley (1993:95), they were described by Josephus as "rebels". An example is that of thousands of workers who rioted because they became unemployed after the completion of the Temple. Another example is the mob that rose against Pontius Pilate because he had erected images of Caesar in Jerusalem by night for the interest of public worship. This was considered a provocation to the worship of God. Even though the "crowd" was known to be a social pressure group they were not revolutionary, because they did not challenge the system; they simple stood against its abuse of power.

<sup>130</sup> See also Acts 6:13, where false witnesses are also prepared to witness against Stephen.

Whatever the case, the “crowd” of Luke 22:47 stand distinct as a distorted  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ .<sup>131</sup> This being the case, Luke wishes to show that although the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  followed Jesus, their conception of Jesus’ identity was uncertain. Secondly, Luke wants to show that not all of the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  stood on Jesus’ side. Just like the disciples, the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  knowledge of Jesus’ identity remains unstable. The situation becomes worse when Pilate reports on Jesus’ innocence to the chief priests and the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$  (Lk 23:4). In this particular case, the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$  still act as accomplices, or as a distorted  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$ . This situation is repaired when Pilate later convened the chief priests, the rulers and the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  (and no longer the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$ ) for his final verdict (Lk 23:13). At this point, Pilate seems to acknowledge that those who are particularly affected by Jesus’ teaching (according to the new charge against Jesus) are the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ , and not the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$ . He is accused for perverting the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  (Lk 23:14). This probably justifies why the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$  are no more part of the story line. Those who request and acclaim Jesus’ crucifixion are the chief priests, the rulers and the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  (Lk 23:16, 21). In the later part of the narrative, Luke reports that even though a multitude of  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  followed Jesus, only the women wailed and lamented (Lk 23:27). However, it is important to note that once more, the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  of Luke 23:27 simply become the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$  in Luke 23:48, as a result of their conviction with the centurion that Jesus was an innocent person, a  $\delta\iota\&\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$ .

From the above, Luke’s distinction between  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  in the gospel should be understood in terms of the universality of Jesus’ mission and in terms of the knowledge of who Jesus was, prior to and after a personal experience of him and his activities. The neglect of these factors leads to a misinterpretation of Luke’s intention. For example, Jane Via (1983:131) remarks that “although the crowd (*ochlos*) sometimes participates in Jesus’ death, other crowds (*ochloi*) gather at the cross, and return home beating

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<sup>131</sup> The presence of a distorted crowd is not doubtful within this context. Horsley (1993: 96) also opines that quite often, there was a symbiosis between the Jerusalem “crowd” and its “king”. This was the case with the “crowd” that stood against Cumanus in 4 BCE. On the fourth day of the festival, a Roman soldier had stood naked, exhibiting his genitals to the multitude. This action created anger and rage on onlookers, who considered this attitude as an offence against God; as blasphemy (Horsley 1993:97). Hence, instead of standing in defence of the right of the populace, the crowd stood on the side of Cumanus, by interpreting his attitude religiously.

their breasts after Jesus dies (Lk 23:48)". Luke does not present a variety of crowds in the gospel. Rather, he defines people, and crowds, in terms of their relationship with Jesus. Thirdly, he wishes to show that irrespective of any character group, some members within each group served as foils to the others. Luke's fourth intention in the distinction between  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron v$  is certainly to show that the gospel begins with  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  (Lk 1:10), and ends with  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  (Lk 24:19). Yet, Jesus commissions his disciples to go not to the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  nor to the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron v$ , but to  $\rho\alpha\&nta\ ta\ e!\eta\eta h$ , that is, to all the nations: (Lk 24:47).

### 5.5.3 Jesus and the $\rho\alpha v$ (all)<sup>132</sup>

Jesus' ministry is launched by reports about him in the surrounding country (Lk 4:14). His defeat of the devil in the wilderness seems a merit and confirmation of himself as God's Son (cf Lk 3:22). This defeat seems to have created an impressive impact on those simply referred to in the narrative as  $\rho\alpha v$  (*pas*) or "all". Hence, they became a vehicle of Jesus' praise, glory and fame as he taught in their synagogues (Lk 4:15). These teachings later took Jesus to the synagogue in Nazareth, where he read from a scroll. He seems to have once more impressed the  $\rho\alpha v$  with the announcement of the content of his ministry (Lk 4:18-19) and the presentation of himself as the content of this ministry (Lk 4:21). They seem to have understood who Jesus was, and what it implied for him to be the content of his ministry. In response, they speak well of him (Lk 4:22). However, their later identification of Jesus with Joseph poses a problem between them and Jesus. They either probably misunderstood Jesus or they were confused by the credentials which Jesus had presented in the synagogue and those which they knew (as Joseph's son).

Jesus does not seem to approve of the identity with which they understand him. Hence, he dissociates himself from what seemed a distorted

<sup>132</sup> It may be difficult to say at this point with certainty that the  $\rho\alpha v$  in Luke 4:15, Luke 4:20 and those of Luke 4:36 are the same as the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\_v$  in Luke 3:21. From the Jordan, to Galilee, then to Nazareth and to Capernaum, the context is changing, and so too is the audience. Consequently,  $\rho\alpha v$  at this point of the gospel probably refers to a mixed group of onlookers from a Jewish religious context ( $\lambda\alpha\omicron i$ ) and those who might have a different and convinced feeling about what Jesus is doing ( $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron i$ ). Their distinction as  $\rho\alpha v$  may come from the fact that it is not a homogeneous group.

identity and compares his mission to that of Elijah and Elisha. The *pav* probably understood the implication of what Jesus said. His mission will surely go beyond Israel. Consequently, they rise up against him (Lk 4:29). Although they seem to have acknowledged Jesus in his pronouncements, they are still convinced that he is Joseph's son. This understanding creates a dissonance between Jesus' presentation of who he is and their expectation of who Jesus should be and what he should do.

The next micro narrative takes Jesus to Capernaum (Lk 4:31-37) where the *pav* seem more responsive. They seem not to have prior knowledge about Jesus. Hence, they come to know him through his teaching in the synagogue. On the basis of Jesus' teaching they are astonished, because his words have authority (Lk 4:32). Jesus seems to have approved their first impression about him. Contrary to the refusal to heal in Nazareth, he heals a man with an unclean spirit by word of mouth. This healing reinforces the enthusiasm of the *pav*, who are not only amazed, but discuss this authority with one another. Their conclusion is that Jesus indeed speaks with authority. He even has the authority and power to command unclean spirits (Lk 4:36). Unlike in Nazareth, the *pav* in Capernaum seems to know Jesus from his preaching and from his actions (healing). He is the one who has power and authority to command. This then is probably the content of the reports they carry to every place in the surrounding region (Lk 4:37).

In Simon's house, he proves right the reports of his authority and power to heal when he rebukes the fever from which Simon's mother-in-law is suffering (Lk 4:38-39). By this time, a new composition of *pav* is coming to the fore. Jesus' action in Simon's house impresses his audience. Consequently, "all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them" (Lk 4:40). Jesus once more shows that he is the embodiment of the power and authority of the words with which he heals. At the same time, he rebukes the demons for identifying him publicly as the "Son of God" because they knew that he was the "Christ" (Lk 4:41).

Following this micro narrative, Luke becomes explicit about who is following Jesus: whether it is the *o!xlov* or the *laov*. It would appear that the earlier narratives lay preparatory grounds for the discovery of who Jesus

is. So far, there seems to have been several groups of individuals in Luke's gospel whose reaction towards Jesus is varied. First, Jesus is baptised when all the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  had been baptized (Lk 3:21). They are witnesses to the "voice" that identifies Jesus as God's Son (Lk 3:22). They are probably part of the group that later on proclaims his fame (Lk 4:15). When Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth, he meets another group of  $\rho\alpha\nu$  that receives him with what seems as a preconceived agenda. When Jesus' attitude does not fit with this agenda, they rise up against him. When he progresses to Capernaum, the interest of the  $\rho\alpha\nu$  in Capernaum grows as they witness him act with authority and power.

The relationship between Jesus and this character group at the beginning of Luke's gospel is that of self-revealing and self-discovering. Jesus reveals who he is, and the  $\rho\alpha\nu$  at the same time discovers Jesus' identity. He is the content of his ministry. He is an embodiment of the authority and power with which he acts. While those whose minds are free try to understand him through his preaching and actions, those who have preconceived knowledge about him feel disappointed. It would appear that right at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus intends his audience to know and understand who he is through his words and deeds, and not through what those who came in contact with him assume, think and conjecture.

#### 5.5.4 Relationship with the $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$

The  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  that came to Jesus the first time were those whom he healed from various infirmities (cf Lk 4:40). They seemed to have loved Jesus' company; hence, they would not allow him to depart from them. Jesus uses this opportunity to reiterate the core of his ministry, namely to preach the good news of the kingdom of God (Lk 4:42-44; see also 5:15; 7:24; 8:4; 9:11). Their love for Jesus' company is manifested in their wish to hear the word of God (Lk 5:1, 3), their quest to touch him (Lk 6:19), their eagerness to follow him (Lk 7:9, 11) and their joy in welcoming him (Lk 8:40). It is this zeal that probably presents them as an obstruction between Jesus and the paralytic seeking healing. In return, Jesus responds to the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  with solidarity through his teaching, healing, table fellowship (Lk 5:29) and by providing for

their physical needs (Lk 9:11-17). At this initial stage, the relationship between Jesus and the  $\phi\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$  seems to be that of anxiety and cooperation.

Jesus' growing concern for the  $\phi\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$  is manifested when he asks the disciples who the  $\phi\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$  think he is (Lk 9:18). Jesus probably had noticed their enthusiasm, and wished to know if they actually knew who he was. He might have also noticed that they manifest traits of misunderstanding through their zeal (they had just obstructed a paralytic from meeting him). The impression of the  $\phi\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$  would also probably help him to shape their attitude. While they continue to sympathise with Jesus, they also inform him about his disciples' inability to effect healing (Lk 9:40). Once more, they appear more critical and keen than the disciples. They become Jesus' informants, and he seems to trust them. Unfortunately their attitude soon changes as Jesus moves towards Jerusalem. Their appreciation of Jesus' healing activities is diverse. When Jesus casts out demons, they respond with mixed feelings. First they marvelled (Lk 11:14), and then they disagreed in their appreciation of Jesus' action. While some of them accused Jesus of working in connivance with Beelzebub (Lk 11:15), others requested for more signs (Lk 11:16). This ambivalent attitude proves that they seem not to know who Jesus is.

In spite of this ambivalent attitude, they still follow Jesus in large numbers (Lk 12:1). Jesus seems to be aware that their attitude exhibits traits of pretence. Hence, in their presence, he warns his disciples against the "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Lk 12:1). This warning seems directed equally to them. In the course of teaching, he is interrupted by a question from the  $\phi\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$  (Lk 12:13); a question which identifies Jesus as a worldly arbitrator. This conception seems to betray their perception of who Jesus is. Although they follow him, they seem to attribute to him a wrong identification. As they continue to listen to Jesus, he once more warns them against false prophets in relation to eschatological happenings (Lk 12:54).

Their public importance is again manifested when the ruler of the synagogue uses them as judges. Jesus' Sabbath healings had brought controversy between Jesus and the ruler of the synagogue (Lk 13:14). The  $\phi\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\upsilon$ , however, approves of Jesus' action by rejoicing in the glorious things Jesus is doing (Lk 13:17). This joy seems to transmit the fact that they

have understood who Jesus is and what he was doing. It also implies that they disagree with the misinterpretation of Jesus' attitude by the ruler of the synagogue. Again, conscious of their deficiency, Jesus explains to them what it entails to be his follower (Lk 14:25-33). Hereafter, they follow him and proclaim his fame as he moves to Jerusalem (Lk 18:36).

While in Jerusalem, their enthusiasm again becomes an obstacle for Zacchaeus (Lk 19:3) who wishes to meet Jesus. After this micro narrative, the ο!xlov disappear from the scene. They only reappear in the company of Judas when Jesus is arrested (Lk 22:47), and is consulted by Pilate during Jesus' trial (Lk 23:4). Finally, they become the first group to join the centurion in his testimony that Jesus was innocent (Lk 23:48). They thus appear like a convinced character group that has finally understood who Jesus was.

The relationship between Jesus and the ο!xlov is that of solidarity, concern and witnessing. Even though they seem to misrepresent Jesus through some spontaneous responses, they often save Jesus' face and take interest in the disciples' attitude in their support for Jesus. Their uncertainty about Jesus' identity comes to its climax in Jerusalem when they acclaim him as a worldly king (Lk 19:39), but soon after this is rectified. As a sign of conviction, they beat their breasts while returning home after Jesus' crucifixion (Lk 23:48).

### 5.5.5 Relationship with the λαο&v

Following the chronology of events in Luke's gospel, the relationship between Jesus and the λαο&v can be separated into two phases. The first phase is the events that take place in Luke 6:17 and Luke 21:38. The second phase takes place in Luke 23; where they seem to passively follow Jesus. They do this right up to the cross, when they become ο!xloi. The first time that the λαο&v, as a distinct character group in Luke's narrative, comes in contact with Jesus is after the news about his healing miracles, including his teachings, in Capernaum and beyond. They probably follow Jesus in order to listen to him (Lk 6:17; 7:1), or out of enthusiasm. They are not only keen listeners; they also praise God for what Jesus is doing. Jesus' raising of the dead to life becomes an act of praise from their side (Lk 7:16; 18:43). Quite often they also act as witnesses. On his way to heal Jāirus' daughter, Jesus

is touched by a woman who has bled for twelve years. When she realises that Jesus has taken notice of her touch, she falls before him and bears witness in the presence of the *laov* (Lk 8:47). Jesus uses the *laov* as witnesses when he cautions the disciples against the attitude of the scribes (Lk 20:45).

As the *laov* follow Jesus and listen to him, they seem to become a force to be reckoned with. Their adherence to Jesus' teachings makes it impossible to have him arrested (Lk 19:48). The religious authorities are conscious of their presence, and they control their attitude *vis-à-vis* Jesus. In fact, they are to be feared. It is the wish of the chief priests and the scribes to put Jesus to death, but they fear the *laov*. They are part of Jesus' audience and hang upon his words (Lk 19:48; 20:6, 19, 26; 22:2).

In the second phase of Jesus' contact with the *laov*, they are used by Pilate, also as witnesses. They seem to hold a strong opinion concerning public decision. Instead of inviting the chief priests and the *oxloi* – as he previously did at the beginning of Jesus' trial – Pilate invites the chief priests for the second time, together with the rulers and the *laov*. In their presence, he declares Jesus innocent once more (Lk 23:13).<sup>133</sup> From here on, the *laov*' attitude towards Jesus becomes ambiguous. The religious authorities seem to have lured them into a request to have Jesus crucified (Lk 23:15). Towards the end of the passion story they resume their attitude as a curious and passive group that follows Jesus. Even though they follow him to the cross, they seem to remain passive (Lk 23:27). They stand by and watch while the rulers scoff Jesus and the soldiers mock him (Lk 23:35) without intervening, as they did on previous occasions.

The ambiguity of the *laov* towards Jesus probably stems from the fact that as onlookers they become excited and curious in hearing Jesus and seeing him perform miracles. Apart from this, they remain neutral in their relationship with Jesus and do not seem to take position with any group against Jesus, until Luke 23.

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<sup>133</sup> Cassidy (1983:152) opines that Pilate invited the *laov* at this point because he expected them to support him and thus facilitate Jesus' release. This sounds plausible. But what other justification could be offered when Pilate invited the chief priests and the *oxloi* at the beginning of the trial (Lk 23:4)? It is far more possible that at this point, Pilate probably intended to use them as witnesses from an ethnic point of view. After the story of Jesus' arrest, this is the first time that *laov* is announced as a character group.



### 5.5.6 Conclusion

The way in which Luke uses the nouns  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  is clear. Luke has a specific reason in referring to one group of followers of Jesus as  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and to another as  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ . They are two distinct character groups whose attitude towards Jesus and his movement differ. In Luke's terminology,  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  has to do with religion and a particular ethnic group, whereas  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  is a group that goes beyond ethnic and religious inclination. The Gospel ends with the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  becoming  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$ . This seems a breakthrough from exclusivism to a new inclusivistic movement. Luke shows that both the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  attest to Jesus' popularity, in spite of the growing opposition between him and his opponents.

$\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  are two character groups in Luke that constitute a major threat to Jesus' opponents. They both present an ambivalent attitude, which depicts their uncertainty about who Jesus is. Most especially, the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\iota$  follow Jesus because he makes promises of what seems to be a new era, a new reign, wherein they can find a place alongside the elite. Luke's presentation of  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$  and  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$  *vis-à-vis* Jesus confirms that, in relation to who Jesus is, characters do not have any stable characteristics.<sup>134</sup>

## 5.6 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-JEWS

### 5.6.1 Introduction

In the context of this study, the non-Jews referred to are understood as non-Jews by virtue of birth. Consequently, attention will be given to the Samaritans in particular and the Gentiles in general (excluding the Roman elite).<sup>135</sup> Although there is no particular instance in Luke's gospel where Jesus

<sup>134</sup> The  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ , and sometimes the  $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ , are a symbol of those who follow Jesus out of curiosity. They can be compared to what Goldsmith (2000:48) refers to as "skin Christians". "Skin Christians" are those who present an outward Christian look but when scratched, they are mere followers underneath in the heart. This situation depicts that of a suffering African. From an African perspective, misery, poverty, oppression, hunger and diseases constantly push the mass to rally behind those who spring up as liberators. In this situation, their loyalty is highly conditioned by the ability of the "liberators" to quench their aspirations through satisfactory leadership, from the masses' point of view.

<sup>135</sup> The name "Gentile" is a generic term referring to all the non-Jews who were not originally chosen by God as a "people" (Lk 2:32; 21:24, 25; 22:25). It also refers to humanity, including Israel (Lk 12:30; 21:24; 24:47). Thirdly, it could also refer not particularly to a group in terms of ethnicity, but to the attitude of sinful humanity (Lk 18:32). According to Old Testament prophecy, the life of Israel both as God's people and as individuals was to act as a magnet to draw the Gentiles to God by means of their lifestyle and their attitude: "I will also make you a

comes into physical contact with a “Gentile”, his relationship with the non-Jews can be evaluated in terms of his general attitude towards non-Jewish activities. One of the main disagreements between Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries in Luke’s gospel seems to derive from the fact that Jesus mingled with non-Jews.<sup>136</sup> It is therefore a relationship between Jesus, a born Jew, within the context of his Jewish counterparts and their relationship with “outsiders”.

### **5.6.2 Jesus’ relationship with the non-Jews**

The first non-Jewish activity carried out by Jesus is the healing of the centurion’s servant (Lk 7:1-10). This healing puts Jesus in contact with the centurion through the courtesy of the elders of the Jews (Lk 7:3) and “friends” (Lk 7:6). Twice, the centurion avoids meeting Jesus. The reason given by the centurion himself is because he feels himself “unworthy” (Lk 7:6). He clearly sees Jesus as someone important. He therefore asks the elders of the Jews to intervene on his behalf. The remarks of the elders (Lk 7:4-5), the centurion’s concern for human life (Lk 7:7), and his comments about Jesus (Lk 7:6c-7) entice Jesus to commend his faith (Lk 7:9). Jesus’ acknowledgment of the centurion’s faith implies that this attribute (faith), is not a monopoly of Israel. Jesus indicates that the right attitude is to show love for fellow man and to have an indiscriminate compassionate attitude towards the needy (cf Lk 10:33-35). Jesus’ remarks about the centurion’s belief also testify to his interest in the attitude of non-Jews. On the other hand, Jesus has concern for all who show love and compassion, irrespective of their origin.

The return of the twelve apostles from the first mission in the next micro narrative (Lk 9:1-6) is followed by what seems to be shortcomings on their part. In spite of the empowerment that they had received from Jesus (Lk 9:1), they are unable to heal a boy possessed by a demon (Lk 9:40). When Jesus spoke about his death, they misunderstood him and preoccupied themselves

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light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Is 49:6). Strikingly, Simeon interprets this prophecy as being fulfilled not in Israel as a nation or individuals, but in the infant Jesus as a provider of salvation (Lk 2:32, 31).

<sup>136</sup> As discussed in the previous section, the non-Jews by birth had the same status as those who lost their Jewish status as a result of some calamity, sex or their social status. For the Jews, God was Holy: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Lv 19:2). Hence, Jesus’ attitude towards the non-Jews was considered as a contradiction in terms of their belief.

with how great they will become as his successors (Lk 9:46-49). In what follows, John seems to render the situation worse by complaining to Jesus that they forbade a man from casting out demons (Lk 9:49). This for Jesus sounds ironical, because they forbid someone from doing what they are unable to do. When Jesus faces his way to Jerusalem, he resolves to go through Samaria, in spite of the resistance from the Samaritans (Lk 9:54).<sup>137</sup> This resistance most probably depicts the existing relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans. The violent suggestion from James and John to call down fire on the Samaritans (Lk 9:54-55) also testifies to this fact. By all indications, Jesus' decision seems risky. He probably risks being criticised by both parties for nursing what appeared as an undiplomatic relationship. In spite of this, Jesus remains determined and keeps on focussing on his objective.

His later decision to send out the seventy-two to every place where he himself was about to go (Lk 10:1) confirms his zeal to expand the good news about the kingdom of God beyond Israel.<sup>138</sup> This urge seems to have been motivated by the disciples' reaction towards the Samaritans. This second mission is in some way a duplication of the mission earlier assigned to the twelve apostles (see § 5.2), but also a correction. It includes places where the disciples did not go in the course of the first mission and serves to invoke a change of attitude in the disciples. There is a probable need to sharpen the disciples' view of Jesus' mission to include those outside of the Jewish community.

The mission of the seventy-two is a prelude to the story of the "Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:25-37), which in a way also can be seen as a replica of the story of the centurion whose servant was healed by Jesus (Lk 7:1-10). It is a parable which shows the paradox in the relationship between a Jew and a

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<sup>137</sup> This decision minimises the existing historical enmity between Jews and the Samaritans in 7 AD. Some Samaritans had defiled the Temple in Jerusalem by scattering dead animals in the Holy of Holies. The Jews took this sacrilegious act as a serious offence against God's holiness. Goldsmith (2000:77) remarks that Herod worked hard to reconcile the two camps. Jesus most probably was presented in the temple at the same time. Therefore, growing up as a young Jew, Jesus knew of this tense relationship and also tried to establish a new atmosphere between the two groups.

<sup>138</sup> Luke 10:1 has a textual problem which presents the number of those that were sent by Jesus as seventy or as seventy two. The debate on the exact figure is not the concern of this thesis. Consequently, the figure seventy two will arbitrarily be adopted as a neutral figure. However, in Jewish thought the number twelve represents Israel as a nation while the figure seventy was used to refer to the Gentiles (the number of Noah's children through Shem, Ham and Japheth).

non-Jew (Samaritan). This story also stands to condemn the attitude of the priest and the Levite (fellow Jewish religious leaders) for not carrying out a humanitarian and compassionate task (like the centurion in Luke 7:7-10), because of what seems like religious priority and purity, respectively. They fail to show solidarity, generosity, love and compassion that accompany their respective offices to a fellow Jew who was robbed and left in a miserable state. In contrast, the story presents a Samaritan who comes to the rescue and offers assistance. The Samaritan actually acts like the centurion. They both show compassion to those who are beyond their respective ethnic groups. The story of the Samaritan is a response to a lawyer's quest to know who someone's neighbour is. In this parable, Jesus explains that neighbourliness does not depend on belonging to the same community. Jesus expects the lawyer (his disciples and other Jews) to learn from this story that genuine love goes beyond ethnic boundaries to address human needs (Lk 10:37). The question of neighbourliness is also preceded by the question of what it means to inherit eternal life (Lk 10:25). From the conversation between Jesus and the lawyer, coupled with the understanding from the parable, an indiscriminate heart of compassion seems to be the only way to inherit eternal life. The relationship between Jesus and the non-Jews therefore is a challenge to the Jews. Jesus advises the lawyer, as a Jewish representative, to "go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37).

In the parable of the great banquet (Lk 14:16-24) Jesus elaborates on the broad view of his ministry. The parable presents three categories of guests invited at different intervals for the same feast. The first category is those for whom the feast was initially intended, but who prioritised other activities (Lk 14:17-20). The second group are the poor, the maimed, the blind and the lame. Even though these invitees accept and honour the invitation (Lk 14:21), there is still more room (Lk 14:22). Because of this, the third category of people is invited. They are people from beyond the city fence who are compelled to honour the invitation (Lk 14:23). This parable alludes to the different missions contained in Jesus' agenda: mission to the "original guests" (the Jewish elite); mission to "common people" (the Jewish peasantry) and mission to those beyond (the non-Jews). The telling of the parable of the "great banquet" at this point of Jesus' ministry (on the way to Jerusalem), seems to have a dual purpose. It shows Jesus' concern even to those outside of the Jews. Secondly, it describes the nature of his ministry. While he will not

receive the favour of some people, others will follow him, and yet some others will be coerced to accept him. The last category depicts the nature of his “Gentile” and Samaritan missions.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus is met by ten lepers who lift up their voices in a request for mercy (Lk 17:11-13). Jesus’ prompt reaction is to command them to go and present themselves to the priests as was the custom (Lk 17:14). After Jesus healed them, one returned, praising God. He is a Samaritan (Lk 17:15-16). Through the story of the ten lepers, Jesus once more shows faith as another element that grants eternal life (Lk 17:11-19; see also Lk 7:9). Jesus marvels that ten lepers were healed, and that the one that returned in thanksgiving is a Samaritan. The nine others (Jews) went away, taking Jesus’ healing for granted. The Samaritan, who returns, then receives wholesome healing, which seems to depict an extension of God’s love and favour to non-Jews. The Samaritan clearly has understood and recognised Jesus’ identity in his offer of healing. Just like the story of the centurion (Lk 7:1-10), this story implies that the recognition of who Jesus is, coupled with belief and trust in his person, are what Jesus requires, irrespective of one’s nature and origin.

### 5.6.3 Conclusion

The relationship between Jesus and the non-Jews breaks down the barriers of enmity between Jews and non-Jews. It is a teaching relationship to both the Jews and the disciples, as he widens the scope of his ministry to include the non-Jews. This vision is an open challenge to the *status quo*, wherein the disciples and the Jews at large are called upon to fashion their view of who Jesus is and what his mission entails. The centurion is commended as a person of strong belief (Lk 7:9); some elders of the Jews seem to be in favour of Jesus’ missionary expansion (Lk 7:4); the attitude of the Samaritan is an example to be emulated (Lk 10:37); the attitude of a Samaritan leper earns him wholesome healing which the others (Jews) do not receive because they take it for granted (cf Lk 14:17-20).

Through this relationship, Jesus defines the various dimensions of his mission: mission to the Jews (elite and peasantry) and mission to the non-Jews. He confirms this view by finally commissioning the disciples to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all nations (Lk 24:47). It is therefore

a relationship that dictates what seems like requisites that he requires from his followers: indiscriminate love and compassion for one another.

## **5.7 AN EMIC READING OF LUKE 9:18-22: LEADERSHIP, CONFLICT AND IDENTITY**

### **5.7.1 Introduction**

It is apparent from the above emic reading of the various relationships in which Jesus was involved that misunderstanding surrounded his person and works. This misunderstanding engendered antagonism between Jesus and his contemporaries. Jesus revealed who he was through his teaching, his interactions with various groups of people, his activities, and the way he responded to spontaneous reactions and attitudes. In Galilee, Jesus' identity is an object of controversy from both cosmic (Lk 4:1-13) and human authorities such as his disciples (Lk 8:22-25), John the Baptist (Lk 7:18-19), the Jewish peasantry (Lk 4:22-30), the Jewish elite (Lk 5:17-22, 30-32, 33-39; 6:1-5, 6-11; 7:39-50) and the Roman elite (Lk 9:7-9).<sup>139</sup> Because his identity was conceived differently, Jesus wishes to make a personal disclosure of who he is, including its consequences, to his disciples. But first, they must tell him how much knowledge they have gathered about him from the crowds, and what they themselves thought of him. The situation of Luke 9:18-22 within the macro-context of Luke's story line of Jesus and his activities explains and summarises the conflicts that evolved between Jesus and the different relationships he established. However, beyond being a summary of Jesus' activities in Galilee, it also introduces and projects the Jerusalem ministry and its consequences.

In what follows, Luke 9:18-22 will be read and understood with reference to these relationships. What is presented is an emic reading of Jesus' relationship with the disciples, the Jewish peasantry, the Jewish elite and Roman elite, through the lens of Luke 9:18-22. Besides its position within the macro narrative of Jesus' Galilean ministry (Lk 4:1-9:50), and its transitional function *vis-à-vis* the Jerusalem ministry (Lk 9:51-23:38), this micro narrative indicates a certain degree of closeness with the micro narrative of the

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<sup>139</sup> Jesus' question in Luke 9:18-22 is relevant because it is not about a specific crowd. Crowd(s) in the plural refers to the various groupings of crowds in the narrative. Jesus inquires to know what these various groupings say about him. Although his activities create an impact within the cities, his identity is still misunderstood.

transfiguration of Jesus (Lk 9:28-36). This closeness justifies the presence of a reflection on the relationship between Luke 9:18-22 and Luke 9:28-36.

### **5.7.2 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the disciples**

Luke 9:18-22 has the form of a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. Prior to this dialogue Jesus had empowered his disciples to heal all illnesses and had given them authority over demons (Lk 9:1). It is an empowerment for them to do what he was doing. After their return from this mission (Lk 9:1-6), Jesus does not seem to be satisfied with their performance and attitude. Although the crowd that followed him in Bethsaida was growing, they do not seem threatened by natural phenomena like darkness, hunger, and insecurity (Lk 9:10-12). On the contrary, the disciples seem threatened; hence, they asked Jesus to disperse the crowd so that they could secure lodging and feeding (Lk 9:12). The disciples seem to forget or lose confidence in the one who has shown supremacy over natural events such as a storm (Lk 8:24), death (Lk 7:15; 8:55) and diseases (Lk 5:25; 6:10; 7:10; 8:39, 48 cf Lk 7:21-22). Jesus challenged their ignorance by asking them to provide food for the crowd (Lk 9:13). Because of their inability, Jesus blessed the five available loaves and two fish and gave it to the disciples to share with all present (Lk 9:16). The disciples most probably once again were astonished (cf Lk 8:25) when they collected twelve baskets full of leftovers (Lk 9:17). The increasing number of the crowd and the apparently disappointing attitude of the disciples probably triggered Jesus then to dialogue with the disciples on the question and meaning of who he is (Lk 9:18-22).

In prelude to the dialogue, Jesus prays, and although the disciples are present with him, they do not (Lk 9:18). They still do not seem to understand that what they see Jesus doing is an embodiment of who he is. Jesus' habit of praying prior to major events is a recurrent attitude in Luke's narrative.<sup>140</sup> The

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<sup>140</sup> Among these events, three are similar in terms of their context, with reference to his death. The discussion of Luke 9:18-22 ends with Jesus' prediction of his death. The prayer session at the transfiguration (Lk 9:28) unfolds with Jesus discussing with Elijah and Moses about his death in Jerusalem. The events of his arrest and subsequent death in Jerusalem are also preceded with prayer (Lk 22:41).

apparently passive attitude of the disciples does not seem strange either. They had earlier been criticised for not fasting and praying (Lk 5:33). Their nonchalant attitude is a proof of the fact that although they have been following Jesus for quite a while, they are not ready to emulate him; they still seem not to take their new task seriously. Then, after Jesus prayed, he inquires from them who the crowds think that he is (Lk 9:18).

It would appear that Jesus was not as interested in the crowds' response as he was in what the disciples themselves thought. After having informed Jesus what the crowds thought about him, they themselves become the focus of Jesus' attention. Hence, he asks them: "but who do you say that I am?" (Lk 9:19). Apparently, the disciples seem to have confirmed through their silence that Jesus' question was an embarrassment. It is Peter alone who offers a response; Jesus is "The Christ of God" (Lk 9:20). The rest of the disciples' silence implied that they either did not know what to say, or they agreed with Peter's response. Jesus then, after Peter's response, commands them sternly not to disclose "this" to anyone (Lk 9:21). In what follows, as a justification of this caution, Jesus releases another self-identification: he is the Son of man (Lk 9:22). This identification is accompanied with other attributes: he will suffer, be rejected, be killed, and on the third day be raised (Lk 9:22). Jesus' description of his identity thus sets forth what will befall him. He will suffer because of the rejection of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes. Those who will be responsible for his killing are not named. In what seems like a result of this suffering, rejection and killing, Jesus will be raised on the third day.<sup>141</sup> The core of this micro narrative seems to be two issues; namely, the question of Jesus' identity and the implications that follow this identity. For Jesus, it was important to check from his followers if they were aware of these issues; if not, it would be appropriate for them to be informed. Jesus is driving towards the end of the Galilean ministry. He therefore most probably hopes that this dialogue will enhance the disciples' understanding of his identity and what the events are that will befall him. As a result of this

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<sup>141</sup> It is common in Greek Biblical texts for God to be the implied subject of verbs in the passive voice when it has not been indicated. In the context of Luke 9:22, where the conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders in respect of his identity culminates in his death, God avenges by legitimating this rejected identity.



information, he probably expected them, unlike before, to develop trust, confidence and commitment in their new task. Jesus was aware that his disciples were deficient. He probably linked the misunderstanding of their mission to this deficiency. Consequently, he wished them to know that the understanding of their mission is conditioned by their understanding of who he was. Hence, he explained his identity in terms of suffering, rejection and dying. The fact that he will be raised serves as a proof of his innocence.

The dialogue with the disciples plays a triple role. In terms of Luke's story line of Jesus and his activities it is a summary of the events that characterise and explain his Galilean activities. Secondly, it serves as an educative session, and thirdly it serves as a projection of what still awaits him. The dialogue intervenes between Luke's story line at the end of the first phase of Jesus' missionary activities (Lk 4:1-9:50), and the second phase still pending (Lk 9:51-21:38). The first phase seems to have begun without a proper preparation and introduction of what Jesus expected from the disciples. Hence, they seem to have followed him without knowing who he was, as well as the implications of his ministry (see Lk 5:11, 28). The pitfalls of this ill preparation had negative repercussions with regards to their attitude during the Galilean ministry. Their recurrent mistakes might have prompted Jesus to find out if they knew who he was. Although he had so far disclosed who he was through his deeds, teaching and interaction with the different social groups, he had not concretely informed the disciples about who he was and what he was trying to accomplish. Only by inference the disciples sometimes have understood the content of the ministry and what it probably meant to "catch men" (Lk 5:10). In Jesus' answer to John's disciples, they might also have understood that Jesus' mission was that of healing, exorcism, raising the dead and preaching (Lk 7:21-22). In spite of this, they might not have known what it implied and what Jesus expected from them as a response. It is in this vein that the dialogue seems to be a correction to a wrong start and a preparation for the next phase of the mission.

In effect, the dialogue seems to be an educative session.<sup>142</sup> Jesus' person and work implied something different from what the disciples expected and thought. They had been recruited from various backgrounds (e.g., fishermen and tax collectors). So far, they had lived and functioned in a particular life pattern and thought form, which have probably influenced their understanding of Jesus' person and activities. The consciousness of this context might have prompted Jesus to embark on an educational phase in order to ensure that they understood one another. Jesus knew that the ministry in Jerusalem would be more difficult than the one that they were just about to conclude. Hence, the question: "But who do you say that I am?" (Lk 9:20). This question also enabled him to measure the disciples' level of understanding. Jesus wanted his disciples to be aware of what was going to happen when they entered Jerusalem. The question put to them thus was an opportunity to educate them on the implications attached to his person. It also gave him the opportunity to dispel ignorant and preconceived ideas which they were nursing prior to and during the course of the Galilean ministry.

The discussion equally played the role of a caution as it served to explain the nature of their next itinerary; the Jerusalem ministry. The disciples had witnessed the antagonism between Jesus the Pharisees and the scribes. In fact, they themselves had quite often been the object of criticism (Lk 5:17-26, 27-32, 33-39; 6:6-11). Unfortunately, they did not understand what was going on. At this point of the narrative, they had not yet seen Jesus in action

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<sup>142</sup> In the first century AD the Jews lived with an expectation of a nationalistic leader, a Davidic heir (Danker 1979:20), who would free them from Roman oppression. According to Culpepper (1995:97), these expectations were varied. While some Jews expected a royal Davidic messiah who would re-establish the kingdom of Israel, others looked for a priestly messiah to purify the worship system of Israel. Whatever the situation, these expectations were nursed within the socio-political background of Israel. In Jesus, the crowds and probably the disciples saw someone doing just this – Jesus was influencing their human setting and bringing about order. Jesus' activities foreshadowed God's promise of deliverance. Their understanding of his identity is therefore linked to such expectations. Two reasons militate for the fact that the disciples' conception of Jesus' identity was not quite different from that of the crowds. First is the fact that they echoed the crowds' opinion without further comments on their implications. Secondly, it is Peter alone who answers Jesus, whereas Jesus' question is addressed to all the disciples: *ei) ~pen de\_ au)toi~v u(me i~v de\_ ti&na me le&gete ei) ~nai*; Finally, Peter's response is also an echo of previous testimonies. Jesus thus needed to caution them. Their understanding of Jesus had to be reshaped. It is, however, only towards the end of the gospel that Jesus explicitly acknowledges himself as the Christ (Lk 24:26). The particularity of Luke 24:26 verse lies in the fact that two important words from Luke 9:22 are repeated verbatim by Jesus: *e!dei* and *pagei~n* (see also Luke 24:46). The rest of the verse is a reflection or an expansion of Luke 9:22.

with the chief priests and the elders. Jesus therefore predicts the outcome of these conflicts. His conflict with the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will result in suffering, rejection and killing. However, there is nothing to worry about, because he will be raised. The dialogue is thus also about a prediction which seems to prepare the disciples for future events. In forbidding them from disclosing the content of their discussion to anyone, Jesus most probably thought that the disciples were not ready and courageous enough to understand and digest this information.

As the narrative unfolds, it subsequently becomes clear that, in spite of this dialogue, the disciples did not understand Jesus. They neither understood who Jesus was, nor the meaning of what he said. Although they temporarily gave the impression that they had understood him (Lk 11:1; 17:5), they often still acted their own way. Time and again, when Jesus reminded them again about his impending death, they misinterpreted him because of their expectations (Lk 9:46; 22:24, 50). However, Jesus' perseverance and focus in the end of the narrative seem to have yielded fruits. At the end of his mission, the disciples seem to have understood who he was, and what his mission entailed (cf Lk 12:11; 21:12): they became witnesses and preached repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem (Lk 24:47-48).

### **5.7.3 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the peasantry**

The intimacy between Jesus and the crowds seems visible in Jesus' quest to know what they thought about him. Jesus was impressed by their enthusiasm from the beginning of his ministry. In Nazareth they manifested mixed feelings of acceptance (Lk 4:22a) and rejection (Lk 4:29). Although they referred to him as Joseph's son (Lk 4:22b), his spontaneous reaction proved that this was a misinterpreted identity to fit their motives (Lk 4:23-27). In Capernaum they became glued to him because he spoke and acted with authority (Lk 4:31-36). In the synagogues of Judea they pressed him to hear his teaching (Lk 5:1). The more people he healed, the more the crowds followed him (Lk 6:17). They seemed passionate to listen to him; a passion that also led them to follow him. While following, they were neither threatened by night nor by exposure (no lodging) or hunger (Lk 9:12). This attitude was perceived by Jesus as unflinching loyalty. Thus, coming towards the end of his Galilean

ministry, he thought it appropriate to know from the disciples what these crowds<sup>143</sup> thought about him, and if they were conscious and convinced about what they were doing in following him.

During his Galilean ministry many from the crowds became Jesus' disciples, such as the woman who were healed (Lk 8:20) and the blind beggar (Lk 18:43). Others from the crowd opted to serve him (Lk 4:39 9:38), while some others wished to follow him (Lk 9:57-61). These positive reactions from the crowds triggered Jesus to inquire from the disciples, who had just returned from their mission, to know who these crowds said he was. The response from the disciples echoes three speculations: Some say Jesus is John the Baptist, others say he is Elijah, while others suspect Jesus to be one of the old prophets who has risen (Lk 9:19).

These speculations clearly are a reflexion of what they see Jesus doing. Jesus' activities remind them of events and figures from the past, especially some prominent figures that are part of their history.<sup>144</sup> Those in the crowds

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<sup>143</sup> There exist more than one alternative reading for  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \omicron\iota\theta\ \omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$  in Luke 9:18. The first alternative reading,  $\omicron\iota\theta\ \omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\ \epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , is proposed by  $\kappa^*$  and supported by B L  $\equiv$  f<sup>1</sup> 892. 2542 pc, and can be translated as "the crowds are saying". A second alternative reading,  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \omicron\iota\theta\ \alpha)\ \eta\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  is suggested by A, supported by 579. 1241. 1424 pc e sa<sup>mss</sup> bo, and reads "the men are saying". The edited Nestle-Aland's text with  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \omicron\iota\theta\ \omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$  is suggested by P<sup>75</sup> and supported by N<sup>2</sup> C D W Q Y f<sup>13</sup> 33 M. It reads: "the crowds are saying". The ages of the first group of witnesses range between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century CE, those of the second group between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, while in the last group they range between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. P<sup>75</sup> of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century appears to be the oldest of the manuscripts. On this basis, the edited text with  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \omicron\iota\theta\ \omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$  is to be preferred as most probably the best reading. In terms of internal evidence, there is no theological difference between the suggestion of the first group of witnesses,  $\omicron\iota\theta\ \omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\ \epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , and the edited text that reads  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \omicron\iota\theta\ \omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$ . Both translations can be rendered "the crowds are saying". The major textual problem in Luke 9:18 is the alternative reading  $\epsilon\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \omicron\iota\theta\ \alpha)\ \eta\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . Both parallel texts (Mk 8:27-31//Mt 16:13-21) refer to  $\alpha)\ \eta\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . The second group of witnesses referred to above, are probably concerned with the need of harmonising the three different readings by giving preference to  $\alpha)\ \eta\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ . Also,  $\alpha)\ \eta\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$  with an article is sometimes translated as "people", referring to men. Hence, if this variant is considered as the original reading, Jesus' question could be rendered as "who do the people (men) say that I am". This translation poses a theological problem with regard to those who constituted Jesus' following. Those who are following Jesus, as a result of his ministry, are beyond sex as defined in his inaugural teaching in Nazareth (Lk 4:18-19; see also Lk 8:2). Secondly, a thorough reading of Luke's gospel shows that Luke is conversant with the terminologies of  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\upsilon$ ,  $\alpha)\ \eta\gamma\gamma\omega\sigma\iota\upsilon$  and  $\omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon$ . In the Lukan vocabulary none of these words are used arbitrary (see § 5.5.2). On this basis, the use of  $\omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$  in Luke 9:18 cannot be a coincidence. Consequently, from both the internal and external evidences, the edited text with  $\omicron\iota\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota$  is preferred as the original reading.

<sup>144</sup> The presentation of Jesus' identity with reference to prophecy was part of Lukan literary art (Greene 1980:32). In the early beginnings of the gospel, Mary and Simeon in their respective canticles prophesied about Jesus' identity (Lk 1:46-56; 2:30-35). Anna identified Jesus in the line of the redemption of Israel (Lk 2:38). John the Baptist's words about Jesus

that were baptised by John the Baptist and who listened to his preaching see a connection between Jesus' teachings and those of John the Baptist (compare Lk 3:7-14 and Lk 6:20-45). They were also present when Jesus gave his inaugural speech and declared that he was anointed (Lk 4:18).<sup>145</sup> This, for some, connected him with the Baptist. Others see him as a new Elijah or Elisha (Lk 4:25-27), based on his healing miracles in likeness of the healings of Elijah. Maybe his ability to predict people's thoughts also influenced some in the crowds to see him in the light of a prophet. More than once Jesus predicted the thoughts of the scribes and the Pharisees (Lk 5:21, 30, 35), and he immediately knew that a woman touched him (Lk 7:39). From some in the crowds' point of view, these activities squarely fit Jesus in the role of one of the prophets of old.<sup>146</sup>

So far, Jesus' relationship with the crowds and the rest of the peasantry seems to be influenced by preconceived thoughts as a result of past experiences with prominent historical figures. Hence, their knowledge of Jesus is misinterpreted and understood in terms of what they already knew and what they probably expected. However, as the relationship grows from Galilee to Jerusalem, Jesus continues to reveal himself differently. By being arrested, the peasantry is probably lured to think that they might have followed the wrong person. But at the end of Luke's story, they too seem to have finally understood Jesus. As a result, all the peasantry become the crowds of Luke 9:18, while they beat their breasts and returned home (Lk 23:48). They are probably convinced with the centurions' remarks about who Jesus was; he was innocent.

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were prophetic (Lk 3:5-6, 16-18). In the last section of the gospel: "New perspectives", the disciples on the way to Emmaus presented him as the expected prophet (Lk 24:19). In these various presentations, Jesus is described in terms of the functional roles that are likened to the prophetic ministry.

<sup>145</sup> With reference to anointing, three categories of people were anointed in the history of Judaism: kings, priests and prophets. It was therefore normal to have thought of Jesus in terms of a prophet.

<sup>146</sup> Williams (2003:142) squarely describes Jesus' as executing prophetic representational functions. It is in terms of these representational functions as elaborated above, that the crowds identified him as a prophet. However, Jesus' identity seems to go beyond that of a prophet because he explains his suffering, rejection and dying as a *dei-* (cf Lk 22:37; 24:7, 44).

#### 5.7.4 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish elite

The question on who Jesus is, is immediately followed with what seemed to be the *raison d'être* or the very foundation of the dialogue. The speculations of the crowds and Peter's response are followed with words of caution (Lk 9:21). Jesus, however, does not leave his disciples in suspense – his words of caution are immediately followed with a justification, introduced by *ei)pw\_n* (Lk 9:22a). The verb *ei)pw\_n* explains who Jesus is in terms of what will befall him. He will suffer many things, be rejected and be killed and on the third day be raised (Lk 9:22b). The principal accusers that will orchestrate Jesus' suffering, rejection and subsequent killing are the Jewish elite, represented by the elders, the chief priests and the scribes.

Jesus spares the Pharisees, who now clearly have identified themselves as one of his adversaries, but keeps on conversing about their allies, the scribes (Lk 5:21, 30; 6:7). In Galilee he tried to minimise the antagonism directed at him by the Pharisees and the scribes. As he proceeds to Jerusalem, he predicts a new alliance (different from that of the Pharisees/scribes); whose relationship with him will be built on absolute rejection. It is clear that the problems Jesus faced with the Pharisees and the scribes are linked to his identity. Initially, they had questioned his identity, which was linked with his authority to forgive sins (Lk 5:21; 7:49). They also questioned his identity with relation to the company he keeps and his choice of followers (Lk 5:30, 33; 6:2).

However, in Galilee, Jesus was opposed and discredited, but not rejected. He did not consider the victimisation that he experienced as suffering. In Jerusalem, however, it would be different. Whereas Galilee was the nursing ground for conflict, Jerusalem appears to be the executing ground. The first contact between Jesus and the elders, chief priests and the scribes takes place in the temple where they seek to destroy him (Lk 19:47). The mechanism for rejection then matures during Jesus' trial, where he is condemned by means of false charges. On three accounts, Pilate proves him innocent (Lk 23:4, 14, 22); Herod does not condemn him either (23:11); and the centurion confirms that he is indeed innocent (Lk 23:47). In spite of these

proofs, Jesus' opponents insist in rejecting him: "away with this man" (Lk 23:18); "crucify, crucify him!" (Lk 23:21).

#### **5.7.5 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the Roman elite**

Luke 9:18-22 also seems to reflect the relationship between Jesus and the Roman leaders. The conjectures from the crowds are similar to those that have been echoed by Herod (Lk 9:7-8). The mention of three distinct personalities implies that it was not clear who Jesus was. It is also an indication that the question of his identity was a threat to Herod. The narrative line of the relationship between Jesus and the Roman elite later reveals that he is neither John the Baptist, Elijah, nor one of the prophets of old. The Roman officials convicted Jesus as "king of the Jews" (Lk 23:38). On the basis of this inscription, Jesus' death seems to have been motivated by the question of who he was and what he did. Dying as "king," it is clear that he was seen by the political authorities (the Roman elite) as a political opponent; but more as a religious opponent to the Jewish elite.

Jesus' prediction of his fate (Lk 9:22) does not spare the Roman elite as part of those who orchestrated his death. Those who were involved in the passion narrative are Jesus, the peasants, the Jewish elite, the Roman elite and God. Jesus is the subject of suffering; the Jewish elite are the direct subject of rejection; and God the implied subject of raising Jesus. The subject of Jesus' "killing", however, is ambiguous. The fact that the Roman elite were unable to rescue Jesus, in spite of their pronouncements on Jesus' innocence, implicates them as part of the group that constitutes the subject of those who "killed" Jesus. Hence, just as it is the case with the Pharisees, Jesus predicted the relationship between him and the Roman elite as that of acceptance (they declare him innocent) and rejection (they declare him a victim, by accepting his crucifixion).

#### **5.7.6 Excursus: Reading Luke 9:18-22 and Luke 9:28-36**

One of Luke's literary devices is that he sometimes repeats salient events, most probably for the purpose of clarification. The reading of Jesus' manifesto

in Luke 4:16-21 is better understood against the background of the prediction of his identity by the angel (Lk 1:32-33; 2:11); the shepherds (Lk 2:18); the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:47-55); the *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk 2:29-32, 34-35) and Anna (Lk 2:38). Luke 4:16-21 also serves as the background of his message to (the disciples of) John the Baptist (Lk 7:22-23).

In terms of who Jesus was and the consequences of what his identity entailed, Luke 9:18-22 offers an elaborate explanation of the different relationships between Jesus and his contemporaries. The understanding of this micro narrative is enhanced when it is read side-by-side with the story of the transfiguration of Jesus in Luke 9:28-36. Towards the end of the Galilean ministry Jesus realised that his identity had been interpreted wrongly by his contemporaries. To address this misunderstanding, Jesus gathers not only with his disciples, but also with them that followed him in Galilee. He then inquires what the crowds were saying about his identity. The speculations on his identity centre on what Herod already echoed. Jesus, however, would like to know what the disciples themselves think. Peter's identification of Jesus as the Messiah of God seems to distance Jesus from the popular opinion about him. With these responses, Jesus is fully aware that the crowds and the disciples still do not know who he is. Hence, he complemented their conjecture with several implications.

His identity is only to be understood when it is linked to his suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. This clarification of Jesus appears to instil more confusion in the disciples. Consequently, eight days later, he took Peter, James and John with him for a divine demonstration (Lk 9:28-36); a divine demonstration that replays the scene in Luke 9:18-22.

As a didaskalos (Lk 7:40; 8:49; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7), Jesus wants his identity to be clear to the disciples. It was therefore necessary to dispel the speculations that surrounded his identity. This is done in Luke 9:28-36, a micro narrative that mirrors Luke 9:18-22. Both micro narratives centre on Jesus' person and the fate that awaits him in Jerusalem. Luke 9:18-22 focuses on Jesus' identity and the implications thereof. Luke 9:28-36, on the other hand, is a succinct presentation of the lapses in the speculations about Jesus' identity in Luke 9:18-22, as well as a confirmation of



who Jesus is. This is sealed by a legitimation and a command from God: Jesus must be listened to. He is God's chosen Son (Lk 9:35).

The drama of the transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36 replays the scene in Luke 9:18-22 in six stages. First, Jesus is in the company of some of his disciples and prays (Lk 9:18//9:28-29, 32). In the transfiguration scene the three apostles are just as passive as in Luke 9:18-22 in that they fail to pray. Secondly, the speculations of the crowds are being replayed. Jesus appears in splendour in the presence of two figures: Elijah and Moses. Elijah is one of the figures the crowds identified Jesus with, and Moses represents one of the most prominent prophets of old (Lk 9:19). John the Baptist is conspicuously absent. This absence is probably justified by the fact that, from Herod's report, he had been beheaded. Elijah and Moses are pictured as being in a discussion with Jesus. In the third act the content of the discussion between the three is disclosed. They discuss the things that Jesus will accomplish in Jerusalem. These things are those that Jesus earlier announced as the consequences of his person and works (Lk 9:22//Lk 9:31). This accomplishment seems a necessity: *dei* (Lk 9:22; 24:26, 45). Jesus' appearance and his clothes witness a change. He is in the presence of prominent prophets who, although dead, are alive. Their presence symbolises Jesus' transition from life to death and back to life. The fact that his face changes into what they had hitherto not known, means that he is not an ordinary man; he is divine, the Christ of God (Lk 9:20).

Yet, the question remains: Who is Jesus? In the fourth act, Peter's reaction still shows an attitude of ignorance and misunderstanding. He suggests that they must build three booths to make it possible for Jesus to stay in the company of Elijah and Moses. This will prevent him from going to Jerusalem where he would die (Luke 9:33). Peter clearly does not want Jesus to die. This attitude makes him an obstacle to Jesus' mission. He professes Jesus as the Christ, but does not seem ready to accept the consequences.

In the micro narrative of Luke 9:18-22 Jesus was the speaker. In Luke 9:34-35 God is the one who speaks through a voice. Jesus no longer needs to explain the implication of his identity. This time the voice, which also spoke at Jesus' baptism, announces that Jesus is God's chosen Son. The legitimation of Jesus as God's chosen one echoes Peter's declaration that Jesus is "the

Christ of God” (Lk 9:20; 23:35). The voice plays the role of legitimation; it legitimises the discussion between Jesus and the two prophets and sanctions the earlier dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus is the one who should be listened to. In the last scene of Luke 9:28-36, Jesus no longer cautions the disciples not to disclose what they had seen and heard; the three apostles seem to have decided on their own to keep quiet. Hence, they told no one anything of what they had seen (Lk 9:21//Lk 9:36).

As indicated above, the story in Luke 9:28-36 is no longer a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples as was the case in Luke 9:18-22. It is a replay of Luke 9:18-22, with Peter, James and John as representatives of the disciples watching and reacting, and a voice speaking. Unfortunately, upon return, they do not disclose what they saw.<sup>147</sup> These two passages portray the misunderstandings in knowing who Jesus is as he moves from Galilee to Jerusalem. However, either understood or not, Jesus continues to reveal himself through his activities and through his relationships. He is not John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets of old; he is the Messiah whose credentials will be justified through suffering, conflict, rejection, death and his subsequent raising by God.

This understanding of the transfiguration narrative, as a replay of Luke 9:18-22, stands to discourage all forms of speculation with reference to the comparison between Jesus and Moses (Evans 1965 Moessner 1983:584; Brawley 1987:22, 24; Tuckett 1996:85). Moses’ presence at the transfiguration does not imply that Luke 9:28-36 should be read from a deuteronomistical point of view (Evans 1965; Moessner: 1983; Tuckett 1996). Such reading relegates the presence and significance of Elijah to the background. It equally obscures the meaning and implication of who Jesus is. The appearance of the two prophets and their discussion testify that Jesus is more than a prophet: he will suffer, be rejected and killed as a result of misunderstanding and conflict. As an expansion of Luke 9:18-22, the micro narrative of the transfiguration of Jesus (Lk 9:28-35) directs the attention to Jesus’ identity and the

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<sup>147</sup> The three disciples (as *primus inter pares*) still did not understand who Jesus is. When Jesus, in Luke 9:44, repeats what he said in Luke 9:18-22 (which was replayed in Lk 9:28-36), they still misinterpreted who Jesus is. Rather than misunderstand or misinterpret Jesus, as they do in Luke 9:46-48, Peter, James or John – who were present at the transfiguration scene – should have been able to assist the other disciples in understanding who Jesus is.

consequences that will befall him as a result of a misunderstood identity (Danker 1976:30). The micro narrative is directly followed with Jesus' encounter with another "great crowd" (Lk 9:37). In the crowd there is someone who seems to know who Jesus is; hence, he reports about the disciples who, on the contrary, do not understand who Jesus is (Lk 9:37-43). Both micro narratives, Luke 9:18-22 and Luke 9:28-35, centre on the same topic: Who is the Christ? This common concern confirms the relationship between these two micro narratives.

### 5.7.7 Conclusion

The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples in Luke 9:18-22 is clearly an important micro narrative in Luke's gospel. First, it announces the popular speculations about the person of Jesus and explains the relationship between Jesus and his contemporaries in terms of their misinterpretation of his identity. Secondly, although Jesus seems interested in these personifications, he wishes to explain the implication of what it entails to be the "Son of man" (Lk 9:22).<sup>148</sup> Thirdly, the dialogue confirms that Jesus' Galilean ministry was essentially animated by the question: "who is this?" or "who is the Christ?" In Galilee Jesus revealed who he was through his activities. As he moves to Jerusalem, this question still needs to be addressed. As such, the dialogue in Luke 9:18-22 becomes a point of reference for the rest of the narrative. It explains Jesus' conflict with the Roman elite and justifies his innocence. At the resurrection the women who had come to the tomb with spices are reminded by the two men present to "remember" Jesus' words while he was still in Galilee (Lk 24:6; cf Lk 9:18-22). It is the remembrance of these words that gives them assurance that Jesus has been resurrected (Lk 24:8-11).

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<sup>148</sup> Explaining Peter's response, Goldsmith (2000:38) opines that "Jewish theology does not attribute divinity to the Messiah, he (Peter) probably did not mean that Jesus was God incarnate. He presumably meant that Jesus was the long-awaited deliverer, the liberating saviour, the one who would come to save his people. Peter was acknowledging Jesus to be the Messiah, the anointed King, the son of the living God" (Goldsmith 2000:38). This implies that Jesus probably understood the direct implications of Peter's response, as well as the conjectures from the crowds; hence, his stern reprimand to the disciples not to diffuse these speculations. Jesus' explanation can be seen as a correction of the limitation of Jewish theology which might have influenced these various responses. This makes the responses from the crowds, the disciples (Peter) and Jesus complementary and not exclusive; so long as they will include suffering, rejection and dying, as a *dei-*.

Without locating the antagonism between Jesus and his adversaries geographically; the position of Luke 9:18-22 justifies Luke's gospel as a gospel of conflict. It situates the antagonism between Jesus and his contemporaries within the context of their relationships on the issue of who he is. Jesus' complementary explanations are an elaboration of the prophetic words that had been said about him at the "early beginnings" of the gospel (see § 3.2.2). The identification of Jesus as the Christ had been announced by the angel to the shepherds (Lk 2:11); Luke himself testified about what had been revealed to Simeon, namely "that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:26). Even the demons knew Jesus as the Christ (Lk 4:41). His baptism concludes with the confirmation of his messiahship (Lk 3:21-22). In a certain sense, therefore, the micro narrative in Luke 9:18-22 can be seen as a summary of Luke's gospel. This micro narrative serves as key to the understanding of the rest of the gospel story, especially with regard to Jesus' relationships with the various character groups in the Gospel, as well as the question on his identity.

## **5.8 AN EMIC READING OF LUKE: SOME REFLECTIONS**

Previous approaches on leadership and conflict (as discussed in chapter 2) have led scholars to various answers to the question of who the Christ is. An emic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke has led to similar conclusions. For instance, it agrees with Wenham (2005:63) that Christ was the Jesus of continuity; continuity between Judaism and the new movement of followers (see Tuckett 1996:64; Brawley 1987). It also agrees with Van Staden that Jesus was the Jesus of compassion (Van Staden 1990:4), one who restored lost hope to the afflicted. Although the various character groups did not understand who Jesus was, all the events surrounding his identity were shaped by God's will and not by the devil, the Roman elite or Jewish politics (Spencer: 2005:117). His mission in Galilee and Jerusalem qualify him as a missional Jesus (Goheen 2005), who prepared the disciples for the future ministry (Moessner 1983:579). It was a mission of risk-bearing (Wilkes 1998:127; compare the Samaritan mission [Lk 9:51-55]), based on the principle of service (Nyawung 2005), and not lordship (see Lk 22:25-27).

Jesus appears to be an enigmatic figure. This is probably why most of the reservations of the religious leaders and the disciples concerning Jesus' identity were quite often kept to themselves (Lk 5:21-22; 6:7-8; 7:39; 11:38; 15:1-2; see Powell 1990:105). The Lukan Jesus seems to be a Jesus of scriptural empowerment. He begins his ministry by using scripture as a tool in defence of his adversaries, and ends it with scripture (Lk 24:46) as he further empowers and commissions his disciples. Henceforth, his identity can be discovered by reading and interpreting scripture, because he is the Christ of scripture.

Apart from divine declarations, no other character group seems to have a grip of who he is as the Gospel unfolds. Although Jesus is Joseph's son (Lk 4:22), he has a heavenly mission.<sup>149</sup> His relationship with the different systems of his time was marked with paradox. Although he showed concern and confidence in the disciples, they doubted him. In spite of his continuous teaching and words of caution, Judas betrayed him, Peter did not keep his promise, and the disciples deserted him at the time he needed them. When they were expected to mediate on Jesus' behalf, they misunderstood and

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<sup>149</sup> Luke's gospel does not seem to lay as much emphasis on Jesus' relationship with Joseph as it does on his relationship with Mary. Although Joseph seems less committed in the identification of Jesus, he works positively in the background. Luke does not describe his reaction when he discovers Mary's pregnancy. However, what is evident is that he does not divorce her. On several occasions, he shows solidarity towards Mary and "her son". First, he accompanies her to Bethlehem for the purpose of enrolment; he witnesses the birth of a son, made provision for the baby because the baby is wrapped in "swaddling clothes" for comfort (Lk 2:7). For the first time in Luke, he is a personal witness to divine testimonies about Jesus from the angels and shepherds and later by Simeon and Anna. While Mary kept everything that was said about Jesus in her heart, nothing is still said about Joseph's reaction (Lk 2:18). However, he continued to support Mary as they both brought Jesus for presentation in the temple to offer sacrifice. Their presence in the temple with the required items testifies to their mutual understanding to bring the baby Jesus up in safety. Once more, according to tradition, they both moved to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, and on their return discovered that Jesus was not with them (Lk 2:44). Joseph accompanies Mary in search of "her son" (Lk 2:48). Even though Jesus is said to have remained obedient to his parents (Lk 2:51), apparently Joseph seems to remain quiet while Mary is the one who dialogues with Jesus (Lk 2:48). From this point, Joseph vanishes from the scene of Jesus' story; while Mary is reported to be present and caring (Lk 8:19-21). *Vis-à-vis* the Cameroonian tradition, where a father (whether adoptive or not) is considered the head of the family, Joseph is passively active. Luke does not explain Joseph's opinion when Mary is found to be pregnant or in the naming process; Mary reprimands Jesus while Joseph seems quiet (Lk 2:48). However, while Simeon's prophecy establishes a relationship of pain between Mary and Jesus (Lk 2:35), Jesus' relationship with Joseph is shown in his lineage to David (Lk 2:5). This element is important because it links the genealogy of Jesus: He is "the son (as supposed) of Joseph, and Joseph is from the lineage of David, which links up with "Adam, the son of God" (Lk 3:23, 31, 38). By contrast, the character of Jesus' divine sonship remains prominent and runs through the entire Gospel.

misinterpreted him in terms of their own expectations. They did not even believe in the story of the resurrection, nor recognised him when he appeared in their midst. Yet, at the end, they seemed to have understood Jesus; hence, they became witnesses and were commissioned to pursue in the ministry of preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all nations (Lk 24:47-48).

While the Jewish elite connive with the peasantry to ignore and reject him on the basis of his activities and declarations, the Roman elite simply seem to have become cowards, and do not play their expected role. However, in each of these character groups, some individuals seem to have distinguished themselves. Simeon the priest spoke well of Jesus (Lk 2:30-35). Some elders of the Jews seem to recognise and recommend what he does. Hence, they seem to stand in support of missionary expansion (Lk 7:1-10). Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council, offers to bury Jesus (Lk 23:50-56), while the centurion declared him as *dikaios*. At the end of the gospel, the *laos* associate with the *o!xlov*; they confirm that Jesus was innocent (Lk 23:48). Even though some of the religious elite (the Pharisees) seem to have shown hospitality to Jesus, they seem to have been wrongly motivated (Lk 7:36; 11:37; 14:1-6). Jesus seems to have identified traits of hypocrisy in such acts.

In a nutshell, for Luke's story to be understood, each character group must be read from their own perspective. No character group needs to be treated as bad or evil, otherwise Luke risks being misjudged or misinterpreted. In other words, the Jewish elite, as well as the Jewish peasantry should be understood from their context. For example, there seems a difference in Luke's use of *laos* and *o!xlov*. Even though those present in the Jerusalem triumphant entry were the *o!xloi*, this seems not to have been a homogeneous composition. The religious leaders later on lured both a distorted *o!xlov* and a distorted apostle to arrest Jesus. At the end of the trial, the *laos* approved of his crucifixion. It is therefore erroneous to quickly affirm that the crowd that sang hosanna to Jesus immediately turned against him at the crucifixion. However, this argument neither exonerates the *o!xlov* nor any other character group, including present day humanity. It is in this light that Cleopas' report about Jesus' trial needs to be re-read with careful attention. Seemingly, the chief priests and the rulers are not to be held solely

responsible for Jesus' death (Lk 24:20). The "evil generation" (Lk 17:25) or "the Gentiles" (Lk 18:32) seem to be held responsible. All the character groups in Luke seem to fall within this context.

In recent scholarship, the question of Jesus' identity is mistakenly attached to who is responsible for his death (Cassidy 1983: 146-167; Jane Via (1983:122-145). This seems to be a misinterpretation and a misdirection of the conflict that Jesus faced in his ministry as a result of his person and mission. Such misinterpretation can possibly lead to the development and propagation of an anti- or pro-Semitic theology. Hence, the use of social scientific analysis in the study of the conflict in Luke's gospel seems a solution to this misinterpretation. Goldsmith opines that

We must not forget that the New Testament (with the possible exception of Luke, although that too is debatable) is written by Jews and therefore the charge of anti-Semitism is unlikely to be well-founded despite the rejection of Jesus and the Christian church by the great majority of Jews.

(Goldsmith 2000:73)

Who Jesus is and how he was understood can responsibly be assimilated when every reader sees him/herself as representing one of the systems that were in relationship with Jesus. In other words, a possible approach to the understanding of who Jesus was (and is) should begin with the perspective of the  $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&v$  and end with that of the  $\omicron!\times l\omicron v$ . Jesus' person and work in Luke's gospel is described in terms of continuity. The lawyer is expected to behave differently; the ruler of the Jews in the temple is in favour of missionary expansion, the centurion legitimates Jesus' innocence. And the disciples are requested to bear witness to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

## Chapter 6

### Luke 9:18-22: An etic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke

*We must be careful that we do not import into the text what is not there and consider these impositions as word of God. We must also be conscious that we do not miss what it is that the text does not seek to convey and what effect and formative power it would wish to have on us and the communities of faith that surround us.*

(DeSilva 2000:18)

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

From an emic point of view there seems an inseparable link between the understanding of Jesus' person and works and the understanding of the various relationships in which he was involved. These relationships seem to have been the principal medium through which he revealed himself, and through which he was known and understood by the various character groups in Luke's gospel. The conclusions of the previous Chapter indicate that the relationship between Jesus and the various characters of Luke was that of conflict characterised by misunderstanding, misinterpretation, prejudice, contempt, ambiguity, suspicion, hate, distrust, malice, deceit, risk, conspiracy, rivalry and tension. At the background of these vices lies the question "who is the Christ?"

This atmosphere was not strange to a first-century Mediterranean reader being part of an agonistic society. For a modern reader, however, the case is different. The eagerness of the modern reader to understand these relationships places him/her in a position of someone struggling to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" (Rohrbaugh 1996:2; see also Ps 137:4). The same can be said of the modern reader coming from an African background.

First of all, an African reader is also confronted with the social, cultural and historical distance between the first-century Mediterranean context and that of the twenty-first century Africa. Because of this difference, many scholars are of the conviction that a responsible reading and interpretation of the Bible has to be a cross-cultural activity that demands careful attention to these differences. The fact that the Biblical stories are stories about people further necessitates this kind of reading. The moment one takes the notion



seriously that the lives and behaviour of the people we meet in the Bible should be understood within a particular cultural and historical setting, a cross-cultural reading becomes the obvious route to go (see Elliott 1993). It also makes the modern reader, as an outsider to the text and its world, aware of the temptation to understand a different culture and its social systems from the point of view of that which is known, that is, the culture of the reader. Ethnocentrism always creeps in where the own culture serves as yardstick in evaluating other cultures.

The second problem that faces the modern African reader is that the texts of the New Testament are “high context” texts, produced by societies that leave much to the reader or hearer’s imagination and common knowledge (Malina 2001a:2; see again § 5.1). The authors and original readers of the Biblical texts shared the same social system and experiences. Contemporary (African) readers come from a different social system than that of the Biblical authors. These social, cultural and historical gaps become an even bigger handicap when the modern reader is a member of a “low context” society. To overcome this difference in order to gain access to the social system of the original audience, modern scholarship often stresses imagination. This, of course, supposes a certain level of assumption. Or, put differently, it compels the modern reader to devise a methodology that will enable him/her to penetrate the social, cultural and historical setting in which these texts (like Luke’s gospel) originated. By using these models, the reader at least can try to grasp an understanding of these texts in more or less the same way the original audience would have done.

The understanding and interpretation of the relationship between Jesus and the different character groups in Luke’s narrative world require a sociological, anthropological and historical study of these groups and the social context of first-century Mediterranean society. This approach can broadly be labelled a social scientific approach, an approach that can engage a dialogue between the modern reader and Luke’s gospel and its social setting. It is also a historical activity because social scientific criticism (SSC) is seen as an extension of the study of the historical dimension of texts (see § 4.4.2.5). Social scientific criticism operates through the use of models and

theories, which are reading scenarios that make Jesus' story of conflict in Luke's gospel accessible and relevant to the present-day reader.

Although SSC is both diachronic and synchronic, this Chapter will focus on the synchronic facet thereof, that is, the examination of the social, cultural, political and religious context of the first-century Mediterranean world. The diachronic approach is reserved for the next Chapter when the African context will be compared with that of Luke.<sup>150</sup>

The aim of SSC in this section is to provide an etic reading of leadership, conflict and identity surrounding the person of Jesus in Luke's gospel. Within the context of this thesis, it is the phase of diagnosis and explanation. It is an attempt to explain the nature of the relationships that Jesus engaged with his contemporaries, including their outcome. Inasmuch as the emic reading concentrates on what the natives thought, the etic reading is interested in investigating why they thought the way they did, and not otherwise.<sup>151</sup> An etic reading will therefore provide further explanation to the social codes embedded in Lukan texts, which have not been explicitly mentioned or explained because of its "high context" position. It is therefore an immersion into the Jewish and Greco-Roman background in order to "enter" Luke's story of Jesus.

The etic reading of Luke's gospel, focusing on the question of Jesus' identity, his leadership and the conflict he experienced, will be dealt with in three sections. The first section examines the socio-cultural setting of Luke's context by the use of certain models. The application of these models interrogates the Lukan texts in a new way. This does not mean, as put by Esler, that "a model is ... a set of pigeon-holes into which data is slotted. It is a heuristic tool, allowing comparisons to be made with the texts for the purpose of posing new questions to them. The texts must supply the answers, not the model" (Esler 1994:12-13). Models will therefore be used to guide and

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<sup>150</sup> As a process that prompts new questions and enhances a to-and-fro shuttling between the models that are used and the data in Luke's story of Jesus that are studied, SSC in principle, is based on the abductive method of interpretation (Garrett 1992:95-96; Esler 2006:4). The aim of the back and forth process is to avoid an anachronistic and ethnocentric prejudgement.

<sup>151</sup> With the etic reader coming from a "low context" society, SSC acknowledges that different cultures may have different ways of construing, describing and explaining reality as they live and experience it (Elliott 1993:39).

control the investigation of the social world of Luke, and not the reverse (Carney 1975:5). Moreover, the selection and application of the models and theories to be used also take into consideration the fact that “[t]here is ... no single theory on which most anthropologists agree” (Overholt 1996:4-5; see also Esler 2006:4).

The second section focuses on the application of the models selected and described in § 4.2 and 4.3. This will serve the purpose of elucidating Jesus’ story of conflict and leadership in Luke. The new answers provided by this exercise will surely enhance the understanding of the issues that surrounded Jesus’ identity in Luke, and the leadership style he adopted as a consequence of the conflict he faced because of the actions of his opponents. The last section will centre on an etic reading of Luke 9:18-22 – a reading of Jesus’ relationships and the ensuing misunderstanding and misinterpretations from the point of view of an “outsider”.

This etic reading is inspired by the following questions: Why did Jesus come into conflict with the various character groups (systems) of his time? Why was the relationship between Jesus and almost all of the characters in Luke marred with misunderstanding? Why did some characters exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards Jesus? Why was Jesus’ identity a problem for his contemporaries? Why were the social and cultural systems present in Luke a source of conflict? Why does Luke introduce the “good news of Jesus within the context of conflict? In answering these “why”- questions, models will serve as speculative instruments for the purpose of organising, profiling and interpreting the raw material gathered as a result of the emic reading done previously (§ 3.4.2).

## **6.2 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF LUKE’S GOSPEL**

### **6.2.1 Introduction**

It was argued in § 2.6 that conflict in Luke is social, cultural, economical and political in nature, that is, societal (Neyrey 1991a). Consequently, a social scientific critical (SSC) approach to Luke’s text was prescribed as an alternative approach for the understanding of Jesus and the hostilities that he faced. It was further argued that sociological, historical and literary studies on Luke’s gospel had failed to connect Jesus’ identity to the question of conflict

and leadership. The emic reading of Luke's gospel has confirmed that there is a definite connection between Jesus' person, his leadership and the different conflicts he was engaged in with his contemporaries. The point of departure for the use of SSC in the understanding and interpretation of Jesus' story in Luke as stated in § 4.4.5 is the use of sociological and anthropological models and theories. For this task, earlier research by pioneer scholars must be taken seriously.<sup>152</sup> So far, their very astute approach has left little room for compliments in recent works.

It is the rich variety of well developed models and theories treated by these scholars that justifies the brevity with which some cultural and social values of first-century Mediterranean society will be dealt with. However, for the sake of clarity and cohesion, these values will in short be introduced and thereafter applied as models in the etic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke. In effect, the main areas that characterise and define the socio-cultural context of first-century Mediterranean society are: 1) social relations; 2) social dynamics; and 3) cultural dynamics. Motivated by the pivotal values of honour and shame, all these characteristics are dependent on each other because they define the social behaviour of individuals and groups.

## **6.2.2 Honour and shame: Pivotal values of first-century Mediterranean society**

### **6.2.2.1 Honour and shame in first-century Mediterranean society**

In the Mediterranean society, honour and shame as the very base of its culture were dominant over all other concerns (Esler 1994:25; Rohrbaugh 1995:183; Moxnes 1996:19; Downing 2000:13; DeSilva 2000:23; Malina 2001d:27; DeMaris & Leeb 2006:180; Hanson 2008:39).<sup>153</sup> For this reason,

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<sup>152</sup> Many scholars have done elaborate, recommendable and sustainable works on this topic. For detailed information, the following could be consulted: Carney (1975); Pitt-Rivers (1977:21-23); Polanyi (1977); Malina (1981); Gilmore (1982); Eisenstadt & Roniger (1984); Elliott (1986); Bechtel (1991); Moxnes (1991); McVann (1991); Neyrey (1991a); Esler (1994); Van Eck (1995); Rohrbaugh (1995); Hanson (1996); Downing (2000); DeSilva (2000); DeMaris & Leeb (2006).

<sup>153</sup> Downing (2000:21) opines that while honour and shame are strictly Mediterranean values, they remain strange to the Western world, especially North America, where the "profitable" is rather considered as the central value (Malina & Neyrey 1991b:26; Esler 1994:27; Neyrey

the concern for honour and shame permeated and shaped every aspect of social and public interaction in the world of Luke. Jesus attests the importance of these values in Luke 14:8-10:

When you are invited by anyone to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honor (prwtoklisi&an), lest a more eminent man (e)ntimo&tero&v) than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man', and then you will begin with shame (ai) sxu&nhv) to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher'; then you will be honored (e!stai soi do&ca) in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

(Lk 14:8-10)

Honour and shame were subjective values because it is the community that determined what was honourable and what was shameful within its setting. In comparative terms, honour in the Mediterranean society was a dynamic and relational concept. It was a claim to worth by an individual, followed by a social recognition of such worth. Simply put, it was a value of public reputation, because worthy honour was that which was validated by the public. It was also a claim of superiority and excellence over others, or to demand rights on the basis of social precedence (Pitt-Rivers 1977:21-23; Rohrbaugh 2007:32). Within the world of Jesus, honour was either ascribed or acquired.<sup>154</sup> Conversely, shame was a situation when someone's behaviour was contrary to the values of the group. Simply put, a shameful person was someone

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1996a:115; DeSilva 2000:26; Malina 2001d:52). Peristiany (1965:9-10) had argued the contrary. According to his observation, all societies have their own forms of honour and shame, which either have significant analogies and/or significant differences. This idea is justified by the fact that honour and shame are more subjective than objective values, depending on the society. However, Moxnes (1996:19) observes that even though these values may exist in other societies, they play a minor role. In fact, Downing's judgement as well as that of others might have been influenced by the fact that they write from the perspective of a "low context" society, whereas the Mediterranean society is that of the "high context", where habits are uniform. Secondly, honour and shame are "high context" words (Plevnik 1993:93) whose meaning is only deduced from the social behaviour of individuals within that context. Thirdly, DeSilva's belief in values such as self-esteem and worth may be influenced by the nature of the capitalist world from where he and the others write, because in these societies it is all about individualism.

<sup>154</sup> Ascribed honour is through birth, when someone either grows to inherit a reputation as a member of an honourable family or when it is a grant bestowed by someone in a powerful or honourable position. In this case, it refers either to status or position. Honour can be acquired later in life through adoption into a more honourable family, or through personal excellence when it is conferred on the basis of virtuous deeds or by excelling over others in various forms of social interactions (Gilmore 1982:191; Moxnes 1996:20; DeMaris & Leeb 2006:180). It is possible for someone to have both ascribed and acquired honour in the society.

without value. In fact, honour made the reputation of someone, while shame marred it. Hence, honourable persons were considered as models because they drew attraction and popularity.<sup>155</sup>

As subjective values, what was honourable varied among the elite and non-elite. Even though each group of individuals understood the importance of honour, as well as the degrading consequences of shame, they had different perceptions of how honour was obtained and preserved, while shame was universally avoided. For example, Rohrbaugh (1996:9) remarks that the accumulation of surplus that constituted honour among the elite was considered a shameful thievery by the peasantry. Honour or shame could be acquired through the process of challenge-response (or challenge-riposte).<sup>156</sup> Even though honour and shame as corporate values applied to both sexes (Van Eck 1995:167) they had gender implications within the Mediterranean society. Hence, while honour was considered as masculine, shame had a feminine connotation.<sup>157</sup> Men demonstrated honour in public places through strength, wisdom and courage. Women occupied private or domestic space of home, because they were considered as embedded in the identity and honour of some male (DeSilva 2000:34). As such they were regarded as a point of vulnerability to the family's honour.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> In such a society (as first-century Palestine), honourable persons are a prime indicator of social status. It becomes important to know with whom one eats, converses, walks and interacts. Honour is also gained through such association.

<sup>156</sup> The exercise of challenge-riposte was that of social communication whereby, the public arbitrated in a confrontation between two equals. It was a process by which honour was either publicly acknowledged or despised. Consequently, the claim to honour that was not publicly recognised was seen as foolish (Rohrbaugh 2007:32).

<sup>157</sup> For a discussion on the gender implications of the values of honour and shame, consult Weidman (2003: 519-530) and Rosell (2008:88-89).

<sup>158</sup> It is in this sense that shame as modesty, esteem and shyness can be appreciated in its positive side as a value of the Mediterranean culture. The value of shame also offered a woman the right to preserve her chastity. In the negative sense, shame was applied to both males and females (Moxnes 1996:21). For example, the physical condition of the woman in Luke 13:10-17 placed her in a shameful situation within society. Her restoration by Jesus means the recovery of her normal social status as a woman, and through that the restoration of her human dignity and honour.

### 6.2.2.2 Honour and shame in Luke's gospel

Luke's gospel presents various situations of honour and shame, and is one of the main sources of conflict between Jesus and the various systems of his community. These could be summarised in more or less three domains. Firstly, Jesus voiced his inaugural words of renewal and transformation (Lk 4:18-19) within the context where social discrimination had imposed shame on its victims.<sup>159</sup> Concretely, his healing sessions (Lk 4:38-41; 5:17-26; 6:6-10; 7:1-10; 14:1-6; 18:35-43) are aimed at restoring lost hope because social rejection had reduced human dignity into a situation of misery, despair and exclusion. In fact, these healing sessions serve the purpose of rehabilitation. In addition, Jesus' concern and interaction with people of low repute such as tax collectors and sinners (Lk 5:27), the woman in the Pharisee's house (Lk 7:37-50); the woman who bled for twelve years (Lk 8:43-48); the crippled woman (Lk 13:10-17) and the lepers (Lk 5:12-14; 17:11-19) are well understood when they are read with the lenses of upliftment.

Jesus expressed and commanded honour by showing supremacy over natural events such as death (Lk 7:11-17; 8:50-56), the storm (Lk 8:22-25) and demonic beings (Lk 8:26-39; 9:42-43; 11:14); all symbols of chaos. Publicly he defied, criticised and discredited the Pharisees (Lk 11:37-44; 12:1; 18:9-14); the lawyers (Lk 11:45-52); the scribes (Lk 20:45-47) and the ruling elite as a whole (Lk 20:9-18). Jesus' actions implied shame on the ruling classes that hitherto considered its structures and leadership as honourable. On the other hand, the criticism over Jesus' choice of disciples (Lk 5:33; 6:1-2) and his association with sinners and tax collectors (Lk 5:30) were all attempts by his opponents to denigrate him and bring shame to his person and his activities.

Secondly, Jesus' activities were actually those that credited him honour and respect at the expense of the established honour gained and imposed on the society by the ruling Roman and Jewish elite, respectively. He confirmed leadership status by calling disciples (Lk 5:1-11, 27-29; 6:12-16) and by assigning them for specific mission (Lk 9:1-6; 10:1-12). The multitude that followed him (Lk 5:19; 7:11; 8:2; 9:10-17; 57-62; 14:25), defended him (Lk 19:48; 20:6, 19, 26; 22:2), rejoiced over his activities (Lk 13:17) and

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<sup>159</sup> As rare and competed commodities, honour gained by one party was shame inflicted on the other party. Hence, by definition, socially impaired persons were shameful by nature. Jesus' words of restoration therefore implied the institution of a new community where the shameful recovered their dignity.

acclaimed him (Lk 19:28-40), testified that he was a person of dignity and honour. This honour was further bolstered by the successes during several sessions of challenge-riposte (Lk 4:1-13; 5:17-26, 29-39; 6:1-5, 6-11; 7:39-50; 11:14-20, 37-54; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 20:20-26, 27-40).

Thirdly, Jesus was addressed with titles that endowed him with maximum honour (Malina & Neyrey 1991b:47). From the beginning of the gospel to the end, Luke conditions his audience on how to identify Jesus; he is from the lineage of David (Lk 1:27; 2:4; 18:38). His credentials present him as the most honourable person in Israel (Lk 1:32-33, 35; 2:11).<sup>160</sup> His genealogy attests to his kinship relations (Lk 3:23-38). Through the Holy Spirit, God himself confirms his sovereign status both at baptism (Lk 3:22) and in the story of the transfiguration (Lk 9:35; cf. Ps 2). In fact, Jesus is introduced as one who must be listened to. After the crucifixion, the centurion summarised Jesus' honourable status by declaring him innocent of all the charges that had so far been labelled against him (Lk 23:47). His resurrection further confirms his supreme status and vindication by God. Jesus confirms his status by interpreting his suffering (and death) as a means to "enter into his glory" (Lk 24:26), which is a place of honour.

Summarily, the disruption of the *status quo* by Jesus disfavoured the existing system, bringing shame to its structures, as well as uplifting the honour of the less privileged. The uplifting of the socially impaired persons implied a reversal of status (see Mary's *Magnificat* in Luke 2:48-54). Jesus discredited existing political and religious authorities and became the point of focus of the populace. The confrontations he had with his contemporaries are better understood when they are analysed within the context of the quest for the latter to maintain and preserve their social status of honour. Jesus was thus discredited with negative labels, which accorded him the status of a deviant and rendered his activities invalid and illegal.

### **6.2.3 Social relations in first-century Mediterranean society**

Social relations in first-century Mediterranean society had an economic and religious impact. In fact, the economic and the religious systems were inseparable because even the control of economic resources meant the

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<sup>160</sup> These credentials are worthy of note because they come from credible agents such as angel Gabriel (Lk 1:32-33), Simeon (Lk 2:30-32) and Anna (Lk 2:38). Malina & Neyrey (1991b:54) observe that testimonies from honourable persons (especially of higher status), counts for much in the context of first-century Mediterranean society.



exercise of power (Moxnes 1988:27). With regards therefore to kinship, two models – dyadic personality and patron-client – were characteristic of this society because they constituted the basis of honour.

### 6.2.3.1 Kinship<sup>161</sup>

“Kin” refers to being of the same sort as oneself. According to Hanson (1996:62) kinship is “an abstraction relating to the network of relationships based on birth (either real or fictive) and marriage” (Hanson 1996:62), that is, a network built on family relationships.<sup>162</sup> Hence, the Mediterranean society was organised on the basis of kinship institutions such as families, clans and kindred, which were considered as fundamental seats of group honour. There was a distinct division between kin and non-kin, that is, between family members and non-family members. Basically, a person’s family of origin constituted a primary source of reference, location and identity. In like manner, someone’s merit begins with the merit of the person’s lineage or the reputation of the one’s ancestral house (DeSilva 2000:158).

In Jewish culture it was customary for people to be known first of all by their father’s name, whose reputation became the starting point of his children’s reputation. In this respect, Luke’s gospel opens with Jesus’ genealogy which links him with Joseph (Lk 3:23), Adam and God (Lk 3:38).<sup>163</sup> In § 2.5.3, it was argued (according to Desjardins) that Jesus was sometimes responsible for the controversies that were raised against him by his contemporaries. His attitude seemed to have impinged on the traditional

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<sup>161</sup> Malina (1986b 152) distinguishes kinship, economics, politics and religion as four basic social institutions by which basic human values are realised. Even though kinship has been singled out as the main institution in first-century Mediterranean society (Heilbroner 1972:37; Finley 1973:50; Van Eck 1995:210), these four institutions are not discrete entities that operate in isolation. However, kinship appears as the most protected institution because it is interactive (Hanson 2008:27). Hence, everything that goes with kinship dictates the economic, political and religious pace of the society, and *vice versa*.

<sup>162</sup> In this case, the name family is generic and means different things in different contexts. It could refer to biological relationship as well as people with a common ideology (political, religious and economic).

<sup>163</sup> Although genealogies in first-century Mediterranean society were complex social constructs (Hanson 2008:30), the point at stake is not a comparison between Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus and Luke’s account. Each of the two evangelists certainly had a targeted audience with specific intentions. Consequently, by concluding the genealogy of Jesus with Adam and God, Luke intends to point to the inclusive vision of Jesus’ ministry. In Matthew, Jesus’ genealogy links him to Abraham (Mt 1:1), as a reference to Israel’s faith.

notion of kinship, thereby upsetting the acceptable societal norm. For example, the call of disciples (Lk 5:1-11, 27-32; 6:12-16) had serious social, economic and religious implications.<sup>164</sup> Socially, Jesus explained true discipleship in terms of its implications within and without the family. In addition to Jesus' implied chaos and division within families (Lk 12:49-53), discipleship also meant absolute renunciation (Lk 9:57-62; 14:26). It is a conception of the family that seemed an offence to the *status quo* because it affected the sense of family honour. Secondly, the call of disciples implied an economic loss in terms of productivity and the payment of taxes (from fishermen) and the loss in man power (tax collector). Lastly, by calling the disciples, Jesus constructed a new kind of kinship with different religious demands and different and new relationships (Lk 8:19-21).

A new community was therefore being defined in terms of those "who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21; 10:37), and not necessarily in terms of ethnic claims (Lk 3:8; 8:20). Jesus' understanding of kinship went beyond ethnicity. Hence, while the crippled woman is referred to as "a daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13:16), Zacchaeus is also identified "a son of Abraham" (Lk 19:9). Jesus thus gave an inclusive picture of the society that he intended to build. Jesus' understanding and application of kinship should not, however, be misunderstood or misinterpreted. By using the model of kinship he contextualised his mission in terms of what God required. He did not disapprove of earthly kinship; rather, he redefined and reshaped the traditional notion of kinship (Hanson 2008:26). It is a redefinition of kinship which marched with God's principles of love and compassion: "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37). By scolding his disciples for obstructing little children from coming to him (Lk 18:15-17), Jesus upheld children as the first constituents of earthly (fictive) kinship. The fact that he remained obedient to his parents as he grew up (Lk 2:51) testifies that the religion which he professed and taught, was that of unity, respect, love and concern.

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<sup>164</sup> In first-century Mediterranean context, personal change was downgraded because of in-group/out-group and dyadic personality. Hence, once called, the disciples acquired new status as members of Jesus' fictive family. It is a decision that enabled them to give up their former status and all that it entailed, in order to follow Jesus (Malina & Pilch 2006:312).

### 6.2.3.2 Dyadic personality

Just as it is the case with the African society, first-century Mediterranean society was not a monadic and individualistic society.<sup>165</sup> Rather, it was a society of “group-oriented”, “collectivist” or “dyadic” personality, since people derived their identity from the group to which they belonged.<sup>166</sup> As described in § 6.2.2.1 above, people of first-century Mediterranean society saw and qualified themselves only through the eyes of others (Malina & Neyrey 1991c:73; Van Eck 1995:175). In such societies, people are often engaged in a sort of “psychological symbiosis” wherein one person’s weaknesses are complemented with another person’s strengths. Harré (1984:105) explains this phenomenon of mutual dependency as follows:

Psychological symbiosis is a permanent interactive relation between two persons, in the course of which one supplements the psychological attributes of the other as they are displayed in social performances, so that the other appears as a complete and competent social and psychological being.

(Harré 1984:105)

In spite of this stress, people were responsible for their individual attitude, especially if they acted contrary to group norms. Hence, abnormal persons were considered as deviants. The social scientific model of social identity theory equally explains that in such societies, groups tend to develop strong feelings in order to affirm and protect their identity as members of a particular group (see § 4.3.2). This is also a means to build stereotypes, hatred, prejudice and bias *vis-à-vis* outer groups.

The context of first-century Mediterranean society was that of “strong group persons” (Malina & Neyrey 1991c:74); a context that influenced and

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<sup>165</sup> A comparative analysis of first-century Mediterranean society and Africa on the one hand, and European and North American societies on the other hand, has led Bell (1976:16) to remark that individualism has been a threat to Western civilisation since the sixteenth century. However, this conclusion does not approve and elevate any one of the practices over against the other, because they both have their strengths and weaknesses. It all depends on their applicability to each of these communities.

<sup>166</sup> It is in this light that special note should be taken of the remarks made by Biblical authors against certain characters. These remarks often play the role of identifiers, especially in Luke’s gospel. For example, Zacchaeus is identified as a chief tax collector (Lk 19:2); Naaman is the Syrian (Lk 4:27); there is “the ruler of the Pharisees” (Lk 14:1); the Samaritan leper (Lk 17:16) and Simon of Cyrene (Lk 23:26). These qualifiers identify characters as members of social groups, profession or trade or as stereotyped personalities.

justified the formation of distinct religious groups such as the Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, elders, chief priests and the disciples of John (Lk 5:33; 7:18). These groups were built on the characteristics of collaboration, solidarity, group values, group loyalty and group honour (Rohrbaugh 2007:10), which in turn identified and separated members of one group from those of another. Group members, as well as other individuals, had a personality that was described both in terms of external control and in terms of external responsibility (Malina 1992:77-78; Van Eck 1995:336).<sup>167</sup>

In Luke's gospel, Jesus redefined first-century Mediterranean dyadic personality. His redefinition of a dyadic society also implied a redefinition of society as a whole. Hence, a dyadic society is that of like-minded people who "hear and do" what God requires (Lk 8:21; 16:29-31). It is a community of transformed, empowered, assertive and self-reliant individuals that henceforth do not need to depend on external responsibility. Consequently, the disciples are challenged: "you give them something to eat" (Lk 9:13). Also, Jesus does not depend on mob conjecture to substantiate his identity. The disciples need to think and express for themselves what they feel: "But who do you say that I am?" (Lk 9:20). Jesus' vision of a dyad society is that of people who are conscious of their acts "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37). On the other hand, his healings and exorcisms were equally a means to declare the ineffectiveness of external control. His quest for restoration meant the annihilation of satanic influence over "a daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13:16; see also 6:17-18; 8:26-39; 9:37-43; 11:14); death itself had lost its power (Lk 7:11-17; 8:49-56). The Sabbath law (Lk 6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6) and Jewish regulations (Lk 5:33-39; 11:37-41) were no longer a hindrance to his restorative works. It is in this light that Jesus could declare forgiveness of sins instantly (Lk 5:23; 7:48). While the lepers are still on their way to present themselves to the priests, they are made well (Lk 17:11-19). It is therefore a

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<sup>167</sup> External control could derive from the fact that (Mediterranean) society in general has an influence on the activities of each individual. Examples of external control on Jesus could be situated at the level of cosmic forces (Lk 4:1-13) and at the level of social forces (Lk 4:22-30; 9:54-56; 18:15; 22:50). External responsibility is simply about the social duties that a person has *vis-à-vis* his/her peers as a member of the dyadic community. Even though Jesus' clash with his fellow Jews could be interpreted in terms of his attitude, he was basically rejected because he failed to function in conformity with their expectations. In other words, Jesus was rejected because he failed to execute his expected external responsibilities (the role he had to play according to the society's expectations).

society of joy, repentance and forgiveness (Lk 15:1-7, 8-10, 11-32); a society void of hindrances (Lk 17:1-4; 18:15-17; 19:1-10), where even stones can praise God (Lk 19:40).

### **6.2.3.3 Patronage and clientism**

Patron-client relationships are a form of dependency relation, involving a reciprocal exchange of unavailable goods and services. The situation of unfair distribution of resources in first-century Mediterranean society had created an imbalanced society of unequal status between the privileged (elite) and the less privileged (the peasantry). The privileged citizens had access to honour, wealth, goods, protection, and opportunities of employment, which they offered to the less-privileged in the form of a gift. The honourable activity of receiving assistance placed the receiver in the position of a client, while the giver was the patron. It is a practice which instituted and increased the chances of a long-term potential relationship between patron-client (Elliott 1996:144; DeSilva 2000:97). In this context, a patron was considered a benefactor while the client was the beneficiary.<sup>168</sup> Patronage was a relationship of dyadic contracts, where both patron and client had reciprocal obligations (Malina 2001d:105). While the client benefited from the patron's protection, advancement and appointments into administrative posts, equality in or freedom from taxation and support in legal cases, he offered the patron a variety of services, and was obliged to enhance and uphold the integrity, prestige, reputation and honour of his patron in private and public life (Elliott 1996:149). According to Block,

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<sup>168</sup> Batten (2008:50) observes that in first-century Mediterranean society, there was an absolute distinction between patronage and benefaction. Unfortunately, this distinction seems to have hardly been respected by many scholars (Joubert 2000:59-60, 62-63). The main difference resides in the fact that unlike patronage, benefaction exists between equals and is void of self-interest. However, within the context of first-century Mediterranean society, there existed two types of patronage; reciprocal patronage between individuals and personal patronage. Reciprocal patronage was engaged within patrons (the elite) themselves or within clients (the peasants). In order to maintain good relations a patron who did not have desired goods requested by his/her client contacted another patron for the satisfaction of his client. Hence, a patron who provides access to another patron for his/her client was called a "broker". This type of reciprocal patronage between patrons was good for their personal status because a client contributed to the reputation and power base of the patron and therefore became an important asset to be loved and protected. Personal patronage was a simple relation between single patrons and their clients.

[p]atronage is a model or analytical construct which the social scientist applies in order to understand and explain a range of apparent different social relationships: father-son, God-man, saint-devotee, godfather-godchild, lord-vassal, landlord-tenant, politician-voter, professor-assistant, and so forth. All these different sets of social relationships can thus be considered from one particular point of view which may render them comprehensible.

(Block, in Moxnes 1988:41)

Within the context of Luke's gospel, Jesus presents himself both as a benefactor and as a broker. As a benefactor, he executed acts of benevolence such as healing, teaching, feeding and support for the poor and the weak. As a consequence, he became indebted to public love, support, protection and honour. The climax of this attitude was the offering of himself on the cross (Lk 24:26). Contrary to Malina's view (1988:13-14), Jesus acted as a patron in the eyes of the less privileged, who were charmed by his person and works. In his efforts to prepare the community for the coming of God's kingdom, he acted as a broker, recruiting disciples, making new converts and challenging the *status quo* (Van Eck 1995:172). He warned his disciples from emulating religious leaders who served as "negative brokers" and failed to perform their right functions. In fact, they frustrated access to God through the misuse of the temple and the Torah (Moxnes 1991:256). Pharisees are described as exploiters and distortioners (Lk 11:39), honour seekers (Lk 11:43), hypocrites (Lk 12:1) and lovers of money (Lk 16:14); they serve the enemy (Lk 7:30) rather than serving God. Lawyers are burdensome and pretentious in their attitude (Lk 11:46-48), while scribes are chastised for seeking social and public prominence and being economically oppressive and exploitative (Lk 20:45-47). As a corrective, Jesus recommends the "Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:33-37) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). The Pharisees and even the disciples are advised to give alms (Lk 11:41; 12:33). It is in his service as a broker that Jesus faced fierce opposition from his rivals.

Jesus delegitimizes religious leaders by criticising and putting into question the traditional practice of patronage based on inequality, reciprocal solidarity, alliances and friendship, coercion, exploitation and the search for honour, self-interest and power (Garnsey 1988:58; Moxnes 1991:248; Batten 2008:50). He redefines patronage in the form of "brokerage" and benefaction.

It is benefaction wherein human beings commune and deputise on behalf of God. In Jesus' definition of patron-client relationship, all believers become involved in the process of making and becoming Jesus' disciples because they have become witnesses (Lk 24:48). It is therefore a community of brokers where its members are benefactors; in fact, a community of equals and not a community of clients where wealth, status and honour determine social relations. Rather, Jesus' view of a new community is that where the reciprocity of services and utilities are not expected: "when you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid" (Lk 14:12). In summary, Jesus previews a community of love and concern for each other. It is a society where nobility is derived from humble, responsible stewardship and a serviceable attitude (Lk 9:46-48; 22:25-27); a society that relies on God, and not on human patrons (Lk 11:9-11; 12:29-31; 18:29-30).

Jesus' view of human relationship was indeed an attack on the very basis of patronage. The Roman and Jewish elite, respectively, had power over control of land and wealth. In this respect, patron's often used power or threat of recourse to military force against peasant clients (see Lk 3:14, 19; 13:1, 31-34). Religious leaders misused their authority and the institutions that they served in order to extort and exploit the society (Lk 19:45-48). Jesus stood against this practice and as a result, he was seen as a rival or a usurper, or as one whose intention was to weaken their authority and power, and thus bring shame and simplicity into their respective offices. Religious leaders interpreted Jesus' activities as a profanation of the honourable activity in which they were involved; hence, the question: "tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority" (Lk 20:2). It was on this basis that Jesus was considered and rejected as a deviant.

## **6.2.4 Social dynamics of first-century Mediterranean society**

### **6.2.4.1 Limited goods**

In the early sixties, Foster (1965:296) had viewed the society of limited goods from the perspective of the peasants.

By “Image of Limited Good”, I mean that broad areas of peasant behaviour are patterned in such a fashion as to suggest that peasants view their social, economic, and natural universes – their total environment – as one in which all of the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply, as far as the peasant is concerned. Not only do these and all other “good things” exist in finite and limited quantities, but in addition there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantities.

(Foster 1965:296)

This definition is correct when the term “peasant” is understood in its generic sense to mean persons regardless of their occupation, within the context of first-century Mediterranean society (Malina 2001d:81). The culture of this society was grounded on the belief that all goods, both material (food, land, crops, livestock, money and other goods) and immaterial (honour, fame, respect, status, influence, security, safety, influence, power and authority) were limited and scarce (Moxnes 1988:77). As discussed in § 6.2.2, the only way to increase the supply of these resources, was at the expense of someone else. Consequently, honourable persons worked hard in order to preserve what they had, instead of accumulating more, which would be considered as stealing.<sup>169</sup> It was also conceived in such a society that everything good was already distributed and that nothing could be increased (Neyrey & Rohrbaugh 2008:239).

Luke’s gospel is written within the context of a limited-good-society, where the confrontation between Jesus and his opponents could be explained in terms of the quest for limited good, manifested in the form of envy. In other words, Jesus’ identity and leadership were rejected as the consequences of envy. By transforming the society of want into a society of abundance, his acts and attitude were misinterpreted by his contemporaries. Jesus’ vision of the society was that of limitless material and immaterial good, where one person’s gain would not imply another’s expense; in fact, a society of little or no anxiety (Lk 12:22-31). His was a society where riches were expressed in terms of how much has been given out; and not how much is gained or

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<sup>169</sup> In this respect, Esler (1994:5) remarks that the notion of expanding economies (capitalism) was unknown in first-century Mediterranean society. As a matter of fact, first-century Mediterranean society had no independent and identifiable economic institution.



preserved. His ethical teachings on wealth (Lk 6:20-25; 12:13-21; 18:18-30); the stories of the “Good Samaritan” (Lk 10:25-37), the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), the chief tax collector in Jericho (Lk 19:1-10) and the example of the widow’s offering (Lk 21:1-4) all testify to Jesus’ interest in transforming the traditional society of scarcity into a society of limitless goods.

Jesus’ teaching and actions triggered envy<sup>170</sup> between him and the peasants, the Jewish elite and the Roman elite. From this perspective, the questions surrounding his identity are better understood. The hostile reaction of the Nazarenes in Luke 4:22 (peer envy) is an open admission of loss on the part of the peasantry. The doubts cast on Jesus’ identity by the Pharisees and the scribes (Lk 5:21; 7:49), the question over the source of his authority (Lk 20:2), the questions of test posed by the spies (Lk 20:20-26) and the Sadducees (Lk 20:27-40), as well as the charges levied against Jesus (Lk 23:2, 5) were all attempts to disprove Jesus as a competent professional competitor. Herod’s cogitation (Lk 9:9), his quest to see Jesus (Lk 13:31-33), his attitude of contempt and mockery (Lk 23:11) and his untimely alliance with Pilate (Lk 23:12) are also aspects of contemptuous envy.

Summarily, Jesus’ public attraction pulled an undeserved honour and fame in the eyes of his adversaries, which were interpreted in terms of loss on their part. Jesus thus became a common enemy whose public activities caused a negative effect on the *status quo* at all levels. Hence, various methods were used to discredit his person and his activities; he was slandered, criticised and capped as a rival before being made an object of prosecution and death.

#### **6.2.4.2 Agonistic society**

Naturally, the situation of rivalry, envy and the scarcity of resources as stated above, lead individuals to live a defensive lifestyle, because they are in a constant strife to either protect what they already have or to increase it, if possible. First-century Mediterranean society was an example of such a

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<sup>170</sup> Envy, according to Neyrey & Rohrbaugh (2007:247), “is pain or distress at another’s success, a sense of being injured, which seeks redress”. It appears and manifests itself in five stages: the form of envy, what is envied, who envies whom, how one envies and how one avoids envy. Three forms of envy can be distinguished in Luke’s gospel: peer envy between Jesus and the peasants, professional envy between Jesus and the Jewish elite and contemptuous envy between Jesus and the Roman elite.

society of instability, imbalance and contest (Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984:76). It was a society of power struggle, mutual suspicion, tension and fear. These characteristics make the context of Luke's gospel that of an agonistic society. Freyne (1980:177) describes agonistic societies as follows:

No matter what step of the ladder one had reached there was always someone higher, a situation which made life essentially unstable, if not precarious. Even Antipas could be deprived of his possession, and benevolence to the deprived does not dominate in such a situation.

(Freyne 1980:177)

Oakman (1991:168) paints first-century Mediterranean society as a society where violence was a regular and normal part of societal experience (Rohrbaugh 1996:6); a society of continually agonistic social dynamics (Neyrey & Rohrbaugh 2007:248). Paradoxically, this was equally a society where solidarity, trust, harmony and cooperation were the hallmarks of the interactions between kinship and ethnic. Also, it is this same spirit of competitiveness within dyad groups that created stereotype behaviour and described 'outsiders' as enemies. People outside of an individual's kinship or ethnic group were considered as potential rivals and even enemies. For instance, the disciples' (John and James) suggestion to call down fire on the Samaritan village (Lk 9:51-55) was as result of the long time antagonism between the Jews (insiders) and the non-Jews (outsiders). A second example is the disciples' aggressive attitude in "protecting" Jesus (Lk 22:50). This was a protest from the disciples, with the wrong motive of protecting Jesus.

The world in which Jesus lived and ministered was therefore characterised by high levels of controversy and antagonism, conditioned by the strife for honour, the system of patronage and the presence of limited good. As a challenge to this society, Jesus offered a new orientation to the disciples. Their aggressive attitude of retaliation does not fit within the context of the new mission. Consequently, he condemned James' and John's spirit of retaliation (Lk 9:55), and restored the ear of the high priest's slave (Lk 22:51). Contrary to Desjardins (1997:72), Jesus did not condone violence nor promote it. Instead, he stood against a society where violence was the norm. His birth is heralded by the announcement of the release of Israel from

enemies, foretold in the *Benedictus* (Lk 1:68-69). This is confirmed in his manifesto in Luke 4:18. In a society where controversy thrived, Jesus' reinterpretation of the Torah and other Sabbath regulations was understood by the religious leaders as an attack on their institution, while his teachings were interpreted as subversive.

Jesus' death is a revolt against the agonistic nature of first-century Mediterranean society.<sup>171</sup> The resurrection approves his strategy to build a society of love and compassion. In the phase of physical confrontation, Jesus responded with persuasive arguments and miracles. He did not preach armed revolt; he rather constantly advocated a non-violent attitude: "No more of this" (Lk 22:51). He condemned violence and saw it as an ineffective tool in altering God's control over human history (see § 2.5.3).

## **6.2.5 Cultural dynamics of first-century Mediterranean society**

### **6.2.5.1 Clean and unclean**

In first-century Mediterranean society, persons (and materials) were labelled "clean" or "unclean", not with reference to hygiene or concern for viral or bacterial infection. Rather, these were cultural maps that defined boundaries between "in-group" and "out-groups". As maps of identification, they became marks of kinship and ethnicity, where the "clean" labelled "out-group" members as "unclean", and through that excluded them from all forms of interaction and fellowship (Neyrey 1996b:90). In other words, "clean" and "unclean" were values that defined both ethnic status and social description in relation to bodily defects. To be labelled as "unclean" was therefore a mark of deviance and exclusion.<sup>172</sup> One of the major reasons why Jesus' opponents did not credit him with divine origin and functions was because he came in contact with the "unclean" either through social interaction (Lk 7:39), or through fellowship meals (Lk 5:30).

As defined already in § 5.6, the "unclean" within the context of Luke's gospel can be grouped into two categories. In terms of social description, the

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<sup>171</sup> The centurion's testimony (Lk 23:47) implies the disapproval of the former system of "blind" rivalry, controversy, misinterpretation and antagonism.

<sup>172</sup> Jesus' association with the "unclean" and his task to remove the scar of "uncleanness" were a strategy to rehabilitate its victims and to create a homogeneous society void of boundary marks of exclusion.

“unclean” were identified with the dead (Lk 7:11-17; 8:54-55), those with defective bodies (Lk 4:40; 5:17-25), lepers (Lk 5:13; 17:11-19), menstruants (Lk 8:44), the blind (Lk 7:21), as well as tax collectors and sinners (Lk 5:24; 7:47; 15:1-32; 19:1-10). In terms of ethnicity, they were assimilated to non-Jews like the Samaritans. Either in terms of social description or in terms of ethnicity the “unclean” were all ranked low and inferior when compared to the “clean” (Neyrey 1991b:291).

Contrary to the Jewish understanding of God’s holiness to mean separation and exclusion (Lev 19:2; see also Lev 11:44-45), Jesus’ activities drew new cultural maps which gathered in those who were hitherto excluded. As God’s “limit breaker”<sup>173</sup>, he restored and rehabilitated the “unclean” by making them “clean” (Lk 5:12-13; 7:22; 17:14-17). The declaration of his mission (Lk 4:18-19), the journey through Samaria (Lk 9:51-56), the sending of the seventy-two (Lk 10:1-12) and the command for his name to be preached to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Lk 24:47) confirm and indicate his intention to abrogate and reform former boundaries of hatred and conflict (Malina 2001a:165). The new community, according to Jesus, was that of God’s love and compassion (Lk 1:50, 54, 58, 72, 78; 6:36; 10: 25-37). It was a community of inclusion where preferred guests at the banquet were those on the “highways and hedges” of the society in particular, and of Israel as an ethnic group in general (Lk 14:12-13, 23-24).

Jesus’ contemporaries (the Jewish elite, the Roman elite and the Jewish peasantry), condemned him and considered him as an enemy, who caused a revolution, turning the society upside down. From an etic point of view, Jesus rather drew new maps which restructured and reformed the Jewish society in conformity with God’s principles of love (Neyrey 1991b:298). It is from this perspective that part of the conflict which Jesus faced with his contemporaries could be centred on the right understanding, interpretation and application of scripture and tradition.

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<sup>173</sup> Limit breakers were special agents, who were socially recognised and authorised to cross lines in order to deal with the “unclean” of the society (Malina 1986c:143-154; Neyrey 1991b:292).

### 6.2.5.2 Ceremonies and rituals

In first-century Mediterranean society ceremonies and rituals were like building blocks. They both served the purpose of ordering, that is, drawing and redrawing boundaries around natural and social spaces and identifying them as “good or bad, inside or outside, clean or unclean, high or low” (McVann 1991:334; Van Eck 1995:179-180). However, they remained two distinct values. For instance, while ceremonies served the purpose for the confirmation of roles and status of persons, rituals served that of the transformation/reversal of these roles and status (McVann 1991:334-335; Van Eck 1995:180). Also, ceremonies were considered as special regular and predictable time taken off by individuals and societies from daily, weekly or annual routine, in order to observe a pause or to intensify aspects of their activities. When these periods become irregular and unpredictable (when needed), they were called rituals.

Ceremonies in Luke’s gospel strengthened group identity, its stability and its continuity. They were relevant when food and table fellowship were concerned. In this society, individuals always strove to structure their world in an orderly manner. Hence, people only ate with those with whom they shared certain values (Neyrey 1991c:364; Van Eck 1995:181). It is in this light that the Pharisees and the scribes criticised Jesus for sharing with sinners and tax collectors (Lk 5:29-32; 15:1-2; 19:5-7). Jesus castigated and disapproved of such fellowships because they were scenarios for public display and social discrimination where people sat according to their status (Lk 14:7-14; 20:46). Through this, he introduced a new formula for table fellowship (Lk 14:16-24; see also Lk 22:14-23) based on equality and conviviality.<sup>174</sup>

It was argued in § 2.2.4 that the table (meals) were structures through which Jesus defined a new order that depicted the nature of God’s kingdom (Malina 2001b:10; Moxnes 2001:200). In Luke’s gospel, he reformed and transformed fellowship meals into symbols of inclusiveness. For instance, in the ceremony of the Lord’s Supper with the disciples, Jesus served as a servant, and not a leader (see Lk 22:27). In this micro narrative (Lk 22:14-

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<sup>174</sup> Neyrey (1991c:363) observes that in view of their social status, elite such as the scribes had special seats of honour during feasts. These seats fostered and confirmed their social status within the community and offered them special honour.

22), the table stands as a symbol for the abolition of hierarchy. Meals for Jesus are ceremonies and even rituals of status transformation, where the ceremonial master is a servant. In the feeding miracle at Bethsaida, Jesus destroyed the barrier of separateness by attending to a mixed group of the sick (unclean) and other peasants (clean).

On the other hand, rituals were activities that guided, shaped and sustained group boundaries, as well as one's identity in first-century Palestine. They played the role of the guarantor of social order, because the rites of reinstatement established lost legitimacy and status to its victims (Peristiany & Pitt-Rivers 1992:2). Jesus' healing activities and his social contacts with Jews and non-Jews alike were activities of status transforming rituals in which he became the "new" ritual officer. In fact, his declaration to have come for the unrighteous implies a redefinition of social boundaries (Lk 5:32).

Jesus suffered conflict with his adversaries because he used and interpreted ceremonies and rituals the opposite way (see Lk 1:46-56), thereby turning the *status quo* upside down. In Luke's gospel he offers himself as the person whose responsibility it is to reform and transform status through traditional ceremonies and rituals.<sup>175</sup> Consequently, he must be listened to (Lk 9:35). Rituals for Jesus became unconditional activities of absolute rehabilitation. The ten lepers on their way to see the priests are healed instantly (Lk 17:11-19). By eating with the rejected of the society, he assured them of their humanness. He equally blurred the lines separating observant and non-observant Jews and disapproved of the core value of "separateness". His Sabbath activities (and those of the disciples) indicated that he devalued the system of laws that structured temple activities (Neyrey

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<sup>175</sup> McVann (1991:341, 359); Neyrey (1991c:361) and Van Eck (1995:288-291) agree that Jesus' baptism was a ritual, wherein Jesus' status was transformed from that of a private resident of Nazareth to that of a public prophet (sic). As a Jew (ascribed identity), Jesus went through the traditional rituals of circumcision (Lk 2:21) and purification (Lk 2:22-35); not as rituals for the reversal of status but as ceremonies of boundary markers that confirmed and consolidated ethnic boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. Also, Jesus' baptism was simply another ceremony of status confirmation (ascribed status) because his identity and mission were already prescribed and disclosed in the micro narratives of the "Early Beginnings" (Lk 1:26-2:52). It seems therefore misleading and inadequate to interpret Luke 3:1-4:30 exclusively as a micro narrative of Jesus' status transformation (see McVann 1991:341-360). In the same vein, other examples such as the question-and-answer session (Lk 9:18-22), the transfiguration story (Lk 9:28-36) and the centurion's declaration (Lk 23:47) can equally be understood still, as ceremonies of status confirmation.

1991c:384). Meals for him are henceforth ceremonies that abolish boundaries of social discrimination. He concretised this by eating with both the Pharisees (Lk 7:36-50; 11:37-44; 14:1-7) and the rejected ones of the society (Lk 5:29-32; 15:1-2; 19:5-7).

### 6.2.6 Conclusion

From the models and theories described above, three conclusions emerge in terms of first-century Mediterranean society. Firstly, the conflict surrounding Jesus' person and ministry were due to the socio-cultural, political and economic context of its environment. Secondly is the fact that Jesus' leadership skills were in response to the realities of his context. Consequently, there is a close link between his person and the question of his leadership. Thirdly, from an etic point of view, these conflicts can be summarised in five categories. For the purpose of continuity, more emphasis will be laid on this last conclusion.

The first conflict was a conflict over "limited goods". By redefining and repositioning pivotal values of honour and shame, Jesus disrupted the *status quo* and provoked a reversal of status. This was a discredit to the existing political and religious system of Luke's context; a discredit which had social, political, religious and economic consequences on society. The second conflict is that of interest. Jesus reformed, informed and transformed the society of human interest into a society that lives according to God's interest. His redefinition of social relations implied the collapse of the *status quo*. Thirdly, there is the conflict of identity. Jesus' identity posed a threat to his contemporaries who saw him as an impostor and a usurper. His identity was a replicate of his mission; something that seemed strange, even to his disciples. It is in this vein that Luke's gospel could be summarised under the question: Who is the Christ? Fourthly, there is also the conflict of ideology. Jesus was concerned with the question of how God should be understood. The understanding of God to mean inclusivism and compassion challenged the traditional teachings and practices of religious authorities. Lastly, the fact that first-century Mediterranean society was an agonistic society equally gives less room for the identification of the nature of hostilities surrounding Jesus. By nature and from birth, he was identified as one who will cause the fall and

rising of many (Lk 2:34). This is also coupled with the fact that where there is social interaction, there is conflict.

Summarily, Jesus faced hostility; not because he abolished Jewish socio-cultural practices, but because he used traditional social and cultural values in order to inform, reform and transform society. His, is a new society that challenges consciences, destroys boundary maps of ethnicity and ensures equality and love among God's people. It is this attitude of information, reformation and transformation from within that led him into fierce confrontation with his contemporaries. He was seen as an adversary, who turned the world upside down.

### **6.3 ETIC READING OF JESUS' IDENTITY: WHO IS THE CHRIST?**

#### **6.3.1 Introduction**

In spite of the fact that scholars do not agree on the starting point of conflict in Luke's gospel, they remain unanimous that Luke's focus in the gospel is the question of Jesus' identity (see § 2.3.1): "Who is the Christ?"<sup>176</sup> It is a question about Jesus' social relationships, his religious activities and the political and economic implication of his teachings. Brief, it is a question of who Jesus is, and of what he does. From the perspective of first-century Mediterranean context, it is a question of Jesus' honour, vis-à-vis that of his contemporaries. It is in this respect that his identity has been interpreted differently by various authors (see § 2.3). Irrespective of all the sources and the nature of conflict elaborated on in § 6.2.6 above, Kingsbury (1985:100) is correct that the misconception, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of God, embedded in the Messiah-title of Jesus, was at the basis of almost all the conflict in Luke.

In what follows, two models (labelling and deviance theory and social identity theory) will inspire the etic reading of Jesus' identity and thus facilitate

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<sup>176</sup> With reference to the starting point of conflict in Luke's gospel, scholars have varied positions. These conflicts, according to Edwards (1981:33) and Fitzmyer (1981:137), actually begin with the encounter between Jesus and the devil (Lk 4:1-13). For Kingsbury (1985:101) and Culpepper (1995:13), they are launched by Jesus' attitude in pronouncing forgiveness of sins to the paralytic (Lk 5:17-26). Both ideas seem to ignore the fact that whether conflicts started with cosmic agents (Lk 4:1-13) or with human agents (Lk 5:17-26), these are situations that were already announced in the infancy narrative (Tyson 1983:315). It is therefore this theme of conflict that is later on carried forward in the rest of the gospel narrative.



the understanding of the question: “Who is the Christ?” These are neither hypotheses nor mathematical formulas that provide an answer to the question of Jesus’ identity. Rather, they are explanatory tools that offer a clue to why Jesus was identified and labelled with varied titles by the various Lukan characters. The aim of these models is also to diagnose and interpret Jesus’ identity from the very content of his teachings.

### **6.3.2 The question of Jesus’ identity**

The question of Jesus’ identity starts with the legitimation of the declarations of angel Gabriel (Lk 1:26-38; 2:9-14); the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-56); the *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk 2:29-32, 34-35); the prophetess Anna (Lk 2:38); the Holy Spirit and of other human agents. It finally proceeds to the challenges of this identity by both cosmic and specific earthly characters, respectively.

#### **6.3.2.1 The legitimation of Jesus’ dual honourship**

As discussed in § 6.2.2.1, the legitimation of Jesus’ identity in Luke’s gospel is at the same time that of his honourship. The beginning of Jesus’ ministry is heralded by the recognition and validation of his identity by the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:21-22). The significant role of the Holy Spirit in this micro narrative is that of the confirmation of Jesus’ ascribed honour and a grant of acquired honour. Based on this declaration (of dual honourship), Jesus is confronted by his adversaries on the nature of his sonship, of his teachings and activities and the source of his authority. While the devil lures him to doubt his divine sonship, his peers in Nazareth remind him of his real lineage, as Joseph’s son (Lk 4:22). In the same vein his teachings, his activities and the source of his authority are questioned by the religious authorities. All these sessions are attempts to ridicule and disapprove of the legitimation of this dual honourship that constitute the grounds for Jesus’ person and works.

In effect, Jesus’ ascribed identity (honour) is announced by early Lukan characters (as mentioned above), and by Luke himself. The genealogy that follows the acknowledgement of Jesus’ dual honourship bolsters and substantiates the pronouncements of the Holy Spirit and other heavenly and human characters. A genealogy is a list of a person’s relatives. It serves as a ground for a person’s claim to power, status, rank, office or inheritance in

earlier ancestors. Anthropological studies indicate that genealogies are meant to preserve tribal homogeneity or cohesion, to inter-relate diverse traditions, acknowledge marriage contracts between families, legitimate fictive kinship, and maintain ethnic identity (Rohrbaugh 1995:187). In first-century Mediterranean context, genealogies were used by rulers to justify their right to rule (Wilson 1992:931). Their purpose also depended on the interest of the redactor. In the case of Luke's gospel, Jesus' genealogy is an interlude to public acknowledgement of the divine sonship of Jesus. In presenting this genealogy, Luke establishes Jesus' status and makes it authentic. It is a confirmation of Jesus' pride and aggrandisement. In short, it is recognition of his ascribed honour.<sup>177</sup> From the beginning of the gospel Luke ascertains, legitimates and presents Jesus' identity to all the social, political and cosmic characters of his gospel through a succinct and clear description of his pedigree, which situates him in a particular kinship within the Jewish setting.

By acknowledging Jesus as his Son, according to the tradition of first-century Mediterranean society, God accepted responsibility for him, declaring him as his heir (ascribed honour), in whom he was pleased (acquired honour). This was also an occasion for God as Father, to ascertain his Son's status within the community. Jesus' acquired honour is later confirmed through his social activities of healing, teaching and preaching. These activities influenced further legitimation as it was the case with the crowds and Peter (Lk 9:18-20), the voice at the transfiguration (Lk 9:28-36) and the centurion (Lk 23:47). Jesus' dual honourship thus became a paradox. On the one hand the crowds and Peter seemed to have understood and interpreted its meaning in human terms to mean Jesus' honour and that of the Jewish race. On the other hand, Jesus explained and justified the consequences of what they heard, saw and conceived, in terms of what appeared to be humanly shameful: conflict, suffering rejection and death. From the perspective of Luke's story plot, Jesus validated the centurion's declaration by foretelling his vindication (Lk 9:22). It is in this sense that his declaration to the disciples is better understood: "Was it not necessary that the Christ

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<sup>177</sup> This study is an etic reading of Jesus' identity in Luke's gospel. Consequently, it is not interested in the question of the historicity of Jesus' genealogy. For further information, these questions are dealt with by Fitzmyer (1981) and Hood (1961).

should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (Lk 24:26). The glory in question (see Lk 24:12-27) was about the confirmation of his dual honourship.

### **6.3.2.2 Challenges to Jesus’ identity and honour**

The challenges to Jesus’ honour in Luke’s gospel are a test and/or a protest of the credibility of his identity and that of his authority, as attested by human agents and confirmed by the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:2-22). The declaration of his dual honourship constitutes the grounds for this credibility test, which is perpetrated at both cosmic and human levels, respectively. At cosmic level, Jesus’ identity is challenged, tested and put to doubt by the devil (Lk 4:1-13). The latter’s introductory words are self evident: “If you are the son of God” (Lk 4:3). His ensuing requests indicate that the customary conclusions from the genealogy as well as the legitimation from the “voice” were seemingly all wrong. In this encounter, every foundation of Jesus’ honour is put to question and doubt. Rohrbaugh (1995:189) rightly describes this micro narrative as a test of Jesus’ honour.

At human level, Jesus is challenged by his Nazarene peers, by the religious leaders, by Herod and his soldiers and by other Lukan characters (see Lk 23:35-39). Jesus’ Nazarene peers appear as those who knew him best: his origin, his family and the circumstances under which he grew up. The premise of their remark: “Is this not Joseph’s son?” (Lk 4:22) is the genealogy, where Jesus had effectively been identified as Joseph’s son (Lk 3:30). In response, Jesus’ criticism (Lk 4:23-27) implies that their remark had two implications. It refers to his person both as an individual and as a member of a dyadic community. At the level of an individual, the issue at stake is that of Jesus’ identity and that of his origin. From every indication, Jesus’ perceived identity seemed incompatible with what they knew him to be: a peasant’s son. Although they knew of his earthly origin, they ignored his status as “Son of God”; his ascribed and acquired identity (honour) that had made him famous in the eyes of the public (Lk 4:14) and his own declarations of self-acclaimed identity (Lk 4:18-21). Jesus was right to have taken their

reaction for an insult or a mockery.<sup>178</sup> To identify him as Joseph's son was a way to cut his claim of honour down to size. Jesus did not tolerate this approach; he would have been identified through the wrong (human) source that put his divine identity into question.<sup>179</sup> Besides, the question from Jesus' peers refers to him as one of their community member. It is about a matter of boundary and kinship relations that draws Jesus' attention that he is one of them. As a consequence, the extension of his mission to those out of the "Jewish boundary" was unacceptable. They therefore attributed to Jesus an identity that reduced the scope of his mission to an ethnic consideration. Jesus' corrective reaction instead defined and granted a universal vision to his mission, which became an embarrassment to the Nazarenes; hence, his rejection became apparent and outright.

The religious leaders used Jesus' social relationships, his activities and his teachings as an alibi to challenge his identity and leadership. He is ridiculed for feasting with sinners and tax collectors (Lk 5:30; 7:39; 15:1-2; 19:1-10), making wrong choices (Lk 5:33; 6:1-2), defiling Sabbath regulations (Lk 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6) and for not cooperating with the powers-that-be. His public teachings seem to position him as their equal. In first-century Mediterranean society inferiors had no authority of their own. They were not permitted to address the public, let alone initiate a conversation. Hence the question: "Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority" (Lk 20:2) is a challenge and a disapproval of Jesus' identity (dual honourship) and works. According to the Jewish religious authorities, Jesus had neither of the prerequisites that qualified him as a public speaker. Rather, his birth status accorded him credentials due a personality of inferior

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<sup>178</sup> Jesus' peers knew his earthly background. In this respect the question: "Is not this Joseph's son" seems indeed, to have been ironic. Traditionally, the Nazarenes knew that Jesus was a "bastard" son of a simple peasant – Joseph. Consequently, Joseph's profession and the circumstances surrounding Jesus' conception, his birth and his naming, would not have offered him the dual honourship, which he now claimed (Lk 4:21). The task even became more complicated when his peers were requested to listen to him (Lk 9:35).

<sup>179</sup> Jesus' reaction implies that, to identify him through human origin is a misrepresentation which brings dishonour to him because it misinterprets his identity and mission. Instead, his divine identity is adequate and defines the leadership role that befits him (contrary to that which has been defined by the devil). Hence, the multitude's remarks can be considered as ridicule to his birth status and through that, an insult to his personality (Rohrbaugh 1995:195).

status.<sup>180</sup> In this vein, the crowd that sometimes made his fame was also considered invalid to ascribe honour to Jesus, because they were not classified (see § 5.5).

Herod and his soldiers joined the cue of challenge by administering a treatment of contempt towards Jesus (Lk 23:11). In fact, the treatment of Jesus as a misfit constituted a point of reconciliation between Herod and Pilate (Lk 23:12). Just as it was the case at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the picture of the temptation micro narrative (Lk 4:1-13) is recast at the crucifixion, which appears as a conclusion to his ministry (Lk 23:35-39). Another opportune time having come, the devil once more challenged Jesus' identity through the rulers who scoffed at Jesus (Lk 23:35). Their challenge is rested on his expected and prophesied salvific works (Lk 1:51-54; 2:31). The soldiers mock Jesus and offer him vinegar (Lk 23:36). Through this, they challenge the very foundation of his identity as king. Finally, one of the criminals who were crucified alongside Jesus focuses on Jesus' very claim of messiahship: "Are you not the Christ?" (Lk 23:39). Jesus' identity is therefore an object of an enormous challenge throughout his ministry. Suddenly, the trend of events is reversed, with the centurion confirming, ascertaining and reinstating this identity: "Certainly, this man was innocent" (Lk 23:47).

Jesus performed his earthly ministry within the context of challenging events from cosmic and human forces, respectively. These challenges became an object of conflict, rejection and hostility faced by him. They also became a test to his identity, as well as a medium through which he confirmed the dual honourship conferred on him by the various Lukan characters. Irrespective of this pressure, Jesus maintained the identity and

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<sup>180</sup> Within the context of the Mediterranean society of honour and shame, an inferior person did not initiate a conversation; let alone teaching in the presence of those who were considered as "superior". The question about Jesus' identity warranted him to have recognised his inferior status, and to have admitted it by staying quiet. In this light, Rohrbaugh (1995:186) remarks that in antiquity people were expected to act in accord with birth status and anyone who defiled this represented a troublesome social anomaly. On the basis of this concept, Jesus' attitude was considered abnormal; hence, a justification was needed because he seemed to have claimed a mistaken identity. Such a justification was in conformity with the Babylonian proverb that "a servant in a strange town may be taken for a high officer" (Harper, in Rohrbaugh 1995:186). Curiously, Jesus riposted because he was not in "a strange town". This attitude of his demonstrated the equality of status between him and his opponents.

honour of Christ, the suffering servant (Lk 24:26); an identity which is further attested by his resurrection.

### **6.3.3 Labelling and deviance theory (LDT)**

As it was observed in § 4.3.3, LDT has a wide area of concentration because it deals with cultural values that affect individuals and their interaction with others. For the case of Luke's gospel, it was equally observed that the question of conflict and identity could be approached from the view point of LDT (Malina & Neyrey 1991a:99). One of the ways through which Jesus' identity (dual honourship) and leadership were challenged was through labelling and deviance. Deviance is the consequence of the application by others of rules whose infraction by an "outsider" is considered as an offence. A deviant is therefore someone to whom this label is applied. By interpreting its norms and principles, society determines who and what is deviant from who and what is not. In this vein, Barclay (1999:293) remarks that "what makes an act socially significant as deviant is not much that it is *performed*, as that it is *reacted to* as deviant and the actor accordingly labelled" (Barclay 1999:293). As a social product, deviance is either an ascribed or an achieved status. LDT will thus be used in order to explain the various ways through which Jesus was identified. This will mean an examination of the theoretical framework for applying LDT in the understanding of conflict, identity and leadership in Luke's gospel. In the second phase, LDT will be applied in order to understand and interpret the above themes.

#### **6.3.3.1 Labelling and deviance theory in Luke's gospel: Theoretical framework**

The relationship between Jesus and his adversaries in Luke's gospel is situated around Galilee and Jerusalem. In Galilee four aspects characterise the nature of the controversy between them, with reference to the nature of Jesus' identity. Firstly, his activities of teaching, preaching and healing are a confirmation of his dual honourship. They testify who he is and what he intends to do. Secondly, his claim of divine authority is an indication of the presence of God's rule (see Lk 17:21), which is mistakenly misunderstood by the Pharisees and the scribes. Thirdly, his social relationships defy the normal

order because they are not an extension of the traditional cultural maps of ethnicity. Lastly, Jesus' attitude towards the Mosaic Law is an introduction of an era of new ethical values. In the eyes of the public, Jesus was seen as the authoritative leader, as compared to the religious authorities. Such consideration meant a gain of fame and honour for Jesus at their detriment. It is with this impression of mixed feelings that Jesus is received and acclaimed as a successful leader as he enters Jerusalem (Lk 19:28-40).

His principal opponents in Jerusalem are the scribes, the chief priests and the elders of the people. The antagonism and hatred between them is triggered by three factors. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem actually confirms him as Israel's Messiah-king (see Lk 3:15-16; 7:18-23), in conformity with his early comparison with God (see Lk 5:21; 7:48). As a second factor, Luke presents the temple as a source of conflict (Tyson 1986:153). His arrival in Jerusalem also ushered him into the temple, where he launched a symbolic reform in its activities. Hitherto, its functionaries and other agencies had made the temple to lose its power to make holy (Elliott 1991b:223).<sup>181</sup> Henceforth, the temple will no longer be a place of exploitation and robbery (Lk 19:45-48). It has once more resumed its rightful place as the house of prayer (Lk 19:46), learning (Lk 3:46), teaching and preaching (Lk 20:1). Jesus' attack on temple activities is an attack on the very seat of his opponents' authority and power (Elliott 1991b:235; Kingsbury 1997b:156). His critical reforms make the temple a symbol of their failure in leadership. The third factor relates to Jesus' criticism of their leadership as depicted in the parable of the vineyard and the tenants (Lk 20:9-18).

The religious leaders read and interpreted all the reforms initiated by Jesus in practice and in his teachings as an insult to their authority and leadership. He seems to have presented himself as the true representative of

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<sup>181</sup> The temple had become an institution where priests and Levites protected their interest rather than rendering compassion (Lk 10:31-32). The Pharisees became more interested in their religiosity rather than being righteous and just (Lk 11:2; 18:9-14). The widows had become victims of exploitation from the scribes (Lk 20:46-47). In the same way, the temple had become an institution where the chief priests and the Sanhedrin connived to thwart justice (Lk 22:2). In fact, the temple had been polluted and administered contrary to its intended purpose of being a place of reverence.

God. Hence, they galvanised every effort to destroy him (Lk 19:47; 20:19a).<sup>182</sup> Unfortunately, they still “did not find anything they could do, for all the people hung upon his words” (Lk 19:48; see Lk 20:19b, 26). Conflict in the temple pursues its course when Jesus is further attacked on the source of his authority. These agitations from the religious authorities constitute some of the vital reasons for which Jesus is declared a public enemy to be ostracised.

From Galilee to Jerusalem, Jesus’ opponents mount mechanisms in order to trap him in his words and actions. In this process, Jesus is addressed with negative labels that humiliate, discredit and disprove him.<sup>183</sup> The purpose of this approach is to declare Jesus a deviant and thereafter ostracise him. Progressively, he is tagged a blasphemer and usurper (Lk 5:21). With these labels Jesus’ adversaries intend to put him in conflict with God. He is further criticised as an antinomian citizen who tolerates and promotes the non-respect of religious regulations (Lk 6:33; 6:1-5; 6-11; 11:38; 13:10-17; 14:1-6) and an associate with “outsiders” (Lk 5:30; 7:39). According to the perceptions of Jewish culture of the understanding of “clean” and “unclean”, Jesus was absolutely “out of place”. On the account of his healing activities, he is called demon possessed (Lk 11:15). During the trial, he is accused as a false prophet and a false Christ (Lk 22:63-71), before being referred to the highest Roman political authorities. Before Pilate he is described as a “polluter” and a “revolutionary” (Lk 23:5); that is, as a leader of a rebellious faction. This is a masked and misrepresented picture of Jesus, painted by the religious

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<sup>182</sup> The hatred and antagonism between Jesus and his opponents is progressive. In Galilee, the discussion is still centred on what to do with Jesus (Lk 6:11). When he criticised and condemned the Pharisees (Lk 11:37-44; 16:14-15; 18:9-14), the lawyers (Lk 11:45-52) and the scribes (Lk 14:7-11) on his way to Jerusalem, the question is not yet about killing him. The scribes and the Pharisees rather continue in search for a means to trap him in his words (Lk 11:53-54). Even when he labelled the Pharisees (and the ruler of the synagogue) as hypocrites (Lk 12:1-3; see Lk 13:15) and lovers of money (Lk 16:14), they neither dared to arrest and kill him (see Lk 22:53) nor to convict him. The plans to arrest and destroy Jesus are nursed only after his (provocative) entry into Jerusalem (Lk 19:28-40) and his reaction to temple activities (Lk 19:45-46). Further criticism on their leadership (Lk 20:9-18) and the labelling of the scribes as extortionists (see Lk 20:45-47) later served as additional evidents to their quest.

<sup>183</sup> Neyrey (1991a:99) remarks that such labels that come as a result of developed stereotypes are able to inflict injury on their victim, especially when they come from influential persons. For the case of Jesus, most of the negative labels were derogatory names that were forced on him as acquired status by religious authorities with the intention of giving a subversive tone to the charges levied against him (Hagedorn 2006:231). Since a new label defined a person in a new way, this exercise was aimed at declaring Jesus as a deviant.



authorities to his fellow Jewish public and the Roman leaders. In the process of labelling and deviance, the labeller usually sought for testimonies and other endorsements from prominent persons. Hence, during and after the trial, the quest for new alliances became serious. Spies, the *laov* and the *oxlov* are exploited as witnesses. They play the role of an incredible majority, whose objective is treachery and falsehood. Pilate and Herod are lured as superior and malicious authorities. These Lukan characters apparently succeed in according Jesus acquired status of deviance.

In order to strengthen these labels, Jesus is tested on the very basis of his authority (Lk 20:2) and his teachings. Spies are used in order to confront him (Lk 20:20-26), while the Sadducees test him on the basis of his teaching concerning the notion of the resurrection (Lk 20:27-40). Earlier, the lawyers had done the same when they tested Jesus on the issue of eternal life (Lk 10:25). Suspicious alliances<sup>184</sup> are also formed in order to testify against him. Unable to successfully trap and arrest Jesus, his opponents conspired with a distorted and traitor disciple – Judas (Lk 22:4). The *laov* that was initially feared is engineered into a distorted *oxlov* of accomplices who join in Jesus' arrest (Lk 22:47) and are later persuaded to label Jesus as an instigator (Lk 23:4). The *laov* are further taken as witnesses (Lk 23:13). This makes the involvement of the peasant class in convicting Jesus to be complete. At the end, the *laov* successfully declared Jesus a deviant and agreed with his crucifixion (Lk 23:18, 21, 23). In the same vein, the Pharisees who did not agree with the priestly class suddenly became part of the Sanhedrin (see Acts 5:33-35; 23:6-10), while Herod and Pilate became friends. As a whole, every effort was made to ensure that the labelling and rejection of Jesus was effective.

On the other hand, these negative labels did not annihilate Jesus' identity and works. Various Lukan characters appreciated Jesus differently as they attributed him with positive labels, even though some came as a result of the misinterpretation of his actions. For example, Jesus is announced by

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<sup>184</sup> Kingsbury (1997b:162) analyses these alliances as a "coalition of darkness". He is certainly right that the presence of the Sadducees in the passion narrative is a weakness on the part of the opponents of Jesus. Their inability to ask Jesus further questions (Lk 20:40) testified that they had no fundamental basis to discredit and ostracise Jesus. Yet, they continued their "dark" plans by associating other agents. They certainly needed the support of the Jewish public so as to validate the change of status inflicted on Jesus.

angel Gabriel as “Son of the Most High” (Lk 1:32); “Holy, the Son of God” (Lk 1:35) and “Saviour, Christ the Lord” (Lk 2:11). Demons equally identify him as “the Christ” (Lk 4:41). The crowds, a Pharisee and Herod identified him as a “prophet” (Lk 7:16, 39; 9:8, 19). While some characters addressed him as “teacher” (Lk 5:5; 7:40; 8:24, 45, 49; 9:33, 38, 49; 10:25; 11:45; 12:13; 17:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7), others knew him as “Lord” (Lk 5:8, 12; 6:46; 7:6, 13; 9:54, 59, 61; 10:17, 40; 11:1; 12:41; 17:5, 37; 19:8). For Peter, Jesus was the Christ of God. The centurion’s positive label as the *δικαίον* crowned his identity as an innocent suffering servant-leader. While some Pharisees (and some scribes) seemed to have perceived his true identity (Lk 7:36-50; 11:37; 14:1; see also Lk 20:39), and tried to preserve it (Lk 13:31-33; 19:39), they refused its legitimation. Although the above labels (positive and negative) seem to present Jesus with a dual identity, his true identity was only incarnated in what he did and in conformity with what God required.

### **6.3.3.2 Application: The arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as rituals of status transformation**

Jesus’ arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension can be examined as rituals of status transformation (Malina & Neyrey 1991a:99). While the rituals of the resurrection and ascension are those of status restoration, those of the arrest, trial and crucifixion are a mechanism to degrade and change Jesus’ identity. During his trial, the charges levied against him served the purpose of labelling and deviance. It was a ritual of status transformation, where Jesus’ identity was deformed so as to march with the corresponding charges of deviance. This ritual also fell within the context of challenge-response, which was a process by which honour was either acquired or lost (Moxnes 1996:20; Malina 2001d:33).

Generally, the exercise of challenge-response happened between equals, and in four stages. It started with a challenge whose intention was to enter the social space of the other.<sup>185</sup> The second stage was the perception of

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<sup>185</sup> Once more, challenge-response as an exchange for public recognition of honour was worthy only when it took place between social equals, if not it lost its *raison d’être*. By virtue of status, the honour of a superior person was already recognised as opposed to that of an inferior. Consequently, public interaction was of no value because the challenge of an inferior was shameful. The exercise of challenge-response was done verbally, through symbolic

the message by both the one who was challenged and the public (the opponent's readiness to respond or not). Thirdly, was the reaction from the opponent, which could be a positive refusal to act, or the acceptance of the challenge followed with a counter challenge or a negative refusal to act, which could imply dishonour.<sup>186</sup> The fourth stage was the public's verdict, which could consist of a grant or a loss of honour. At this stage, the public played a very important role because as an arbiter, it had the power to either make someone's personality or mar it (Neyrey 1995:141).

The process of disfiguring Jesus was launched by his arrest. From public praises of honour in Galilee (Lk 4:14-15, 22) and in Jerusalem (Lk 19:36-38; 20:39), he was publicly arrested as a criminal (Lk 22:47-62). Further, he was verbally abused, beaten and blindfolded (Lk 22:63-64). After these preliminary attempts to dishonour him and render him impotent, he was led to be tried. His trial was carried out at two distinct levels: the Jewish trial (Lk 22:63-71) and the Roman trial (Lk 23:1-7, 8-12, 13-25), with the former playing a preparatory role for the latter. Present in the Sanhedrin were the elders of the people, the chief priests and the scribes (Lk 22:66). The Pharisees were presumably also present (see Acts 5:34-39; 23:6-10) alongside the οἱ ἄλλοι and other onlookers. The objective of the Jewish trial was to interpret Jesus' attitude with reference to Jewish cultural values and traditional religious regulations.

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gestures or with the use of physical force. Rohrbaugh (1995:185) remarks that it was an exercise liable to disrupt relationships, because it sometimes resulted in violence and instability. Most controversies between Jesus and his opponents were in the form of challenge-response (Lk 4:1-13; 5:17-26, 29-39; 6:1-5, 6-11; 7:39-50; 11:14-20, 37-54; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 20:1-2, 20-26, 27-40). Quite often, Jesus initiated the challenge (Lk 16:14-18; 19:39-40, 45-48; 20:41-47). However, there is need to distinguish between a positive challenge and a negative one. A challenge is positive when it is triggered through a word of praise, a gift or a sincere request for help. An example is the request from the centurion (Lk 7:3), from Jairus (Lk 8: 41), the cry from the ten lepers (Lk 17:13) and the acclamation by the multitude in Jerusalem (Lk 19:37-38). A challenge is negative when it starts with an insult, a threat or a physical affront. The questions from the high priests, scribes and elders on the issue of Jesus' authority (Lk 20:1-2; see Lk 22:67-71); the question on paying of taxes by the spies (Lk 20:20-26) and that on the notion of the resurrection by the Sadducees (Lk 20:27-40), are examples of a negative challenge. Esler (1994:27) also notes that there is also an ambiguous challenge that leaves the public confused whether an insult is intended or not. Examples of such challenges could be Jesus' identification by the demoniac as "son of the Most High God" (Lk 8: 28) and that of the ruler as "Good Teacher" (Lk 18:18).

<sup>186</sup> This reaction can come in various ways. It could be a compliment, or a comparable reaction of equal weight could be meted, or the reaction could even be more violent than that of the opponent. Rohrbaugh (1995:185) remarks that not to respond at all to a challenge is to have no shame. This of course, is considered to be worse than simply been ashamed.

In the Jewish trial Jesus' opponents sought to assemble a case record and create a selective reading of Jesus' activities in order to substantiate the claim that Jesus was effectively a deviant (Malina & Neyrey 1991a:114). Hence, in vain, he is lured to agree with the labels of false prophet (Lk 22:63-65) and false Christ (Lk 22:67), with which he will soon be addressed.<sup>187</sup> With these charges they intended to see Jesus lose face so that they could subsequently step into a chargeable offence. It could therefore be guessed from this trial which took the form of an inquisition that, Jesus was being labelled as "a pretender" or "a deceiver". His activities had so far been interpreted as a threat to the divinely ordained temple system (and its authorities) and a danger to the Jewish nation. As a consequence, Jesus overtly affirmed his place of honour. Henceforth, he will sit at the right hand of the power of God, as Son of man (Lk 22:69). This declaration which further challenged his opponents testified that he effectively knew their intention. It is a declaration which confirmed his relationship with God, as well as assigned him a place of authority and leadership. On this basis, Jesus is considered a deviant. Yet, Roman approval was still needed in order to bolster their claim.

Apparently, the Jewish trial initially intended to gather clear charges against Jesus seemed to have failed. However, the trial ended with the formulation of three charges that all seemed new. With these charges, Jesus was led before Pilate for the beginning of the Roman trial. He was accused for perverting and stirring up people; for forbidding the paying of tributes to Caesar and for imposing himself as Christ and king (Lk 23:1-5, 13-25). These were political charges which distorted Jesus' identity and mission. The issue at stake in these charges was that of national integrity. Jesus was charged for violating the rules that preserved the society's solidarity and identity. It was an accusation that recapitulated Jesus' activities from Galilee to Jerusalem. Identifying the first two charges in their rightful context, Pilate decided to question Jesus on the basis of the last charge by linking his kingship to his

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<sup>187</sup> Jesus had earlier preached and acted as a prophet (Lk 4:18-19; 7:16). He had also alluded to the accustom rejection of prophets (Lk 4:24). He had compared himself with former prophets (Lk 4:25-27; 7:26; 13:31-35). His activities earned him a prophetic figure in the eyes of Herod (Lk 9:8) and the crowds (Lk 9:19), for which he does not raise a direct objection. In the same vein, Jesus had also confirmed the angel's declaration for being anointed (Lk 4:18; see Lk 2:11) and did not comment on Peter's confession that he was the Christ of God (Lk 9:19). By claiming to be the Christ, he proved to be greater than David (Lk 20:41-44).

Jewish origin (Lk 23:3).<sup>188</sup> Certainly, Jesus is not a political rival; instead, he is accused for religious reasons. Hence the question: “Are you the King of the Jews” (Lk 23:3). Pilate interpreted Jesus’ rhetorical answer to mean his innocence. But when he was informed that Jesus was a Galilean, he referred him to Herod.

The charge of perversion was taken for a serious crime, from a Jewish point of view. In the LXX, perversion meant to lead into a situation of idolatry (Ex 32:7; Ez 14:5) or uncleanness (Deut 32:5; Num 15:39). In other words, Jesus pollutes the nation and subverts its values and structures. The analysis of Jesus’ teaching effectively showed him as directing God’s people according to his purpose. Since his instructions did not favour the *status quo*, they were interpreted as subversion. Jesus had rightly reformed and transformed the former order of things in the society through his preaching, his healing activities and his challenging teachings. The reforms instituted by him had ridiculed religious leaders, rendering them strangers in their profession. Also, rather than forbid the payment of taxes, Jesus had earlier challenged the religious leaders and their allies, the spies, to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar’s and to God the things that were God’s (Lk 20:25). Concerning the last charge, even though Jesus had declared that he was anointed (Lk 4:18-19), nowhere did he proclaim himself as King of the Jews. On the contrary, he constantly contested the misinterpretation of his activities, which attributed him an earthly kingship with reference to Jewish messianic expectations. Consequently, Pilate was right to have read the charges against him as religious charges. Jesus was neither an enemy to

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<sup>188</sup> When taken seriously, Pilate’s interpretation of the charges against Jesus implied that Rome declined its responsibilities of convicting Jesus. In other words, by Roman standards, Jesus was not due capital punishment. It is in this vein that Luke records a series of ironies in the process of labelling and disfiguring Jesus. Firstly, the Jewish trial was illegal because Jesus was physically tortured even before the hearing began (Lk 22:63-65). Also, the trial took place, not in the Sanhedrin, but in the high priest’s house (Lk 22:54). Secondly, although Jesus is accused of stirring and misleading the *laos*, no one explicitly stood from among the multitude to confirm this charge. Thirdly, Pilate who owned power and authority showed powerlessness and weakness in the face of mob pressure. Fourthly, although he found Jesus innocent, he still wished to chastise him, before releasing him. Fifthly, an insurrectionist is liberated while an innocent is convicted for the charge against insurrection. Lastly, at four different instances, Jesus was declared innocent (Lk 23:4, 11, 14, 22) by the most authoritative voices of Rome; yet, he was condemned. In terms of Luke’s story-line, this series of ironies renders the proper reason for which Jesus was crucified obscure and absurd. However, for Luke’s story-plot, Jesus suffered conflict and rejection as a necessity, so as to enter into his glory (Lk 24:26; see also Lk 9:22).

Pilate nor to Caesar; he was rather a religious rival to the Jewish religious authorities.

Jesus' presence before Herod quenched the latter's quest, for, he had earlier desired to see Jesus (Lk 23:8). While Jesus' opponents kept accusing him, Herod's anxiety led him to question him at length. In normal circumstances, an honourable person whose identity has been put into jeopardy or to some other challenge to honour is culturally conditioned to retaliate or offer a riposte that will counter the challenge and preserve honour in the public eye intact. Curiously, Jesus refused to alter a word before Herod. In continuation of the labelling and deviant process, Jesus is mocked and disfigured in gorgeous attire which attested him as king of the Jews (Lk 23:11). Such deviant attire confirmed the religious charge against him and at the same time re-established lost friendship between Herod and Pilate (Lk 23:12). Before being referred back to Pilate, both were unanimous that Jesus was a religious rival.

Once more, before Pilate, the labelling process is pursued and completed when the chief priests, the rulers of the people and the laos&v successfully denounced Jesus and instead preferred Barabbas, the real insurrectionist (Lk 23:13-25). From the arrest to his trial, Jesus is further led to be crucified, as a deviant. According to the verdict, he is a public nuisance. As the degradation process continued, Jesus was led to the crucifixion, where he was declared "statusless" and crucified in the company of other discarded deviants (Lk 23:33). Jesus was thus redefined with new labels as a convicted criminal, an outsider and his Messiah-kingship was repudiated. Curiously, he was also rejected, even by the peasants whom he defended most. Instead of protecting him as they had done so far (Lk 19:48; 20:19, 26; 22:2), they were coerced to denounce him and cause him to be crucified (Lk 22:47; 23:4, 13, 18, 21, 23). However, with the disfiguring process taking its course to the end, his garments were divided (Lk 23:34), while his body was punctured (see Lk 24:39), before being buried. Apparently, no traces of Jesus are left for any eventual identification. At this point, he seemed to have lost in the conflict. Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion are followed by events leading to his resurrection and ascension. From an etic point of view, these events serve as rituals of status restoration for Jesus. It is a phase that stood in contestation

of the labelling and deviant process that initially led to the misrepresentation of Jesus. The first immediate impression came from the centurion, whose testimony rehabilitated and legitimated Jesus as a *di&kaiov* (Lk 23:47). This was followed by an impressive *laov* (Lk 23:13) that became the *o!xlov* (Lk 23:48). The beating of their breasts was a sign of regret for their false testimony and misguided verdict. It also meant the recognition and approval of the centurion's legitimating remarks. Also, while Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council offered an honourable burial to the dishonoured and rejected Jesus (Lk 23:50-53), the women prepared spices to anoint his body (Lk 23: 55-24:1). Three days later, he was raised as a victor (Lk 24:6-7), in correlation with his earlier predictions (Lk 9:22; 23:33). He was finally lifted up to heaven where he permanently occupied the place of honour (Lk 24:51), having passed through the appropriate procedure as the Christ (Lk 24:26, 44-45). These new rituals testified that Jesus was effectively the appropriate leader for Israel, for which the religious and political leaders were a farce (Kingsbury 1997b:157)<sup>189</sup>. With this, the *Magnificat* was also fully realised, with God reversing human fortunes (Lk 1:46-55). Events from the centurion's remarks to Jesus' ascension are a reference to Jesus' early credentials.

In sum, society did not treat Jesus the way they were expected to do. For example, he did not benefit external responsibility from Pilate, who had the powers to vindicate him. The crowd and the people who had been healed by him did not stand to testify about his deeds. Members of the ruling class such as the centurion whose servant was also healed (Lk 7:10) and Jairus, whose daughter was restored (Lk 8:55) failed to testify Jesus' benevolence in public. In spite of this, Jesus died maintaining his identity as the Christ of God as attested by his resurrection and ascension. He alone remained a true and honourable leader, and not the Roman authorities nor the Jewish leaders.

#### 6.3.4 Social identity theory (SIT)

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<sup>189</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that the conflict between Jesus and the authorities is also a conflict over "who is the right person to assume leadership and authority over Israel?" Jesus posits himself as the right leader; he offers what the other leaders have failed to provide (healing, teaching, preaching and the forgiveness of sins). His compassionate love is inclusive and restorative.

It was argued in § 4.3.2 that the Jews and the non-Jews were the two principal character groups that constituted the narrative world of Luke's gospel. Each of these character groups had specific character traits that identified them as homogeneous groups, distinct from each other. On the other hand, the conclusions drawn in § 3.4.2.3.3 also indicated that the structure of the dyadic community of first-century Palestine was that which favoured the development of conflict. While the less privileged (peasants and non-Jews) strove to defend and denounce their status as defined by the privileged (Jewish elite and Roman elite), the latter used their social status in order to better define its hegemony. It is in this vein that social control will be studied as the strategy through which the Jewish elite and their Roman counterparts maintained and manifested their superiority over against the peasants and the non-Jews. Besides, one of the reasons why Jesus faced fierce opposition is because he sought to correct the pitfalls of a society that had been built on categorisation. Consequently, Jesus' approach of de-categorisation (Brown 1996:170-176; Esler 2002:195-199) will be examined as a model to dismantle the vices of prejudice, hatred and stereotype created by the Jewish elite and their accomplices (see § 3.4.2.3.3). As another means of conflict resolution, the theory of "similarity-attraction" will equally be studied to further show how Jesus' struggle to destroy the effects of categorisation disfigured him and distinguished him as a deviant.

#### **6.3.4.1 The question of social control**

Within the context of this study, social control refers to social activities that enabled the Jewish elite and the Roman elite respectively, to exercise and maintain an edge of superiority over the peasants. In fact, because of their social status, they assumed to have had (1) control over the proper understanding of God, (2) control over salvation, (3) control over the distribution of limited goods and (4) the strife to control and maintain the *status quo*. Although it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between these factors because of their interrelatedness, they each have their specificities. For instance, the Jewish religious leaders claimed the monopoly of a better understanding of what God required. Hence, when Jesus pronounced the forgiveness of sins to the paralytic, the Pharisees and the



scribes interpreted his action as blasphemy (Lk 5:17-26). When he healed on the Sabbath (Lk 6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6), he was accused of disrespecting the Torah. When he performed exorcism, he was accused for being an accomplice of Beelzebul (Lk 11:15). His relationship with Levi, other tax collectors and his disciples (Lk 5:30; 15:1-2); the woman who anointed him (Lk 7:37-39) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:7), was criticised and these victims were labelled as “sinners”. In each of these cases, Jesus disproved his opponents; his attitude was rather a fulfilment of his mission: “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Lk 5:32; 19:10 see also Lk 15:1-7, 8-10, 11-32). According to Jesus, God’s holiness did not mean exclusivism or segregation. On the contrary, it referred to his compassionate nature, which was beyond ethnic consideration. His teachings were therefore a disapproval of the religious leaders as the right interpreters of God’s intentions as depicted in the parable of the vineyard and the tenants (Lk 20:9-18).

The claim over an authoritative interpretation of scripture by the religious authorities equally implied the control over salvation. In Luke 18:10-12 the Pharisee’s prayer projected him high above the tax collector. In this prayer, the Pharisee symbolised the Jewish religious elite while the tax collector represented *oi (loipoi\_ tw~n a)nqrw&pwn* (Lk 18:11); that is, the non-Jews. Lukan Jesus disproved his opponents in several occasions. Three times he used the expression *h( pi&stiv sou se&swke&n se* (Lk 7:50; 17:19; 18:42), to indicate the situation of wholesomeness that accompanied those who believed in him. The woman who interrupted the serenity of the meal offered by the Pharisee received wholesome healing because of her faith (Lk 7:37-50). The Samaritan leper received salvation by acknowledging Jesus as being worthy of praise (Lk 17:18-19). The conviction of the blind beggar that Jesus could offer compassion led him to receive instant salvation: (Lk 18:36-42). Besides, Zacchaeus also gained instant salvation on the account of his encounter with Jesus (Lk 19:1-10). Jesus proved that the temple was no longer the lone place of God’s saving grace where the temple leaders held the monopoly of salvation. Salvation was henceforth based on people’s relationship with God and their response to Jesus and his preaching.

In this way Jesus liberalised salvation that was hitherto, considered as an exclusive possession of the religious authorities.

It was equally observed in § 6.2.4.1 that Luke's gospel was written within the context of a limited-good-society, where the confrontation between Jesus and his opponents could be explained in terms of the quest for limited goods. Within the context of social control, the powerful elite used their potentials in order to raise their honour, while the peasants remained in a perpetual situation of shame, dependency, indebtedness and need (see Lk 12:57-59). The confrontation between Jesus and his opponents testified that the latter did not hold the monopoly of social values (material and immaterial). Hence, his acts of solidarity, restoration and rehabilitation were aimed at destroying the edge of superiority and the situation of dependency that had impoverished the peasants and rendered them more vulnerable. The parable of the prodigal son was an example of restored dignity (Lk 15: 11-32). At his return, he was clothed, fed and integrated among his kin.

One of the concerns of the religious authorities was also the strife to maintain the *status quo*. This was sometimes done through the reinforcement of purity laws, as symbols of Jewish group identity. In the Jewish context, purity laws were very important because they strengthened group solidarity. This equally referred to the preservation of cultural identity, with all its consequences. This quest created a climate of suspicion and dislike between the "holy" (Jews) and those whom they considered "unholy" (the non-Jews). The social status of the Jews motivated them to build a strong identity and to think of their traditional practices as a norm for the rest of society. This conception caused them to develop a stereotyped behaviour *vis-à-vis* out-group members because the "more important the group identity the stronger the tendency to treat the out-group as having uniform characteristics" (Gudykunst 2003:267; Collier 1994:39). In this condition, those who found themselves without power and social integration were conditioned to remain weak. Jesus appeared as an opponent, whose responsibility was an urge to maintain the *status quo*, as defined in his conception of the kingdom of God as a new household.

Summarily, Jesus' mission targeted situations of inequality created by the practice of social control within the Jewish society, as presented in Luke's

gospel. This practice came as a result of a categorised society built on hatred, prejudice, xenophobia and stereotype. Unfortunately, his attempt to erase and destroy these cultural maps of division met with fierce rejection from both the elite and the peasants, who misinterpreted his actions and took him for an enemy.

#### **6.3.4.2 De-categorisation: The kingdom of God preaching**

Categorisation is one of the main aspects of SIT, which holds that people and objects are better understood with reference to the group to which they belong. Unfortunately, in Luke's gospel, categories were a source of recalcitrant strife because they were formed on the basis of cultural identity. Hence, they generated prejudice, stereotypes, xenophobia and ethnocentric feelings (Avruch 2003:55; see also Esler 1996:139). De-categorisation therefore intervenes as a solution to the problems posed by categorisation. It is a process through which problematic areas of discomfort between social groups are destroyed and interpersonal relationship between antagonist groups is fostered and encouraged. In other words, it is an attempt to reconstruct a category-free-society of love and concern.

As a result of categorisation the practice of social control cultivated indelible marks of hatred and suspicion within the society of Luke's gospel, at all levels. Economically the rich used their social status to inflict misery, indebtedness, exploitation and dependency on the poor and further enriched themselves.<sup>190</sup> In fact, they had equated economic and social standing with access to eternity (Lk 18:18). Politically, local leaders used their powers to render the population vulnerable. For instance, they exploited the masses in order to survive and further sustain their power. An example is that of heavy taxes levied on the peasants through the complicity of the Roman administration (see Lk 20:20-26).<sup>191</sup> Socially, Lukan context was a stratified society where people fellowshiped and formed coalitions on the basis of

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<sup>190</sup> This situation of dependency can further be testified by the abundant use of terms such as rich man (Lk 16:1), servants and master (Lk 12:35-48; 19:11-27).

<sup>191</sup> According to Oakman (2008:12) Cicero criticised Caesar for expropriating property in order to bestow benefits on others. In the same vein, Plutarch equally reported how the same Caesar ran up huge debts for the purpose of sustaining his own political position and agenda (Oakman 2008:12-13).

their social status (see Lk 14:12) and for the protection of their common identity (Neyrey: 1991c:362; Rohrbaugh 2007:85), as well as their personal interest. Hence, both the Sadducees and the Pharisees independently agreed to treat Jesus as a social nuisance. In like manner, while the Pharisees became associates in the Sanhedrin (see Acts 5:33-35; 23:6-10), Herod and Pilate became friends (Lk 23:12). In the religious domain, religious leaders used their positions to practice injustice, to exploit and extort from the peasants (Lk 11:39-44; 20:45-47). Religion had simply become an important commercial activity for personal enrichment (Lk 19:45-48). In a nutshell, categorisation had fostered inequality and instituted a permanent situation of misery in the whole society, where the weak remained weak and poor, while the strong grew stronger and richer.

Jesus' process of de-categorisation consisted of dismantling the barriers of exclusion established by the practice of categorisation. He denounced injustice and exploitation but encouraged peace-making. Hence, people were advised to settle their matters in an amicable manner, without going to court (Lk 12:57-59). The rich were equally advised to share their wealth with the poor (Lk 18:22). Politically, Jesus' messages defined the essence of leadership, which is humility and service; and not lordship (Lk 22:14-22, 25-27). Socially, his preaching was reforming, transforming and liberating. It contained messages that caused a revolution within the system. He destroyed the myth of social control and made the accessibility to God possible to both Jews and non-Jews. For him, religious authorities were wrong examples of leaders to emulate (Lk 12:1; 20:46-47). They see the speck in other people's eye, but do not see the log that is in their own eyes (see Lk 6:39-42). Through cleansing, he rehabilitated the temple as God's house of prayer (Lk 19:46). Henceforth, it can no longer serve as the centre of Jewish political, economic and social power (Elliott 1991b:223). Jesus also refused to form an alliance with the religious leaders. Their invitations for table fellowship were not acts of hospitality. Rather, they were a trap, meant to lure him to condone with their evil practices. The rejection of their attitude towards worship and the understanding of God meant an institution of true worship, based on Jesus' understanding of the kingdom of God. In his approach, he refashioned the traditional "Be holy because I, the Lord your

God, am holy” (Lv 19:2; see also Lev 11:44-45) into: “Be compassionate even as your Father is compassionate” (Luke 6:36). This feeling motivated him to forgive sins, heal diseases, and recommend love as a kinship-rooted value (Pilch & Malina 1993:30).

Jesus’ mission was contained both in his manifesto (Lk 4:18-19) and in his eagerness to preach: “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose” (Lk 4:43). In this assignment, teaching and healing played a complementary role (Lk 9:1-2). The urgency of this mission is implied in the instructions to the apostles and the seventy two: no material burden (Lk 9:3; 10:4), no anxiety for life concerns (Lk 12:22-34), the need for absolute renunciation of material and other social entanglements (Lk 9:57-62; 14:26) and self-sacrifice (Lk 14:27). They were urged to participate in building a new society wherein, the benefits of the kingdom are to be shared by members of the new community (Lk 10:5-9). It was a preaching that introduced God’s kingdom on earth as the new household of social relationships, characterised by fellowship meals, healing, generosity and hospitality. Indeed, Jesus’ vision was that of a society of transformed values with the Lord’s Supper symbolising a society of equal opportunities where both masters and followers share from the same table, with the leader playing the role of a servant (Lk 22:14-23; see Lk 14:13-14). Even though he had noticed that Judas was an agent of the devil (Lk 22:3) and perceived that Peter and the rest of the disciples would eventually abandon him (Lk 22:31-34), he neither retaliated nor rejected them. In the same way, the mission assigned to the disciples (Lk 9:1-6) and the seventy two (Lk 10:1-12) was that of followers who had been saved to serve. Throughout their mission, the restoration of homes through healing and fellowship meals would be an indication of God’s saving presence (Lk 9:4; 10:6-10; 19:1-10). In the new structure, Jesus defined generosity and hospitality as honourable to God because they led to lasting wealth, encouraged friendship and fostered social relationships. Consequently, the rich ruler was advised to sell his possessions, give alms and provide himself with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail (Lk 12:33; see also 14:12-14; 16:9; 18:22).

Jesus' choice of the twelve apostles was followed by a series of preaching, which painted the picture of the envisaged new community of social change and transformation, characterised by broken boundaries and where hatred was reciprocated with love (Lk 6:27-36). This picture was further illustrated in the example of the Good Samaritan, who indebted himself in order to rescue a Jerusalemite (Lk 10:35). The new community offered by Jesus was that of a reign where God's compassion was replicated with Jesus' willingness to indebted himself for the welfare of human dignity. It was a picture of a new society in the likeness of the *Magnificat*, where the world is turned upside down (Oakman 2008:180). It is the uncertainty of such a society that provoked conflict between Jesus and his contemporaries. In this context, Crossan (1973: 55) is certainly right that "when the north pole becomes the south pole, and the south the north, a world is reversed and overturned and we find ourselves standing firmly on utter uncertainty" (Crossan 1973:55). In Jesus' de-categorised community, the household became a true symbol for the kingdom of God, where Jesus is the broker. It is thus a society of restored honour and dignity in the light of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32).

Jesus' principle of de-categorisation put order in a society of disorderliness where purity laws had become part of societal pressure levied on individuals. In the former society, the integration of non-Jews within society had been highly compromised by their social status because protection against pollution and the preservation of social identity were important aspects of boundary protection. The rule on temple purity system was also a restriction to social interaction because it controlled the social identity, social classifications and social boundaries of the Jews as the holy people of God (Elliott 1991b:221). In fact, the rules on purity were an obstacle for the emancipation of non-Jews. In spite of this, Jesus respected the purity norms of his society (Lk 2:22-34, 41; 5:14; 9:51 17:14; 22:7), though with reservation. If not, he disregarded aspects that oppressed human beings. For example, he defied purity rules and associated with sinners and tax collectors (Lk 5:8-10, 27-30; 7:29, 34, 37-39, 15:1-2; 18:9-14; 19:1-10), the Samaritans (Lk 9:52, 17:11-19; see Lk 10:29-37) and Gentiles (Lk 4:26-27; 7:1-10; 8:26; 24:27). He disregarded ritual cleansing (Lk 11:37), dietary regulations (Lk 10:7-8) and ignored Sabbath regulations that did not enhance life (Lk 6:1-5, 6-

11; 13:10-16; 14:1-6). His picture of the kingdom (the new household) destroyed boundaries of a limited-good-society and declared all goods available. His, was a society of unlimited goods and the restoration of “full human life” to the poor (Moxnes 1988:104). In this case, Luke’s description of the poor implies not only a lack of physical or spiritual resources but also to the situation of social standing and the inability to meet social requirements (Moxnes 1988:103; Malina 2001d:92). Jesus’ conflict with his adversaries was therefore a protest against the control over the distribution of resources and a fight for the values that break the existing boundaries of ethnic, cultural, class, language and status distinctions.

One of the features of SIT is the need for in-group members to suppress their egos for the sake of community interest. To this effect, Jesus’ struggle to curb and destroy categorisation exposed and led him to the cross as a confirmation of the fact that leadership is synonymous to risk bearing (Wilkes 1998:127). Through the process of de-categorisation, he also demonstrated that all human beings were endowed with the same values as children of Abraham (see Lk 3:8).

#### **6.3.4.3 The theory of “similarity-attraction”**

Some five decades ago, Rokeach (1960) remarked that people with similar beliefs seemed to attract each other, irrespective of their group differences. The theory of “similarity-attraction” is a method of conflict resolution, which consists of bringing to the fore points of convergence between social groups, while shunning areas of disagreement. It is much easier for individuals within society to make friendship on the basis of their common areas of interest. This theory can be applied to Luke’s gospel in two distinct ways, depending on the interest at stake. On the one hand, some of the coalitions in Luke’s gospel were as a result of the fact that Jesus’ opponents, irrespective of their social groups, defined him as a common enemy and lured anyone else to agree with them. Consequently, the Pharisees and Sadducees forgot about their respective in-group characteristics which differentiate them as religious groups, and agreed that Jesus was a criminal. Herod and Pilate, who had been enemies, saw things the same way during the trial of Jesus. Although they agreed that Jesus was innocent, Herod facilitated Pilate’s task by

dressing Jesus in a deceitful attire, which depicted him as a king (Lk 23:11-12). In like manner, Judas became an ally to the religious leaders, while the *ō!xlov* were lured to witness against Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus strove to bridge the gap between Jews and non-Jews by defining their point of contact as daughters and sons of Abraham, respectively (Lk 19:9; 13:16). Four examples from Luke's gospel will be used briefly in order to show how Jesus applied the theory of "similarity-attraction".

Firstly, Jesus defied the Sabbath injunction as a means of moralising the Jewish religious opponents. For instance, the justification for healing a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years was that she was "a daughter of Abraham" (Lk 13:16), who deserved God's compassion as well. The description of this woman as "a daughter of Abraham" provoked a mixed reaction within his audience. While his adversaries were put to shame, the *ō!xlov* rejoiced at his glorious performances (Lk 6:17). This was an indication that Jesus had unveiled the truth which they pretended to ignore. His defence, served as the right legitimation to his activities. The woman, who had been victim of an acquired identity of shame (a non-Jew), saw her ascribed honour and Jewish identity restored. Because of her kinship (daughter of Abraham), she was entitled to the privileges of health, as any other Jew.

The second example is found in the parable, traditionally labelled as "the parable of the Good Samaritan" (Lk 10:25-37). In this parable, Jesus proved that love and compassion were true virtues that were inherent in all individuals, irrespective of their ethnic inclination. The Samaritan was paradoxically presented as a model of good behaviour, whose attitude was recommended to the lawyer. In other words, the Samaritan (a non-Jew) exhibited approved character traits that were commensurate to the requisite for inheriting eternal life, which the lawyer (a Jew) did not have. He had a commendable character, because he treated a stranger as a family person (Oakman 2008:178). This was something which the Levite and the priest failed to do as it was expected of them. Through this parable, Jesus defined neighbourliness in terms of compassion; it is blind, and has no limits. In a compassionate-driven- community, love and concern ignore cultural and ethnic identity and initiate friendship and sacrifice (material and immaterial).



Besides, Jesus also offers himself in this parable as a true broker, who has come to pay the “debts” incurred by sinners (see Lk 5:32; 19:10). It is in this light that he invited the lawyer to join him in his compassion crusade towards the restoration of the “lost”, rather than oppose him, because by rejecting him, they equally rejected God’s purpose for themselves (see Lk 7:30).

The story of the rich elite and Lazarus portrays three elements of contact between the elite and the peasants (Lk 16:19-31). Even though they had different social status while they were still alive, they both succumbed to death at last, where these statuses were reversed. Secondly, they all faced judgement during which they were both treated on the basis of their social relationship while on earth. Lastly, they were both recognised as Abraham’s children. While the rich man enjoyed from his social status as Abraham’s son, when he was alive, Lazarus is identified as Abraham’s messenger (Lk 16:24). In his new status, he enjoys from Abraham’s comfort (Lk 16:25). In principle, these common traits were an invitation for the Pharisees, the scribes and the lawyers to have a different view of out-group members and treat them with fairness. Jesus thus offered an opportunity for his opponents to appreciate their social relationships with out-group members with dignity.

In the last example, the dialogue between Jesus and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) indicates that salvation was not an exclusive possession of any social class. It was actually free and available to all who believed in Jesus. It is a dialogue which confirms that the labels of “sinners” and “tax collector” were derogatory. According to the exercise of social control as described in § 6.3.4.1 above, the Jewish religious leaders claimed the control over salvation. The gift of salvation to Zacchaeus the “sinner” and tax collector was an indication that God’s gifts were indiscriminate and that repentance and faith were the lone prerequisites for salvation.<sup>192</sup> Secondly, Jesus justified that

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<sup>192</sup> Rohrbaugh (2007:86) seems to agree with Fitzmyer (1985:1220) that the aspect of repentance in the dialogue between Jesus and Zacchaeus is a Western interpretation, because Jesus did not say anything that provoked a call to repentance from his host. On the contrary, Zacchaeus’ single-minded eagerness to encounter Jesus in the story is self-explanatory (Nickle 2000:197). True repentance is that which comes from an attitude of self-conviction. Zacchaeus’ decision to do acts of generosity and restore back what he had extorted came as a result of self-examination. It was a concretisation of his inner thoughts. He might have learnt about Jesus’ fame and his challenging preaching; hence, his response. Besides, it is this prompt response that instigated Jesus’ own reaction: “Today salvation has come to this house” (Lk 19:9).

salvation accorded to Zacchaeus was legitimate because he too was Abraham's son (Lk 19:9). This remark led Jesus' audience to suppose that the coming of the kingdom of God was imminent (Lk 19:11). It is a conclusion which presented both Jews and non-Jews as beneficiaries of the kingdom, destined for Abraham's children.

It is sometimes helpful in conflict resolution, when groups involved in social conflict are reminded of their common kinship. In this vein, Jesus used an approach that could be likened to that of the theory of "similarity-attraction" in order to refer his contemporaries to their common glorious ancestry. This approach dismantled the walls of prejudice between in-group and out-group members and encouraged friendship on the basis of a common lineage. In this configuration, Jews and non-Jews alike are defined as part of the essential kin group of Abraham. To crown it up, Jesus assigned his disciples to pursue his mission and preach repentance and the forgiveness of sin in his name to all nations (Lk 24:47).

### **6.3.5 Conclusion**

The practice of social control is an exercise which further confirmed first-century Mediterranean society as an agonistic community. While it enabled in-group members to preserve and promote their common identity, it promoted hatred and enmity between its members and out-group members. Jesus seems to have understood that the problems of his social context were linked to the fact that the Jewish elite practised the politics of exclusion, which categorised them as the "holy people" of God. While he struggled to denounce and reform the social order imposed by such a system of stratification, he was mistakenly identified as a deviant. By reinterpreting God's holiness to mean his compassion, he became God's broker, whose presentation of the new household turned the world, upside down and raised his contemporaries against him. Jesus presented a new and inclusive society of social relationships, generosity, hospitality and friendship that identified him as a missionary of social reforms.

As a result of the application of de-categorisation and the theory of similarity-attraction, some members from within Jesus' adversaries changed their traditional appreciation of who out-group members were. While a scribe

indicated his intention to become a follower of Jesus (Lk 9:57; see Mt 8:19), other scribes who were present when Jesus was confronted with the Sadducees showed satisfaction with his responses (Lk 20:39). Two Roman centurions equally exhibited an exemplary character. While one showed compassion towards his sick servant and at the same time built a synagogue for the nation (Lk 7:2-4), another one got out of the norm and legitimated Jesus' activities and his identity. Jesus was truly a *δικαίος* (Lk 23:47). At his death, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin distanced himself from the Jewish and Roman decision to crucify Jesus. Consequently, he accorded Jesus a befitting burial. The concluding events of Luke's story of Jesus' activities therefore testify that his efforts to destroy the effects of categorisation were successful. Henceforth, his disciples as witnesses will preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all nations (Lk 24:47-48). Jesus therefore left a legacy of mission to his disciples and died as a *δικαίος*.

## **6.4 ETIC READING OF LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT IN LUKE**

### **6.4.1 Introduction**

The conclusions concerning leadership in § 3.3 attest that the conflict surrounding Jesus' ministry were linked to the question of his identity and the nature of his mission (see also § 2.2; § 2.3 and § 2.4). From these studies, effective leadership means that leaders must be in the midst of their followers, influencing them, providing guidance, sharing a common vision, complementing each other and empowering them to become effective leaders. This is the picture of leadership as proposed and applied by Jesus. As suggested in § 4.2, two models will be used in the etic reading of Jesus' leadership in Luke's gospel. The first model is the cognitive dissonance leadership theory (CDLT). Dissonance usually occurs when two cognitions are inconsistent within an individual. This is common when it comes to decision making. As indicated in § 4.2.2, leadership is dependent on decision-making. For Jesus, his leadership was essentially about a decision-making-ministry. This sub-topic is therefore about Jesus' decision to define and maintain his identity, and his effort to lure his contemporaries to understand his mission. The second model is contingent-transactional leadership theory

(CTLT). So far, this study has agreed that effective leadership depends on three factors: the leaders, the followers and the context of leadership (see § 3.3.2.1; § 3.3.2.2 and § 4.4.2). Thus, CTLT is about how Jesus managed both his audience and the situations that surrounded his leadership in order to achieve his mission, which was that of serving as God's broker of a new household.<sup>193</sup> It is in this respect that his approach to leadership was highly influenced by the response of his followers and the attitude of his adversaries.

#### **6.4.2 Cognitive dissonance leadership theory (CDLT)**

CDLT holds that conflicting ideas (from within or from without) are always liable to cause a dissonant behaviour within individuals. Such dissonant behaviour inspires leaders to the choice of leadership that they employ in order to attain their set goals. CDLT therefore facilitates the understanding of Jesus' approach to leadership in Luke's gospel. The challenges to his person and leadership, the attempt to deviate him from his objectives, as well as the change of decision witnessed by some Lukan characters are better understood when they are analysed within the context of first-century Palestine values of honour and shame. Hence, two main questions will guide the etic reading of leadership in this section. For instance, what were the effects of dissonance on Jesus and other Lukan characters? How did Jesus effectively apply CDLT?

##### **6.4.2.1 The effects of dissonance on Jesus**

The legitimacy of Jesus' leadership in Luke's gospel is challenged at several instances by his detractors: the devil, the Nazarenes, the disciples, the religious leaders; the Roman elite and even the Jewish peasantry. The aim of this challenge was to create dissonance, distract him from his divine mission (§ 4.2.2) and offer him with other leadership alternatives. Unfortunately for them, Jesus knew his mission so well that nothing could distract or lure him into error. The several attacks on his identity that led him into conflict instead enabled him to develop leadership abilities that later led him to a well projected and successful end of ministry. Due to the constraints of space,

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<sup>193</sup> This was a community that was neither built on ethnic origin nor on cultural heritage, but that which was built on the principles of kingdom compassionate love (see Taylor 2002:577).

emphasis will only be laid on the encounter between Jesus and the devil in Luke 4:1-13.

This encounter has been interpreted differently by various scholars. For example, Rohrbaugh (1995:189) qualifies it as an encounter of testing. Earlier on, Gerhardsson (1966:19) and Fitzmyer (1981:512) had also agreed that it was effectively about a test of Jesus' kinship. Yet, other commentators, according to Rohrbaugh (2007:38), observe that it is about Jesus' possible misuse of his miraculous powers. Even though these speculations are correct – since they lay emphasis on the point of Jesus' kinship identity – they remain incomplete. The confrontation between Jesus and the devil was equally centred on Jesus' leadership role, because it contains elements of dissonance and distraction. In the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis* Jesus' role had been outlined, but how he would lead this mission to its accomplishment, as God's Son, remained the main issue. Jesus' coming had coincided with the era of the Jewish messianic expectation. Hence, he was expected by some to inaugurate a new exodus and establish a new covenant. It is within this context that the devil offered some alternatives. Fundamentally, the confrontation between Jesus and the devil can be read as an exercise of challenge-response with the intention to offer Jesus with alternative modes of leadership.<sup>194</sup> In this light, one can distinguish three leadership modes from this confrontation: leadership by command or authoritative leadership (Lk 4:3); leadership by covetousness and corruption (Lk 4:5-7) and leadership by coercion and power (Lk 4:9-11).

As mentioned above this encounter, to an extent, was about Jesus' kinship and his role in maintaining his dual honourship to the end. In the exercise of authoritative leadership the devil expected Jesus to meditate on his divine sonship as "Son of God". By this, he was conscious of the fact that Jesus would certainly lose honour if he misused power and authority conferred on him. To this effect, Jesus' response was challenging. Authoritative leadership was not an end in itself; rather, it was a means to an end. Leadership by

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<sup>194</sup> It would be erroneous to describe Jesus' encounter with the devil in a clear-cut manner. In the second test the devil's claim to be God's broker is an attempt to subject Jesus into a situation of patronage. Even in this context, it is the question of Jesus' loyalty that comes to the fore as the devil distracts him with false alternatives.

covetousness and corruption was a fact about misplaced priorities in a leader's agenda. Jesus was faced with various options that could bring him honour, authority and pride. The cost price of these values was his submission to the devil in the form of worship. The devil's proposal was an offer for Jesus to lead according to human caprices and to rely on himself, rather than depending on God for guidance. It is a form of idolatry, because friendship with the world is contrary to loyalty with God. In corrupt leadership leaders generally become mean and inferior to their followers. Jesus refused to serve two masters at a time (Lk 4:8; see also Lk 16:13). As a last resort, the devil coerced Jesus with an option to be a spectacular and military star. Jesus was proposed an option of coercive leadership, wherein he would use violent means in order to arrive at his mission. Jesus considered coercive leadership as faulty. He understood that it depicted the leader's inferiority and weakness. In fact, coercion is a method which intervenes when reasoning and agreement with followers have failed. In other words, leadership by coercion is failure and tempting (Lk 4:12). Having felt defeated, the devil withdrew in order to see how Jesus would effectively apply his convictions (Lk 4:13). The departure of the devil from the scene did not necessarily mean that he submitted to Jesus' leadership options. Rather, he pursued his mission by using other Lukan characters.

By rejecting the alternative leadership approaches proposed by the devil, Jesus set out for his mission where he was subjected to further tests. In Nazareth his peers expected him to corrupt and cajole them through his miraculous healings as he would eventually do in Capernaum (Lk 4:23). Unfortunately, they felt frustrated. They had wished to establish dissonance between Jesus' earthy identity (as Joseph's son) and the heavenly mission that he proclaimed. Later on, Herod manifested similar anxiety to see Jesus the spectacular figure (Lk 9:9; 23:8). Peter wished to see him manifest his coercive leadership to the end (Lk 9:33; see also Mk 8:32; Mt 16:22). Even though the disciples desired to witness him in his lordship, they were rebuked (Lk 22:24-27). On the cross the people (peasants), the soldiers and one of the thieves challenged him to act as an authoritative leader (Lk 23: 35-36, 39). In all these events, Jesus remained focused, because for him "it was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory" (Lk 24:26).

Jesus opposed coercive leadership when the disciples (James and John) wished to command fire on Samaria (Lk 9:55-56) and when one of the disciples cut the ear of the high priest's slave (Lk 22:50-51).

From an etic point of view, Jesus sometimes applied leadership approaches proposed by human and cosmic characters, though without expressly obeying their instructions. For example, he healed the sick, forgave sins, fed the hungry with bread, calmed the storm, raised the dead to life and challenged the *status quo*. By grooming the disciples in leadership skills, and by challenging the oppressive systems of his time, he commanded and maintained honour, respect, power and authority, according to the Father's will.

#### **6.4.2.2 Lukan characters and dissonant attitude**

Apart from Jesus, dissonance in other Lukan characters was caused by traditional cultural and religious beliefs that defined a specific *status quo* of social control which ruled the community. The inconsistency witnessed in the disciples' attitude was due to the effects of dissonance which they faced at two levels. Firstly, even though they followed Jesus, they seemed to have failed to evaluate the cost. In fact, they had initially left everything and followed Jesus probably without evaluating the cost (Lk 5:11, 28). Hence, the experiences of their former professions still seemed to conflict with their new mission of self-sacrifice and absolute material and family renouncement. It is in this sense that Jesus reminded them of the consequences of their choices. For him, concrete evaluation inspires wise choices (Lk 14:25-33). Secondly, they might have understood Jesus' coming to mean the inauguration of a new era, where they would occupy important positions of leadership. Consequently, each time Jesus talked about his death, they understood him in terms of their personal benefits (Lk 9:46; 22:24). Unfortunately, Jesus' definition of leadership as service and humility instead placed them in dissonance with their expectations (Lk 22:25-27). His further teachings on the meaning of discipleship – family and material renunciation – might have aggravated their doubts on their initial choice to follow Jesus. The consciousness of such internal conflict within the disciples surely led Jesus to constantly persevere with their shortcomings and accept them just as they

were. After all, they had been detached from the dominant social institution of kinship, which was an important reference for honour and respect.

From an emic perspective, there seemed to have been no homogeneity in the attitude of religious leaders. The Pharisees were enthusiastic in inviting him for fellowship meals (Lk 7:36; 11:37; 14:1-6) and in defending him from being killed (Lk 13:31; 19:39). Unfortunately they were at the same time driven with egoism when they faced dissonance caused by their eagerness to maintain social control over the community. In the same way, some scribes were impressed with Jesus' teaching on the issue of the resurrection (Lk 20:39), while one of them even manifested the intention of following him (Lk 9:57). In spite of this, they were still torn between allegiance to Jesus and his teaching and the quest to forego their status. Jesus created further dissonance by refusing to condone their attitude of exploitation and self-centredness. Through his teachings he challenged them (Lk 10:37) and set them against each other (Lk 20: 27-38). For the religious leaders, their pendulum on the scale of dissonance weighed in favour of in-group and personal interest, at the detriment of community interest. As a result, Jesus was taken for an adversary who needed to be eliminated.

Unlike the above religious leaders, dissonant ideas within the leader of the synagogue (Lk 8:40-42, 49-55), two Roman centurions (Lk 7:1-10; 23:47), and a member of the Sanhedrin (Lk 23:50-56) caused them to prioritise community interest over against in-group and personal interest. Without declining from his role as a leader of the synagogue, Jairus knew and believed in Jesus' supremacy. While the first centurion mentioned in the gospel became a patron by building a synagogue for the community and by sending his servant to be healed by Jesus (Lk 7:1-10), the second simply drew a conclusion from all the conflict narrations of Luke's story. For him, Jesus was a *δικαίον*. At Jesus' death, Joseph of Arimathea defied in-group beliefs and offered Jesus an honourable burial (Lk 23:50-56).

Judas Iscariot's attitude of betrayal could also be explained by the fact that the religious leaders implanted dissonance in his mind and persuaded him to see Jesus according to their painting. This was the same with the *οἰκλῶν* that was lured to offer Jesus to his adversaries (Lk 22:47) and testify against him (Lk 23:4). However, this *οἰκλῶν* and the *λαοὺν* later overcame



the dissonance and beat their breasts as a sign of regret for their false testimony (Lk 23:48).

In a nutshell, some Lukan characters seemed to have shown ambiguous attitude because of the effects of dissonance within them. They seemed to have found it difficult to reconcile on the one hand, the one whom they expected and on the realities that they witnessed on the other hand. They equally seemed to have considered Jesus' utterances and his activities in dissonance with his person. Finally, Jesus' teaching of God's inclusive character seems to have placed his Jewish counterparts at dissonance with their conception of God in terms of his holiness.

#### **6.4.2.3 Recapitulation: Jesus' application of CDLT**

In applying the CDLT, Jesus devised several leadership skills in order to respond to aggression and opposition. Among the methods that he used in order to transform dissonance into consonance within himself and between him and his adversaries, four are outstanding. He minimised dissonance; fought to reconcile inconsistent cognitive within himself; admonished his opponents to a change of attitude and lastly, he practised the politics of acceptance through the forgiveness of sins.

Firstly, Jesus minimised dissonance by showing his detractors a mastery of his mission. For example, whether the devil believed it or not, Jesus proved that he was truly God's Son by refusing to succumb to his capricious demands. When the Nazarenes confused his earthly identity with his divine mission, he redressed the situation by redefining his goal (Lk 4:24-27). When Peter tried to derail him from his mission, he remained focused and undistracted (Lk 9:33). None of the challenges from the religious leaders caused him to cast doubts on his focus. Towards the end of his ministry he was neither threatened by physical pain nor by humiliation from Pilate, Herod, the Roman soldiers and the *laos*. In fact, Jesus knew his goal and did not allow any obstacle to deter him from achieving it.

Secondly, Jesus reconciled inconsistent cognitive attitudes within himself through the use of prayer which was a sign of personal commitment to God. His dual honourship (identity) was confirmed by the Holy Spirit within the context of prayer (Lk 3:21). Before his first confrontation with the religious

leaders (Lk 5:17-22), he had earlier withdrawn to the wilderness where he prayed (Lk 5:16). Probably motivated by an imminent situation of conflict, he urged his disciples to bless those who cursed them and pray for those who abused them (Lk 6:28). Important decisions taken by him were always preceded by prayer. He prayed before choosing the twelve apostles (6:12); before launching the dialogue with the disciples (Lk 9:18); and before the encounter with Elijah and Moses that resulted in a legitimation of his identity (Lk 9:29). His arrest on Mount Olives equally coincides with a prayer session (Lk 22:41). Also, when he perceived that Peter would not be able to contain his attitude as a result of dissonance, he promised to pray for him (Lk 22:32). The disciples probably noticed the effect of prayer in Jesus' ministry. Consequently, they requested him to teach them how to pray (Lk 11:1). In fact, nowhere else in the gospel do the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to do something. Only in Luke 11:1 did they make a request for Jesus to "teach" them: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1).

In order to cause his opponents to a change of attitude, Jesus confronted them according to the circumstances in which they found themselves. When faced with their attitude of incomprehension, he offered creative alternatives. In this vein, his miracles and parables were self explanatory because they addressed familiar contemporary societal issues.<sup>195</sup> The understanding of Jesus' miracles was sometimes reflected in his interpretation of God as compassionate, as opposed to the traditional understanding of God as "holy". Jesus' miracles and parables offered an innovation, which paradoxically became an inevitable source of conflict for his opponents. His rhetorical responses were a means for him to bring his adversaries to self-conviction. He used rhetorical questions when he was questioned about his Sabbath activities (Lk 6:3-5, 9; 13:14-16; 14:5) and the source of his authority (Lk 20:4). Rhetorically, he responded to the spies' question on the issue of taxes (Lk 20:21) and when he faced both the Jewish council (Lk 22:67b-69) and the Roman council (Lk 23:3b). Jesus also used "quiet-leadership" style (Rock 2006:2) in order to defeat his opponents. His

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<sup>195</sup> Van Eck (2009b) has written a commendable piece of work on parables, their interpretation and their use from a social scientific perspective. For Oakman (2008:25), Jesus' parables represent his attempt to publicly express critical truths about his community.

response to Herod's anxiety to see him perform some sign was silence (Lk 23:8-9). He continued to keep a low profile even when the chief priests and the scribes accused him vehemently (Lk 23:10), and when Herod and his soldiers treated him with contempt, mocked him and disguised him (Lk 23:11). This method, as opposed to violence, yielded positive results because Jesus was held as hero at the end of Luke's gospel when he was lifted up to his heavenly rule.

Jesus' approach to reduce dissonance between the Jews and the non-Jews was embedded in his forgiving of sins. The conflict between him and the religious leaders was inaugurated by his proved ability to offer the forgiveness of sins to a paralytic (Lk 5:20). He had understood that forgiveness of sins was double-way traffic. It did not only bring liberation to the beneficiary, but it also brought inner peace and satisfaction to the benefactor. In this case, the forgiveness that Jesus offered appeased him, because it was motivated by God's compassion. The importance of this virtue was reflected in his teaching to the disciples: "forgive, and you will be forgiven" (Lk 6:37), and the content of the Lord's Prayer (Lk 11:4). For him forgiveness must be offered as many times as possible, so long as the one who sins requests for it (Lk 17:4). Before his death, he requested his Father to forgive those who orchestrated his betrayal and death (Lk 23:34). Jesus' compassionate acts and his persevering attitude were both motivated by his policy of forgiveness. Even though his disciples abandoned him during his trial, he sought for them after his resurrection and continued to show confidence in them. The decision to commission them in a mission of repentance and forgiveness to all nations equally means that Jesus had forgiven his adversaries, including the soldiers who had cast lots to divide his garments (Lk 23:34), and mocked him (Lk 23:11, 36); the leaders who had scoffed him (Lk 23:35) and the criminal who had questioned his messiahship (Lk 23:39).

In sum, two important remarks were made, based on the emic reading of leadership and conflict in Luke (see § 5.8). Firstly, for Luke's story to be understood, each character group must be read from their own perspective. Secondly, no character group needed to be treated as bad or evil; otherwise Luke risked being misjudged and misinterpreted. The application of CDLT acknowledges that these characters effectively need to be understood in

terms of the internal conflict they underwent as a result of their expectations and the realities that they lived as a result of Jesus' teachings.

### **6.4.3 Contingent-transactional leadership theory (CTLT)**

CTLT is a theory that focuses on the leader's choices, the followers' response and the context of leadership. Effective leadership has been defined as a leader's ability to harness followers and the various internal and external forces that intervene in the exercise of leadership, in order to attain positive results. In other words, effective leadership is about leaders empowering their followers so that together, they can arrive at expected goals. In this section, the analysis of Jesus' leadership *vis-à-vis* his followers will determine his understanding of the relationship between leaders and their followers. The application of CTLT to leadership at this level will be brief because further application is ensured below, in the etic reading of Luke 9:18-22 (see § 6.5.2).

#### **6.4.3.1 Jesus' leadership *vis-à-vis* his followers<sup>196</sup>**

As stated earlier, Jesus' leadership intervened within the context of the Jewish messianic expectations where the elite, the peasants and Jesus' followers were all driven by personal and national motives.<sup>197</sup> In this case, it is Jesus' failure to act according to their prescribed principles that caused dissonance in their response to his leadership. Notwithstanding, Jesus' leadership was inspired by his attitude of acceptance and his policy of leadership empowerment. This was done through his challenging and educative messages, his acts of liberation and rehabilitation and the active co-option of the apostles in his day-to-day activities. In return, those who seemed to have understood him legitimated his leadership through their declarations, while others responded through benevolent services.

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<sup>196</sup> In the context of this study, "followers" refers to the large number of those who had contact with Jesus, irrespective of their ethnic inclination. In general terms, it refers to all those who followed or encountered Jesus (apart from the Jewish elite and the Roman elite), either supporting him or discrediting his mission.

<sup>197</sup> Jesus had two situations to manage. Firstly, he had the task of persuading his audience through his leadership that, in spite of the dissonance in their expectations, he was indeed the Messiah. His second task was that of enabling his followers to understand his mission, so that together, they could bring it to a successful end.

In order to lure his community to accept his identity and his mission, Jesus' activities pulled a great number of followers, whom he expected to become aids in the accomplishment of this mission. Hence, he started by choosing followers, whom he empowered with the authority to preach, heal and cast out demons (Lk 9:1-2). This commission was repeated after his resurrection, and before his ascension to heaven (Lk 24:47-49). Apart from this, he considered teaching as an important aspect of his ministry (Lk 4:18-19 & 43; see also Lk 8:1). Consequently, the choice of the twelve apostles was followed by an extended lecture on the type of society which he envisaged (Lk 6:20-49). His messages were such that they instigated a change of attitude in his hearers (followers). To his apostles he recommended creativity (Lk 9:13), dutiful (Lk 17:7-10) and humble service (Lk 22:26-27). To his followers in general, he prescribed total commitment as a requisite to discipleship (Lk 14:25-33). For effective service, the disciples were warned against the wrong approach to leadership in the likeness of the kings of the Gentiles (Lk 22:25; see also Lk 12:1-12; 20:45-47). In spite of the waywardness of his followers characterised by rejection, misunderstanding and incomprehension, he taught them without ceasing. This implied his willingness to equip them with the precepts that embodied his mission. This methodology did not only set them free from the ignorance of hatred but also, it led them to understand Jesus' identity and his mission.

Jesus' attitude of liberation and rehabilitation was a replicate of his efforts to destroy fences of discrimination and hatred that had been fostered by the politics of exclusion. By rehabilitating the non-Jews into the community of the Jews and through his politics of acceptance, Jesus established a community of friends; that is a fictive kinship. His attitude made a blend between leadership, acceptance and tolerance. Jesus also empowered his followers by involving them in his day-to-day activities. It is an empowerment that enabled the followers to improve on their thinking and to learn to manage difficult situations in the absence of the leader. Twice, he included Peter, James and John in his activities at specific moments. For instance, they were present during the restoration of Jairus' daughter (Lk 8:51) and at the event of the transfiguration (Lk 9:30-31). Jesus also involved his disciples in preparatory activities towards missionary journeys to the Samaritan village

(Lk 9:52) and to Jerusalem (Lk 19:29). He later charged Peter and John to prepare the Passover (Lk 22:8). The disciples were not left indifferent in his efforts to make his identity explicitly known. Hence, when they returned from their missionary trip, he assembled them to find out what the crowds and they, themselves thought about him (Lk 9:18-22). Four times, Jesus made clear the events that awaited him in Jerusalem (Lk 9:22, 44; 17:25; 18:32). In the same vein, he never spared his followers of the dangers involved in leadership (Lk 9:5; 10:3; 22:39).

The loyalty of Jesus' followers was evident in their legitimation of his leadership, their devotedness, their feedback and the atmosphere of dialogue that reigned between Jesus and themselves. For instance, in spite of their lack of trust and confidence, they remained committed to their new mission. It is this sense of commitment which earned them the reward of a renewed commission at the end of Jesus' ministry (Lk 24:48). Their feedback concerning the crowds' impression about him also enabled Jesus to have a general feeling about the appreciation that the peasants had about him, as well as their own personal conviction. At Jesus' death, the peasants (λαοὶ and οἱ ἄλλοι) that had served as an obstacle to his earlier arrest equally continued to legitimate his identity and works when they beat their breasts and returned home (Lk 23:48). Even though Jesus' identity and his leadership did not draw unanimity, in general terms, he was acknowledged as a missionary of reformation and social transformation.

The diverse nature of Jesus' followers at the end of his ministry testifies for a successful management of the surrounding circumstances of his leadership. Among others, Jesus gathered and transformed tax collectors and forgiven sinners; he reformed Roman centurions and members from the Jewish council; he convinced the οἱ ἄλλοι and λαοὶ; challenged and recommitted the apostles. It is the diversity in the composition of this new household that makes God's holiness inclusive. Jesus himself was the leader of this heterogeneous (in terms of ethnicity) but homogeneous (in terms of kingdom principles of compassion and solidarity) community, where everybody had a seat on the same table of friendship and fellowship, with the leader playing the role of a servant (see Wilkes 1998:13).

#### 6.4.3.2 Recapitulation: Jesus' understanding of leadership

From the analysis above it stands clear that, beyond the Jewish messianic expectations and all its consequences (intrigues, contempt, anxiety, personal and national interest, and misunderstanding); dissonance between the expectations of Jesus' followers and his defined goals, as well as the practice of social control were all important temporal factors that influenced Jesus' leadership. Also, his understanding of God as all compassionate stood at dissonance with their interpretation of God's holiness. In this perspective, his ability to harness his followers to manage these factors confirmed him as *to\_n xristo\_n tou Qeou* (Lk 9:20); in fact, as a *di&kaiou* (Lk 23:47). It is evident from the etic reading of leadership and its surrounding factors in Luke's gospel that Jesus defines and recommends various types of leadership: Compassionate leadership; servant leadership; sacerdotal leadership; participatory leadership; leadership by action and purposeful leadership.

Effective leadership according to Jesus must be animated by empathy towards followers and the vocational or professional passion towards the realisation of estimated goals. This is what may also be referred to as indiscriminate and compassionate leadership (Lk 10:25-36). Failure to read and analyse Jesus' attitude within the context of these two principles, his contemporaries misinterpreted his actions and rated him as an opponent. Jesus wished that the compassionate attitude of the Samaritan could be emulated by the lawyer. In his opinion, the effectiveness of leaders begins from their readiness to accommodate their followers, irrespective of their ethnic, religious, political and cultural differences and their ability to show a sense of responsibility towards tasks which are human centred. The diversity in beliefs is never necessarily a sign of enmity and conflict. Rather, when diversity is well managed within the group, it equips and complements its members' shortcomings and thus facilitates their joint efforts in achieving greater results.

Jesus exhibited indiscriminate compassion through a servant leadership approach. He interpreted meaningful leadership as leadership that was motivated by service (Wilkes 1998:9, see also Wehrli 1992:104, Nyiawung 2005). In other words, it is leadership that is guided by the leader's attitude of

submissiveness and humility. This approach defies the traditional paradigm of leadership which means to rule and command. Even though the term “leader” may be opposed to that of “servanthood”, Jesus’ attitude proves that the leaders’ joy comes from the services that they render to their followers and the satisfaction they derive thereof. As a leader, he had all authority in heaven and on earth as Son of God, but as servant, his lordship was that of service. His example implies that power and authority are useful only when they are used as instruments of service. Even though he was a leader, he sat among his disciples as a servant (Lk 22:27). His position and his attitude at table (Lk 22:14-23) modifies the understanding of leadership. It is not lordship; it is service (Lk 22:26).

Jesus’ willingness to serve even at the expense of his life gave his leadership a sacrificial approach. He prescribed sacerdotal leadership to his disciples: no material, no anxiety about life issues, renunciation of family and self-abnegation. Comparatively, He gave preference to urgency in realising group’s goals, as opposed to the quest for personal gain. Sacrificial leadership moves hand in gloves with risk bearing and self-giving. Jesus’ ability to bear risk resulted in his willingness to offer himself and to suffer as a necessity, in order to enter into his glory (Lk 24:26, 45). His ministry was that of innovation through the reformation and the transformation of traditional social control mechanisms. For this, he neither feared innovation (Wilkes 1998:127), nor compromised with unacceptable dehumanising practices. By effecting change through the delegation of power, he exposed leadership and its implications, thereby training the disciples to become future effective leaders. Sacerdotal leadership is that which involves stress, frustration, isolation, rejection, pressures. In general terms, leaders are prime targets for attack and enmity (Spriggs 1993:145). Notwithstanding, Jesus did not only face it, but he recommended it to his disciples.

Jesus’ success in leadership also stemmed from the fact that he fostered and practised participatory leadership. This was leadership that resulted from the experiences and the contributions of his followers. Without counting the cost and their effectiveness, Jesus took them just as they were, with their strengths and their shortcomings. His open minded attitude created an appropriate atmosphere that enabled the disciples to express their



feelings. Their reports about the crowd's speculations concerning his identity and Peter's response (Lk 9: 19-20; see Lk 9:7-8) enabled him to fashion his leadership in reaction to the expectations of his followers. In participatory leadership, followers assist leaders in moulding leadership which is appropriate to their context. On the one hand, Jesus' participatory approach to leadership enabled him to dispel the misunderstanding and misinterpretation that surrounded his identity. On the other hand, it increased the steadfastness of his followers and their zeal to support him; certainly, Jesus was a *di&kaiov*.

Nowhere in Luke's gospel (apart from Luke 4:18), does Jesus explicitly refer to himself as the expected Messiah. Throughout the gospel he allowed his works to testify about his person and his identity. Elsewhere in the gospel, various human characters identified him, according to their perceptions, and with reference to what they witnessed him perform. It is this leadership approach that is here referred to as leadership by action. In response to inquisition about his messiahship in the Sanhedrin, Jesus pointed to action: "But from now on the Son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (Lk 22:69). Before Pilate and Herod, he never proved to be king. Paradoxically he was dressed in a corresponding attire of kingship and action (Lk 23:11). His dependence on the divine legitimation of his identity and the divine source of his authority were a bolster to his leadership. Hence, from his earthly actions, he earned the legitimation from the crowds and the disciples (Lk 9:19-20). His ability to successfully manage societal crisis to the end, earned him the approval of the centurion and the peasants (Lk 23:47, 48). Incontestably, Jesus' lordship was legitimated as a result of his actions (services). In other words, leadership by action is leadership where leaders' performances lead to the legitimation of their power and authority, and not the reverse.

Jesus' eagerness for service led him to a persevering and purposeful leadership approach. He knew his responsibilities so well that neither did the dissonance from cosmic agents, nor the distractions from earthly forces caused him to deviate from his mission. Humiliation and suffering did not even deter him; rather, they were a necessity and a source of encouragement (Lk 9:22; 24:26). Although his leadership was doubted and contested from the

point of view of its source and its application, he remained focused and unperturbed. In a nutshell, his focus towards mission achievement and his leadership approach were some of the principal causes of conflict with his opponents. Having understood the meaningfulness of his mission, he prayerfully offered himself to God's guidance and courageously gave himself "as it was determined" (Lk 22:22).

Jesus' leadership success prescribes humility, tolerance, perseverance and forgiveness as necessary leadership virtues. His forgiving spirit added an impetus to his mission. He achieved greatness by avoiding the human way of gaining honour and authority and by opting the humble and humiliating way. His tolerant and forgiving attitude enabled him to cope with torture from religious and political authorities; insults from soldiers and the thief; the capricious attitude of his disciples (their lack of faith, incompetence, incomprehension, mistrust), the vacillation of the peasants, his loneliness and rejection from his peers (Spriggs 1993:159). As a result, his perseverance yielded positive fruits in that the followers finally understood his identity and took over the leadership of the mission which they seemingly did not understand from the beginning.

#### **6.4.4 Conclusion**

Three aspects animated Jesus' leadership: his person and his works; the support from his followers by way of legitimation and the understanding of his context of leadership. From an etic point of view, the enigmatic nature of Jesus' character became the source of dissonance in Lukan characters. His followers were hesitant to trust in his leadership because he was never understood. For this reason, he seemed not to have been the right person to follow. The religious authorities did not recognise his leadership because he refused to collaborate and condone with their leadership approach. Considering the fact that legitimation has an important role to play in leadership (Read 1974:190), Jesus counted more on divine legitimation than on human legitimation. The recognition of his identity by the Holy Spirit at his baptism aided him to dispel dissonance from his detractors and attract confidence in his followers. The legitimation from Peter and the crowds spurred him to define his mission in a better way, and prepared him for his

Jerusalem expedition. His success was ensured by his ability to control all temporal factors that influenced his leadership, in order to arrive at a successful end.

In response to the circumstances that surrounded his leadership, he did not use one lone type of leadership. His application of leadership was highly influenced by punctual situations and events (see Hollander 1993:30). For instance, the various responses that he offered during his trial and other occasions of challenge-response depended on the intention of his antagonists. Situated within the context of the Jewish messianic expectations his leadership was full of misinterpretations. The Jews had wished that Jesus could use the different leadership alternatives offered by the devil: leadership by command or authoritative leadership (Lk 4:3); leadership by covetousness and corruption (Lk 4:5-7) and leadership by coercion and power (Lk 4:9-11). Unfortunately, he understood each of these approaches as an attempt to satisfy their ego. Consequently, he chose the servant way, which paradoxically seemed contrary to their wishes. This was an approach which brought him the support from a Roman centurion, a member of the Jewish council, the peasants and the disciples who were later on commissioned to preach the repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations.

## **6.5 LEADERSHIP, CONFLICT AND IDENTITY: AN ETIC READING OF LUKE 9:18-22**

### **6.5.1 Introduction**

From an emic point of view Jesus' identity within the surroundings of Galilee was that of conflict and controversy because the various groups with which he interacted did not only misinterpret his actions, but also conceived his identity differently (see § 5.7). Luke 9:18-22 is therefore Jesus' check of information from his disciples and a personal disclosure of who he is, including its consequences. This micro narrative does not only summarise the nature of the conflict in Luke's gospel but also, it unveils the future of Jesus' ministry. In addition, it depicts his leadership ability and highlights the importance of human and divine contribution in the process of legitimating Jesus as God's choice in bringing salvation to all peoples; a light to Gentiles and glory to Israel (Lk 2:30-32).

The etic reading of Luke 9:18-22 will therefore lay emphasis on Jesus' leadership, the conflict that he faced in his relationships and the legitimization of his identity as God's broker. These aspects will be grouped into two areas of study: contingent-transactional leadership theory (CTLT) and a reading of Luke 9:18-22 through the lenses of some cultural values of first-century Mediterranean society. The intention of applying the CTLT to read Luke 9:18-22 is an attempt to evaluate Jesus' leadership, in terms of his relationship with his followers (disciples) and their contribution to the attainment of goals. It is thus about the implication of the question-and-answer session between Jesus and the disciples. A focused reading of Luke 9:18-22 also shows a close connection between the conflicts that Jesus faced during his ministry and the application of his leadership. In this way, the use of first-century Mediterranean values of honour and shame and the models of labelling and deviance will emphasise the place of legitimization in the theoretical framework that explains the relationships mentioned above.

### **6.5.2 Contingent-transactional leadership (Lk 9:18-22)**

According to the contingency leadership theory, the success of leaders depends on their efforts to manage influencing situations in order to achieve expected goals, depending on the leaders' priorities. In this prescription, leadership is the sole responsibility of leaders. Transactional leadership, on its part, compliments contingency leadership theory in that it recognises the importance of followers in the process of leadership. As explained in § 4.2.4, CTLT rehabilitates both the leaders and their followers in the management of internal and external forces in order to attain goals. Luke 9:18-22 offers an example of how such collaboration is effected because it defines the place of dialogue within the context of leadership. This micro narrative also emphasises the importance of feedback through investigation (Lk 9:18-20) and its effects on both leaders and followers (Lk 9:20-22).

#### **6.5.2.1 Reading Luke 9:18-22 as a dialogue**

A dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons. In leadership, it is a democratic approach that gives room for both leaders and followers to participate in leadership by providing personal opinion, criticism and

feedback. It is one of the characteristics of dyadic communities whereby dyadic persons expect others to give feedback about their activities. Jesus inaugurates the dialogue between him and his followers in Luke 9:18-22 with a prayer session, where they paradoxically do not participate actively (Lk 9:18a). After this quiet moment of meditation, self dedication and communication with God, he asked them a fundamental question about his identity, in two phases. Firstly, he inquired about popular opinion: “Who do the crowds say that I am” (Lk 9: 18b). Secondly, he sought to know what the disciples themselves thought: “But who do you say that I am?” (Lk 9:20a).

Malina (1996b:45) opines that “who do people [others] say that I am” was a typical Mediterranean question, because it was a norm that a person needed at least one other person so as to ascertain who they really were. Through this question Jesus acknowledged that he did not live in isolation, but that as a dyadic personality, community impression about his identity was important. The importance of this question therefore lies in the fact that it goes beyond Jesus’ mere identity in order to address the ministry that he incarnated. It is also a question that inquired about what was said concerning the new message that he preached and the leadership which he commanded through the apostles whom he used. It is feedback about Jesus, the new understanding of God, the disciples, as well as the new vision that they shared. From a dyadic point of view, Jesus’ use of “I” in these questions connotes to an extent an implied “we”, referring to Jesus and the new community.

Notwithstanding, Jesus was convincingly followed by huge number of persons who found themselves in two categories: the “crowds” and the disciples. The “crowds” in this case were a combination of the several groups of people whom he attended to from Capernaum (Lk 4:31) to Caesarea Philippi (Lk 9:18), passing through Bethsaida (Lk 9:10-17), and those to whom the disciples administered (Lk 9:1-6). While he prepared to set his face towards Jerusalem (Lk 9:51), he expected an appreciation from both this thronging public and his in-group members. He was aware that an objective response coming from those who had followed his day-to-day activities would be helpful for the rest of the journey. According to Malina and Neyrey (1991c:84), dyadic persons always needed constantly to be told their role,

identity and status by those around them (see also Rohrbaugh 2007:74). The dialogue gives an impression that Jesus might as well have expected a comparison to be made between him and someone whom they probably expected or whom they knew. It is in this sense that his question addressed to them should be read in comparative terms. Consequently, the crowds' speculation as echoed by the disciples was adequate. Comparatively, Jesus' activities categorised him with some New Testament and Old Testament figures, respectively: John the Baptist, Elijah and one of the prophets of old. For Peter and the other disciples, Jesus was simply "the Christ of God". By linking Jesus to these personalities, the crowds and the disciples sought to authenticate him as an agent empowered by God to establish his reign in their midst. Peter's response did not in any way cancel nor did it contradict the speculation from the crowds as earlier echoed by Herod (Lk 9:7-9). Rather, it was their contribution as a response to Jesus' question.

Interestingly, Jesus neither disagreed with the conjecture from the crowds nor the alternative from the disciples. Rather, by offering a complement to all these responses, Jesus legitimated the place of dialogue and the importance of the followers' contribution in leadership. He confirmed that in a dyadic society the contribution from in-group members is important. In the same vein, Rohrbaugh (2007:76) observes that "all the legitimate questions about Jesus have to do with groups" (Rohrbaugh 2007:76). Hence, the *kai* which introduces Jesus' compliments plays an adversative role. In spite of the fact that the crowds and the disciples had a glimpse of who Jesus was, their conjecture carried consequences that needed to be digested, understood and explained more profoundly.

Through dialogue, Jesus became aware of the limitations in the disciples' knowledge of whom they were following. By introducing his identity as "Son of man" (Lk 9:22), he explains their responses in terms of the conflict that he already faced with the religious leaders and its continuance as he forged ahead. Jesus concluded his explanation by indicating the outcome of the conflict; he will eventually be vindicated. Unfortunately, the dialogue does not indicate whether the disciples understood Jesus as much as he had understood them. However, he summarised the content of his ministry to his followers by defining its working; its goals and its consequences. With this

information, he is certain that his followers are aware of the content of the mission that they are called upon to exercise.

One of Jesus' intentions during his ministry was to make more brokers for the new community that he moulded. From Nazareth, up to the point where Jesus now found himself, he had introduced a new teaching in preparation for a new community. Consequently, he launched a dialogue that enabled him to ensure that the group that he was forming was a coherent group that understood who he was and what he did. He had wished to constitute a group that was coherent in knowledge (of leader and mission), if not, it would rather mean a betrayal of group cohesion. Malina and Neyrey (1991c:73-74) describe such a community as that of "strong group persons" (see also Van Eck 1995:335). Jesus therefore chose dialogue as a leadership approach because he knew that by recognising who he was, and by understanding their limitations, he will inevitably enable his disciples and the crowds to become clients and brokers. As clients they would have a better understanding of Jesus' identity and his mission. And as brokers, they would certainly serve God in a convincing manner. By legitimating Jesus as "the Christ of God" (Lk 9:20b), the disciples, just like the centurion who recognised Jesus as  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$  (Lk 23:47) and the  $\omicron\!\times\lambda\omicron\nu$  who beat their breasts (Lk 23:48), effectively became brokers.

By choosing the way of dialogue, Jesus did not intend to avoid conflict; rather, he envisaged managing and curbing it to the minimum. The discussion with the disciples was based on the conflict that he already faced; it explained the subsequent conflicts that still awaited him. Even within the context of the discussion, he still faced the conflict of misunderstanding with his disciples. Jesus' example indicates that conflict is inherent in leadership. Hence, the leader's responsibility is an endeavour to investigate, know, understand, manage and curb conflict.

#### **6.5.2.2 Leading through investigation (Lk 9:18-20)**

The dialogue between Jesus and his followers in this micro narrative can be analysed as a complete independent sub-unit. Whereas verse 18 introduces the subject matter of the discussion centred on the question about Jesus' identity, the last verse offers a solution, which compliments other responses

that had been provided by the crowds and the disciples. The dialogue takes the tune of an investigation where Lukan Jesus seeks the participation of his followers in the making up of his Christology. Already, Jesus had known where he was going, and the nature of the events that awaited him. But then, he did not know whether at this point, the disciples and the host of his followers had known who he was, and the events that he was about to face. Even if they had, it was still doubtful whether they had understood their implications.

Nickle (2000:92) remarks that it is often very difficult to detect the intentions behind questions posed by leaders imbued with power and authority. Jesus' investigations on the issue of his identity did not seem strange, nor did it appear to bear strings. His authoritative preaching, his healing miracles and exorcisms, his astounding acts of providence and the missionary expedition of his disciples had already created an impact within the vicinity of Galilee. As he moved further for the purpose of accomplishing his mission (Lk 9:51), he therefore sought to know from the disciples if they were conscious of the consequences involved in the mission that was set before them. He probably knew that a satisfactory mission depended on how much information they had concerning his identity. However, the devil had earlier interpreted Jesus' identity in terms of wrong motives (Lk 4:1-13). Also, the question; "who do...say that I am" (Lk 9:18b, 20a) had also been echoed already in Nazareth by the peasants (see Lk 4:22) and later on by John the Baptist (Lk 7: 20). The Jewish elite, through their religious leaders, had been interested in this question, without having in mind a specific response (Lk 5:21). Herod, the Roman elite, had speculated on the same issue although, with doubtful responses (Lk 9:7-9). Jesus' activities had also embarrassed his disciples, who could not find a response as to who he was (Lk 8:25). At this point, there was no way for the latter to avoid the question; and for this, Jesus needed a precise response: "But who do you say that I am?" (Lk 9:20a).

Jesus understood that success in mission depended on how much knowledge the followers had of their leaders including their agenda of activities, and their response by way of feedback and legitimation. He also knew that the survival of leadership depended on leaders' ability to inform, educate and inspire their followers in their weaknesses and on the intricacies



involved in the leadership to which they all aspired. Thirdly, he knew that such education could only come as a result of a thorough investigation. Hence, the question: “But who do you say that I am?” To this effect, Peter’s declaration perhaps represents a climactic confession in terms of Jesus’ identity (Rohrbaugh 2007:74). However, even though it was an important declaration, it does not constitute the plot of Luke 9:18-22. Jesus’ question (in two phases) was a simple medium to define the intricacies involved in the meaning of his identity and the consequences they had on his mission. In fact, the intention of this investigation is contained in the intimation for the disciples to remain silent. More especially, it is to be found in the role played by the expression “ei)pw\_n” (Lk 9:22a). “Ei)pw\_n” introduces the *raison d’être* of Jesus’ question and at the same time concludes the dialogue. Peter’s confession would be climactic if Jesus had explicitly declared that this response was right while that from the crowds was wrong. Instead, he seemed to have authenticated and complimented the both responses. In either case, Jesus is neither John the Baptist nor Elijah, nor one of the prophets of old. Even though he is the Christ of God, his messiahship defies the traditional expectations of the Jewish messianic expectations, because it is linked with suffering, rejection humiliation, death and vindication.

The investigative question directed by Jesus at the disciples was purposeful. In leadership, investigation serves the purpose of evaluation, appreciation and legitimation. The first purpose for Jesus was that it enabled him to associate the disciples with his plan of leadership. Secondly, he wished to provide the disciples with terms of reference for the mission that will soon become theirs. At his resurrection, the women at the tomb are referred to this discussion. They are asked to remember Jesus’ words, while he was still in Galilee (Lk 24:6). Henceforth, the discussion of Luke 9:18-22 would remain a point of reference and a key to their mission. Thirdly the speculations from the crowds and the disciples aided Jesus to define a true understanding of his messiahship. His Christology is a combination of suffering, rejection, humiliation, death and vindication. Fourthly Jesus unveiled the mask of misunderstanding that still haunted the disciples and the crowds. Even though they seemed to have had a glimpse of who he was, they had not yet understood the implications of what it meant for him to be

“the Christ of God” (Lk 9:20b). The investigation therefore enabled Jesus to know the atmosphere that characterised his identity and his leadership. The strict warning for the disciples to keep the contents of the discussion in secret actually implies that they still had a lot to learn (Nickle 2000:97). Lastly, Jesus used this opportunity to present the bitter side of leadership. It entails suffering, humiliation, rejection and even death for which, all aspirants must count the cost.

### **6.5.2.3 The unwanted side of leadership (Lk 9:21-22)**

In the context of first-century Mediterranean society where leadership is synonymous to honour, power and authority (see Malina & Neyrey 1991b:26; Moxnes 1996:35), Jesus’ remarks appeared as an unwanted explanation. Instead of maintaining the honour which he had brought to this community as they had expected, they implied shame and disappointment in many respects. They implied a different definition of leadership as compared to the traditional notion of leadership that they already knew and applied. They equally implied that the mission he began would remain uncompleted. These remarks were in fact a discredit to his teachings because they brought shame to the new community that he was forming. And finally, they portrayed a bleak future for the disciples, who had initially left everything and to follow him.

By associating suffering, rejection, humiliation and death with his identity, Jesus meant to indicate the unwanted side of leadership, especially within the context of a limited-good-society. This painting was in agreement with his understanding of leadership which challenged its traditional notion to mean gain, command and lordship. In this way, Jesus remained consistent in his definition of leadership:

And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.

(Lk 22:25-26)

With this new conception, meaningful lordship and authority, according to Jesus, must be translated into selfless service. Apparently, the disciples seem to have understood this aspect of shame more than they understood that of

honour implied in Jesus' predicted resurrection. Consequently, they constantly clamoured on who would be the greatest (Lk 9:46). Secondly, Jesus' words meant that his mission was coming to an end. This declaration was a sign of frustration and despair for the Jews, who still expected their total political and economic liberation from the Romans. It was ironic and abnormal for one who was expected to lead Gentiles to light and at the same time inspire glory and salvation to Israel (see Lk 2:30, 31, 32) to talk about his immanent and premature death. Jesus' declaration therefore made his leadership and person to become unpopular.

His teachings had been that of reforming and transforming the community in the likeness of God's plan of salvation for Israel. They had contributed to the formation of a new community that derived their providence (material and immaterial) from his benevolence. It was therefore unacceptable that the liberation that he had begun was about to be brought to a sudden end. Through several occasions of challenge-riposte (Lk 5:17-25, 27-32, 33-39; 6:1-5, 6-11; 7:36-50), Jesus had shown the triumph of a new community over against the "old" community led by the religious leaders. During these encounters Jesus had defeated his enemies and brought honour to his community. A recount of the events that awaited him in Jerusalem meant their return to the leadership that Jesus had initially defeated. Initially, the disciples had left everything and followed Jesus. Even though they had not understood him, they had gained honour in the eyes of the public as "Jesus' followers". Their social status had motivated them to aspire for greater leadership in the new community. Unfortunately, Jesus' explanation of who he was and what his mission entails seem not to favour them. It is in this respect that Nickle (2000:97) is right that although Peter gave the right answer, it was for incomplete reasons.

The above elements constituted what could be termed as "the unwanted side of leadership", because Jesus' declaration did not favour the expectations of the disciples and the crowds. Jesus probably knew about this disillusionment. Hence, he began his investigations with a prayer session, which points to the importance of the subject-matter contained in the dialogue. In short, Jesus' dialogue with the disciples is better understood

when it is studied within the context of first-century Mediterranean cultural values of honour and shame and the models of deviance and dissonance.

### **6.5.3 Luke 9:18-22 and cultural values of first-century Mediterranean society**

From an etic point of view Luke 9:18-22 can be interpreted through the medium of two sets of models. Firstly, it is a micro narrative which exposes issues of dissonance, legitimation and honour. Secondly, it embodies first-century Mediterranean values like honour, shame and deviance. In essence, Jesus' response to the question of his identity is about the reversal of status. In spite of his humiliation by earthly leaders, who apparently seem to win, his vindication will come from a divine source to confirm his innocence, his victory and his legitimate leadership.

#### **6.5.3.1 Dissonance, legitimation and honour (Lk 9:18-20)**

It was observed in § 6.4.2.1 that the confrontation between Jesus and the devil was aimed at creating dissonance in Jesus. During that encounter the devil lured him with various alternative leadership approaches. In Luke 9:18b-22, it is the turn of human agents (the crowds and the disciples) to cajole Jesus by identifying him with John the Baptist and prominent Old Testament figures. Unlike the case with the devil, Jesus appears to be the main actor in the dialogue. His first quest is to know who the crowds say that he was (Lk 9:18b). The crowds' speculations, as echoed by the disciples, identified him with a variety of personalities. While for some he was identified with John the Baptist, for others, he was Elijah. Yet for some others, he was simply one of the old prophets that had risen (Lk 9:19). According to these conjectures the crowds did not seem unanimous. Whatever the case, they all agreed that there was an inseparable link between who Jesus was and what he did. Their various responses were in relation with their experiences of what Jesus did; what these Jewish figures had done in the past and their expectations of the promises of Old Testament prophets (Lk 1:54-55; cf. 2 Sam 7:12-16).<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Nyiawung (2008:48) observes that the idea of hope and salvation has been part of Israel's life and history. That is why in the Old Testament the Israelites are in a constant quest of a Saviour-hero. This is a probable reason why the crowds were immediately motivated by

These responses bore elements of dissonance because all the figures mentioned above suffered conflict, humiliation and rejection from their respective contemporaries. For instance, John the Baptist had been beheaded for his criticism against Herod (Lk 9:9). Elijah had suffered threats from King Ahab and Jezebel (1 Ki 19:2-3). Jesus had also remarked that prophets were without honour, respect and recognition (Lk 4:24), because they had suffered from persecution (Lk 11:47).

When Jesus addressed the same question to the disciples, Peter identified him as “the Christ of God” (Lk 9:20). The common factor between the responses from the crowds and that from the disciples was that Jesus was a nationalistic leader from God. After having reflected on leadership possibilities proposed by the devil, Jesus was once more confronted with a crisis of identity. His personal response in verse 22 made a blend of the crowds’ observations and the disciples’ confession. By alluding to himself the title of “Son of man”, Jesus agreed with the crowds that he could be identified with Old Testament figures and prophecies (cf. Dn 7: 9-14; Enoch 45-57). He equally agreed with Peter that he was the Messiah. However from here, Jesus showed the limitations of both responses by associating his messiahship with Isaiah’s idea of the “suffering servant” (Is 52:13-53:12).<sup>199</sup> This compliment freed Jesus from dissonance and focused him on his purpose. Even though he would suffer conflict, rejection, humiliation and death (as other Old Testament figures), he was different from a nationalistic figure, because he would be raised on the third day.

Beside aspects of dissonance, the crowds and the disciples were also concerned with the legitimization of Jesus’ honour. Consequently, they both identified him with Old Testament and Jewish personalities of honour and dignity. For both of them, Jesus had a divine origin. In other words, his authority and his power were divinely inspired. In the Palestinian context,

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Jesus’ activities to identify him with prominent figures who had left a glorious history in the process of the liberation of God’s people.

<sup>199</sup> This position has been contested by many scholars who consider it inappropriate to associate the “suffering servant” of Isaiah with Jesus’ mission in the New Testament (see e.g., McKenzie 1981:132; North 1956:208). However, the fundamental issue resides on the fact that Isaiah does not situate the events of the suffering servant within any time frame. Notwithstanding, Jesus’ coming coincides with the Jewish expectations of a liberator. Unfortunately, Jesus’ approach seems to differ with these expectations.

where someone's source of authority and power played an important role in defining the one's status within the society (Lk 20:2), the authentication of Jesus' honour and dignity in this dialogue was legitimate. In this vein, Moxnes (1996:20) confirms that public (e. g., the crowd) opinion was important in legitimating an individual's social status. Whatever the case, Jesus was recognised as an honourable person. The recognition of his status added impetus in the realisation of his mission. Although their motives might have been wrong, they were inspired to see Jesus unlike other ordinary beings within the Jewish society.

The importance of the dialogue with the disciples also resides in the role of the leaders' followers in the legitimating process of their leadership. Jesus had earlier defined kinship in relation to those who hear the word of God and keep it (Lk 8:21). With this understanding, Jesus' disciples and the crowds could be considered as members of the new household. Honour derived from one's kinship was important in public eyes. Hence, having become members of Jesus' kinship of the new order, the disciples and the crowds had an important role in legitimating his identity, and through that, his leadership. Even though they might have had half truths about his identity, they nevertheless recognised that he was a person of high social repute.

### **6.5.3.2 Deviance, honour and shame: The reversal of status (Lk 9:21-22)**

Having listened to recommendable identities from both the crowds and the disciples, it was absurd for Jesus to define his identity with contradictory characteristics of deviance. Apparently, Jesus had given them the impression that he was engaged in a losing battle in which the religious leaders would be the winners. This was absurd, because the disciples might have expected Jesus to raise a confirmation of the status that had been conferred on him. Instead, he defied all their expectations and placed himself in the position of shame. He will suffer, be humiliated, be rejected and be killed by religious leaders. This meant by implication an extinction of Jesus' movement which implied the end of their aspirations. The one who had been described as an honourable leader did not seem to fit with their expectations. Rather than looking like an honourable leader, he was in fact a deviant

Conversely, Jesus did not allude to himself the status of shame. It is the definition of his messiahship that gave a false impression to his disciples. Luke 9:22 (ei)pw\_n o#ti dei~ to\_n ui(on tou~ a0nqpw&pou polla\_ pagei~n kai\_ a)podokimasqh~nai a)po tw~n presbute&rwn kai\_ a)rxiere&wn kai\_ grammate&wn kai\ a)poktanqh~nai kai th~| tri&th| h(me&ra| e)gerqh~nai) presents three main features. Its importance as an explicative verse is in the introductory ei)pw\_n. Secondly, apart from the verb ei)pw\_n, the subject of the verbs pagei~n, a)podokimasqh~nai and a)poktanqh~nai is explicit: the elders, the chief priests and the scribes. For the verb e)gerqh~nai, its subject is implied; it is God.<sup>200</sup> Thirdly, of all the conjunctions of kai\_ mentioned in this verse, the kai\_ in the expression kai\ h~| tri&th| h(me&ra| e)gerqh~nai plays a special function. It is an adversative kai\_, which implies a reverse in action. It articulates a contrast between what has been said, and what follows. In the context of this verse, the elders, the chief priests and the scribes would inflict Jesus with suffering, rejection and death; but this will not be the end. As a reaction, God will restore him through the resurrection.

God's activity in this verse is that of the restoration of Jesus' status which has been disfigured as a result of the attitude of his adversaries. Jesus' followers did not understand the reversal of status implied in his response. His process of reformation had not ended; rather, it was on-going. The vindication offered by God after three days meant a reversal of status wherein Jesus' honour, dignity, leadership and identity would be re-established. In a society that was conversant with the consequences of the exercise of challenge-riposte, the disciples had not understood that Jesus' vindication implied shame to his opponents and victory to the new household. The reversal of status announced by Jesus is thus similar to the prediction of the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis*. The opponents' honour was defined as temporary: three days; after which they will acquire shame indefinitely, because Jesus will reign forever. Unfortunately, the disciples did not

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<sup>200</sup> Quite often in the Greek New Testament texts God is the implied subject of verbs in the passive voice. Consequently, God is the subject of the verb e)gerqh~nai (see footnote 141).

understand that they had chosen the right leader, who was moving in the right direction.

Summarily, Jesus' prediction of the reversal of status confirmed him as a person of honourable status. It implies that the opinion of the crowds and that of the disciples is partially valid. It proves that the right way to honour is God's way, through the cross. It also dismisses the identity of deviance that will be attributed to him. By being raised on the third day, God defines deviance, labelling, honour and shame in a new way; in fact, the reversal of status is complete.

#### **6.5.4 Conclusion**

The dialogue between Jesus and the disciples (Lk 9:18-22) is probably one of the most important passages in the gospels in particular and in the New Testament in general. It explains and justifies the relationship between Jesus and his contemporaries. It provides a summary of the peasant's and the disciples' conception of Jesus' identity. It projects Jesus' identity and redefines his leadership in terms of what he does. It announces God's plan to restore honour on shameful human attitudes. It is a point of reference to the whole gospel and the New Testament. In fact, it summarises Luke's gospel: Who is the Christ?

An etic interpretation of this micro narrative indicates that it is not enough to repeat what others say about Jesus. A true response concerning his identity derives from personal experience and a close relationship with him. Any understanding of Jesus that excludes his purpose for the world and God's activity in restoring and legitimating his identity is incomplete. In other words, Jesus would be like John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets of old, only when the picture of these Old Testament figures is complemented with that of his humiliation, suffering, rejection and death on the one hand, and that of God's vindication, on the other hand.

#### **6.6 CONCLUSION**

Luke tells the story of Jesus within the context of a community that doubts and puts Jesus' credibility into question; that is, his identity and his leadership. The common factor between the early beginnings of his gospel



(Lk 1:1-3:38)<sup>201</sup> and its ending (Lk 22:1-24:53) is the legitimation of Jesus' divine identity and his self disclosure in Luke 9:18-22. The legitimation of Jesus' identity and his leadership plan thus justify his relationship with the various systems of his time and the conflict that resulted from these relationships. Consequently, the position of these legitimations (at the beginning and at the end of the gospel) is purposeful. The one whose identity and leadership is contested is in fact the one who was chosen and anointed by God. The vindication from God was in agreement with the centurion's remark that he was legitimately *δικαιον*; that he was indeed the Christ of God. Therefore, from the basis of empirical evidence, five areas of conflict can be developed from the etic reading of Luke. These are: conflict of interest, conflict of identity, conflict of ideology and conflict over the limited goods of honour, authority and power; including the fact that by nature Luke's gospel is situated within the context of an agonistic society. These conflicts depict the nature and quality of the relationships mentioned above. They have contributed enormously in defining Jesus' identity and leadership.

Unlike the conclusions from § 5.8, the micro narrative of Luke 9:18-22 does not only accentuate on the question "Who is the Christ?" Rather, it provides a sketch to possible ways of deducing who Christ is. From an etic point of view the answer concerning Jesus' identity is not necessarily embedded in the speculations of what the crowds feel, think and say about him. It is mostly found in personal experiences that individuals develop as a result of their encounter with Jesus, his self disclosure and the response thereof. For instance, even though the woman in Simon's house (Lk 7:37-50), the Samaritan leper (Lk 17:18-19), the blind beggar (Lk 18:36-42) and Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10) all received salvation, they did not share the same experiences, nor respond in the same way. Although they lived in almost the same environment, they neither shared the same context nor the same

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<sup>201</sup> Very peculiar in this beginning section is the non-negligible position of the genealogy which serves as a transition between Jesus' baptism and the Galilean ministry. As mentioned earlier, genealogies in the Mediterranean context served the purpose of a map for social interaction. They were also a source of pride, a justification for privilege, a device for social recognition and a claim to authority in all its forms. They established the credibility of a person's social status. In this sense, the position of Jesus' genealogy in Luke's gospel is understandable, when compared to Fitzmyer's view that this position seems awkward (Fitzmyer, in Rohrbaugh 2007:35).

history. The crowds followed Jesus all the same; but they were not unanimous when it came to his identity. The crowds and the disciples were all his followers, but their response to who Jesus was did not agree. Although the apostles were with Jesus, only Peter offered an idea about who Jesus was. Consequently, the response concerning Jesus' identity cannot easily draw unanimity. Personal contribution and Jesus' self disclosure all have an important role to play in the whole process.

Secondly, from a missionary perspective, the meaning of Jesus' identity cannot be an imposition on a community. It is a derivation from a dialogue between their socio-cultural and historical contexts and Jesus' proclaimed intention and mission. It is a blend from these factors that is capable of unveiling the incompatibility between the community's expectations and God's plan of salvation for the world. Thirdly, adequate Christian theology is that which is produced through a participatory approach wherein the community concerned is involved in building a convincing Christology. Theology which excludes the participation of its "consumers" is a failure if it treats the existing community members as 'empty heads'. Jesus' leadership approach was successful because he involved his contemporaries in curbing the chasm between their understanding of God's holiness to mean exclusivism and the interpretation of God's holiness to mean his compassion, as preached in the new religion which he taught. In the question "Who is the Christ?" Jesus therefore introduces by implication two alternative ways of doing theology: participatory theology and investigatory theology.

Once more, the etic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke confirms that effectively the micro narrative of Luke 9:18-22 occupies an important place in the story of Luke's gospel. In terms of story-plot, Luke's story of conflict between Jesus and his adversaries is found in the events associated with Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension (Kingsbury 1997b:163). The situation is different when the same story is read in terms of its story-line. In Luke 9:18-22, the evangelist summarises and explains conflict in his gospel, stating its antagonists, its protagonist, its causes, its consequences and its denouement. In fact, this pericope bears the kernel of Luke's gospel, which is an answer to the question, "Who is the Christ?" The conclusions drawn above, testify that Jesus' approach of

informing and reforming his audience was that of contextualisation. In other words, the teaching of Jesus' story to a community such as the African context will make sense only when it is translated into that community's social, cultural and historical context with the consciousness that it would be invalid to transpose social and cultural values from the Mediterranean context by way of generalisation (Downing 2000:13) to the African context, for example.