

**WHO IS THE CHRIST? LEADERSHIP AND
CONFLICT IN LUKE 9:18-22:
A SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC- AND NARRATOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

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*Help us to be masters of ourselves
that we may be servants of others,
and teach us to serve to lead.*

(The service prayer of the UK's Royal Military College, Sandhurst)

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

My dear wife:

Mrs Mbengu Asong Thecla Nkemnju

Our children:

Mbengu Esau Wilson Nyiawung

Mbengu Lea Violet Njukang

Mbengu Prisca Desthelle Nkehmbeng

Mbengu Judicael Atemnkeng

My late parents:

Pa Mbengu Stephen Nyiawung

Mama Mbengu Susan Nkehmbeng

Preface

Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.
(Lk 6:36)

PhD-research entails a combination of several resources, ranging from personal endeavours to collective contributions. In fact, it is a life of sacrifice, zeal, commitment and relationships. I have joined others in contributing to an answer to the question of what the Bible means, with reference to the conflict that spiced Jesus' leadership as a result of his identity in Luke's gospel. This task has enabled me to understand the essence of leadership and has let me to appreciate human relationships in a different way.

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Table of contents

Dedication	i
Preface	ii
Table of contents	v
Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT OF STUDY	1
1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS	2
1.3 CURRENT RESEARCH AND RESEARCH GAP	4
1.3.1 Current research.....	4
1.3.2 Research gap	7
1.4 AIM, HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH ITINERARY	8
1.4.1 Aim and hypothesis.....	8
1.4.2 Research itinerary	9
1.5 CONCLUSION: MAIN THESIS	10
Chapter 2	
The current debate: Approaches to Luke, Luke 9:18-22, leadership and conflict	12
2.1 INTRODUCTION	12
2.2 CURRENT APPROACHES IN READING LUKE	13
2.2.1 A historical-critical reading: David Wenham.....	15
2.2.2 A text-immanent reading: Scott Spencer and Jonathan Knight	16
2.2.3 A hermeneutical-critical (reader-oriented) reading: Pieter van Staden and Michael Goheen	21
2.2.4 A social-scientific reading: Halvor Moxnes, Bruce Malina and Jerome Neyrey	24
2.2.5 A hermeneutical-critical (socio-redaction criticism) reading: Philip F Esler.....	27
2.2.6 Summary.....	29
2.3 THE WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE OF LUKE 9:18-22: WHO IS THE CHRIST?	30



2.3.1	“Who is the Christ?”	30
2.3.1.1	D P Moessner	30
2.3.1.2	J A Fitzmyer	31
2.3.1.3	O C Edwards (Jr)	32
2.3.1.4	R Aland Culpepper	33
2.3.1.5	Jack Dean Kingsbury	34
2.3.2	The narrative context of Luke 9:18-22 within the structure of Luke’s narrative	35
2.3.3	Summary	37
2.4	JESUS AND LEADERSHIP IN LUKE 9:18-22	38
2.4.1	David G Horrell	38
2.4.2	Howard Clark Kee	39
2.5	JESUS AND CONFLICT IN LUKE	40
2.5.1	Joseph B Tyson	40
2.5.2	Jack Dean Kingsbury	42
2.5.3	Michael Desjardins	43
2.5.4	Summary	44
2.6	RESEARCH GAP	46

Chapter 3

Evaluation and theories: current approaches to Luke, Luke 9:18-22, leadership and conflict

50

3.1 INTRODUCTION

50

3.2 EVALUATION: CURRENT APPROACHES – THE WIRKUNGSGE- SCHICHTE OF LUKE 9:18-22 AND STRUCTURE

51

3.2.1	Evaluation of current approaches in reading Luke	51
3.2.2	The <i>Wirkungsgeschichte</i> of Luke 9:18-22	54
3.2.3	The narrative structure of Luke’s gospel	58
3.2.4	The narrative function of Luke 9:18-22 within the macro-context of Luke’s narrative	63
3.2.5	Conclusions	65

3.3 LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP THEORIES

66

3.3.1	Evaluation: Leadership, authority and legitimation of leadership	66
3.3.1.1	Jesus and leadership	66
3.3.1.2	The identity of Jesus	67
3.3.1.3	Authority and legitimation of leadership	69
3.3.2	Leadership theories	70
3.3.2.1	Contingency leadership theory (CLT)	71
3.3.2.2	Transactional leadership theory (TLT)	72
3.3.2.3	Itinerant/resident leadership theory (IRLT)	74
3.3.2.4	Cognitive dissonance leadership theory (CDLT)	75
3.3.3	Conclusion	77

3.4 CONFLICT AND CONFLICT THEORIES	79
3.4.1 Evaluation: Conflict in Luke	79
3.4.2 Conflict models and theories	80
3.4.2.1 Models and theories	81
3.4.2.2 Conflict models.....	83
3.4.2.3 Conflict theories	85
3.4.2.3.1 Realistic-group-conflict theory (RGCT)	85
3.4.2.3.2 Labelling and deviance theory (LDT)	86
3.4.2.3.3 Social identity theory (SIT)	89
3.4.3 Conclusion	93
3.5 EVALUATION: LEADERSHIP THEORIES AND CONFLICT THEORIES	94
3.5.1 Leadership theories.....	94
3.5.2 Conflict theories and their importance	96
3.5.2.1 Conflict theories	96
3.5.2.2 The importance of conflict theories.....	96
Chapter 4	
Methodology reconsidered: Theories, models and approaches in the study of leadership and conflict in Luke and Luke 9:18-22	99
4.1 INTRODUCTION	99
4.2 LEADERSHIP THEORIES IN THE STUDY OF LUKE AND LUKE 9:18-22	101
4.2.1 Introduction	101
4.2.2 Cognitive dissonance leadership theory (CDLT)	103
4.2.3 Power-syndrome leadership theory (PSLT)	104
4.2.4 Contingent-transactional leadership theory (CTLT)	106
4.2.5 Conclusion	108
4.3 CONFLICT THEORIES IN THE STUDY OF LUKE AND LUKE 9:18-22	109
4.3.1 Introduction	109
4.3.2 Social identity theory (SIT)	110
4.3.3 Labelling and deviance theory (LDT)	113
4.3.4 Conclusion	116
4.4 APPROACHES IN READING LUKE AND LUKE 9:18-22	117
4.4.1 Introduction	117
4.4.2 Terminology reconsidered	118
4.4.2.1 Historical-critical approach	118
4.4.2.2 Narratology	119
4.4.2.3 Social scientific approach.....	120
4.4.2.4 Contextualisation	122

4.4.2.5	Interrelatedness: Historical-critical analysis, narrative criticism and social scientific criticism	123
4.4.2.6	Emics and etics	125
4.4.3	Social scientific criticism and narratology	126
4.4.4	An emic reading: Narrative criticism	128
4.4.5	An etic reading: Social scientific criticism	130
4.4.6	An African-hermeneutical reading: Contextualisation.....	132
4.4.7	Conclusion	134
4.5	LIMITATIONS: MODELS, THEORIES AND APPROACHES	135
4.6	CONCLUDING REMARKS	136

Chapter 5

Luke 9:18-22: An emic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke.....	138
--	------------

5.1 INTRODUCTION	138
-------------------------------	------------

5.2 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DISCIPLES	139
---	------------

5.2.1 Introduction	139
--------------------------	-----

5.2.2 Jesus and the disciples.....	139
------------------------------------	-----

5.2.3 Conclusion	151
------------------------	-----

5.3 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JEWISH ELITE	153
--	------------

5.3.1 Introduction	153
--------------------------	-----

5.3.2 Brief definitions	154
-------------------------------	-----

5.3.3 Jesus and the Jewish elite.....	156
---------------------------------------	-----

5.3.4 Conclusion.....	166
-----------------------	-----

5.4 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ROMAN ELITE	167
---	------------

5.4.1 Introduction	167
--------------------------	-----

5.4.2 Jesus and the Roman authorities.....	168
--	-----

5.4.3 Conclusion	173
------------------------	-----

5.5 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE JEWISH PEASANTRY.....	174
---	------------

5.5.1 Introduction	174
--------------------------	-----

5.5.2 Excursion: $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$ (people) and $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$ (crowd)	174
--	-----

5.5.3 Jesus and the $\rho\alpha\nu$ (all)	180
---	-----

5.5.4 Relationship with the $\omicron!\chi\lambda\omicron\nu$	182
---	-----

5.5.5 Relationship with the $\lambda\alpha\omicron\&\nu$	184
--	-----

5.5.6 Conclusion	186
------------------------	-----

5.6 JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-JEWS.....	186
---	------------

5.6.1 Introduction	186
--------------------------	-----

5.6.2 Jesus' relationship with the non-Jews.....	187
--	-----

5.6.3 Conclusion	190
------------------------	-----

5.7 AN EMIC READING OF LUKE 9:18-22: LEADERSHIP, CONFLICT AND IDENTITY	191
5.7.1 Introduction	191
5.7.2 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the disciples	192
5.7.3 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the peasantry	196
5.7.4 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish elite	199
5.7.5 Luke 9:18-22 and the relationship between Jesus and the Roman elite	200
5.7.6 Excursus: Reading Luke 9:18-22 and Luke 9:28-36.....	201
5.7.7 Conclusion	204
5.8 AN EMIC READING OF LUKE: SOME REFLECTIONS	205

Chapter 6

Luke 9:18-22: An etic reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke	209
---	-----

6.1 INTRODUCTION	209
-------------------------------	-----

6.2 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF LUKE'S GOSPEL	212
--	-----

6.2.1 Introduction	212
6.2.2 Honour and shame: Pivotal values of first-century Mediterranean society	213
6.2.2.1 Honour and shame in first-century Mediterranean society	213
6.2.2.2 Honour and shame in Luke's gospel	216
6.2.3 Social relations in first-century Mediterranean society	217
6.2.3.1 Kinship	218
6.2.3.2 Dyadic personality.....	220
6.2.3.3 Patronage and clientism	222
6.2.4 Social dynamics of first-century Mediterranean society	224
6.2.4.1 Limited goods	224
6.2.4.2 Agonistic society	226
6.2.5 Cultural dynamics of first-century Mediterranean society	228
6.2.5.1 Clean and unclean	228
6.2.5.2 Ceremonies and rituals.....	230
6.2.6 Conclusion	232

6.3 ETIC READING OF JESUS' IDENTITY: WHO IS THE CHRIST?	233
--	-----

6.3.1 Introduction	233
6.3.2 The question of Jesus' identity	234
6.3.2.1 The legitimation of Jesus' dual honourship	234
6.3.2.2 Challenges to Jesus' identity and honour	236
6.3.3 Labelling and deviance theory (LDT)	239
6.3.3.1 Labelling and deviance theory in Luke's gospel: Theoretical framework	239

6.3.3.2	Application: The arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as rituals of status transformation.....	243
6.3.4	Social identity theory (SIT)	249
6.3.4.1	The question of social control	249
6.3.4.2	De-categorisation: The kingdom of God preaching.....	252
6.3.4.3	The theory of “similarity-attraction”	256
6.3.5	Conclusion	259
6.4	ETIC READING OF LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT IN LUKE.....	260
6.4.1	Introduction	260
6.4.2	Cognitive dissonance leadership theory (CDLT)	261
6.4.2.1	The effects of dissonance on Jesus	261
6.4.2.2	Lukan characters and dissonant attitude	264
6.4.2.3	Recapitulation: Jesus’ application of CDLT	266
6.4.3	Contingent-transactional leadership theory (CTLT)	269
6.4.3.1	Jesus’ leadership <i>vis-à-vis</i> his followers.....	269
6.4.3.2	Recapitulation: Jesus’ understanding of leadership	272
6.4.4	Conclusion	275
6.5	LEADERSHIP, CONFLICT AND IDENTITY: AN ETIC READING OF LUKE 9:18-22	276
6.5.1	Introduction	276
6.5.2	Contingent-transactional leadership (Lk 9:18-22)	277
6.5.2.1	Reading Luke 9:18-22 as a dialogue.....	278
6.5.2.2	Leading through investigation (Lk 9:18-20)	281
6.5.2.3	The unwanted side of leadership (Lk 9:21-22)	283
6.5.3	Luke 9:18-22 and cultural values of first-century Mediterranean society.....	285
6.5.3.1	Dissonance, legitimation and honour (Lk 9:18-20)	285
6.5.3.2	Deviance, honour and shame: The reversal of status (Lk 9:21-22)	287
6.5.4	Conclusion	289
6.6	CONCLUSION.....	290

Chapter 7

Luke 9:18-22: An African hermeneutical reading of leadership, conflict and identity in Luke	293
--	------------

7.1 INTRODUCTION	293
-------------------------------	------------

7.2 SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES OF THE AFRICAN CONTEXT	296
---	------------

7.2.1 Introduction	296
--------------------------	-----

7.2.2 Social relations of African societies.....	296
--	-----

7.2.2.1 Kinship	297
-----------------------	-----

7.2.2.2 Dyadic personality.....	298
---------------------------------	-----

7.2.2.3 Patronage and clientism.....	300
--------------------------------------	-----

7.2.3 Social dynamics of African societies.....	301
---	-----

7.2.3.1	Respect and integrity	302
7.2.3.2	Moral values	304
7.2.3.3	Ethnicity and cultural diversity	305
7.2.4	Cultural values of African societies	307
7.2.4.1	Rituals and ceremonies	307
7.2.4.2	“Evil” people and “good” people	308
7.2.5	Conclusion	309
7.3	THE SOCIO-POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC REALITIES OF THE AFRICAN CONTEXT	311
7.3.1	Introduction	311
7.3.2	The social realities	312
7.3.3	The political realities	314
7.3.4	The religious realities	316
7.3.5	The economic realities	318
7.3.6	Conclusion	319
7.4	WHO IS THE CHRIST? AFRICAN MODELS FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS AS THE CHRIST	320
7.4.1	Introduction	320
7.4.2	Sources for African theological reflection	321
7.4.3	Some African models for identifying Jesus as the Christ	323
7.4.3.1	Inculturation models	324
7.4.3.1.1	Jesus Christ, the ancestor	325
7.4.3.1.2	Jesus Christ, the medicine-man	326
7.4.3.1.3	Jesus Christ, the chief	328
7.4.3.2	Liberation models	329
7.4.3.3	Concluding remarks on African models of Christology	330
7.4.4	Who is the Christ? An African hermeneutic response	332
7.4.4.1	Problems involved in the African understanding of Jesus’ identity	333
7.4.4.2	An African hermeneutic reading of Jesus’ identity in Luke’s gospel	336
7.4.4.3	An African approach to the question of Jesus’ identity	339
7.4.4.3.1	Spontaneous theology	339
7.4.4.3.2	Community participatory theology	341
7.4.5	Conclusion	343
7.5	A CONTEXTUAL READING OF LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT IN LUKE: POWER-SYNDROME LEADERSHIP THEORY (PSLT)	345
7.5.1	Introduction	345
7.5.2	Power-syndrome leadership theory (PSLT): Principles and functioning	346
7.5.3	The effects of labelling and deviance in PSLT	352
7.5.4	Jesus’ concept of leadership <i>vis-à-vis</i> PSLT	354
7.5.5	Leadership and empowerment	358
7.5.6	Conclusion	359

7.6 AN AFRICAN HERMENEUTIC READING OF LUKE 9:18-22 IN RELATION TO LEADERSHIP, CONFLICT AND IDENTITY	360
7.6.1 Introduction	360
7.6.2 Luke 9:18-22 and the clergy’s relationship with the congregation (‘the crowds’)	362
7.6.3 Luke 9:18-22 and the clergy’s relationship with congregational elders (“the disciples”)	365
7.6.4 Luke 9:18-22 and the clergy’s relationship with the “ruling elite”	368
7.6.4.1 Luke 9:18-22 and the clergy’s relationship with the “political elite”	368
7.6.4.2 Luke 9:18-22 and the clergy’s relationship with the “religious elite”	371
7.6.5 Conclusion: Luke 9:18-22 and the pastoral ministry	372
7.7 CONCLUSION	374

Chapter 8

The “gospel of conflict” according to Luke	378
8.1 INTRODUCTION	378
8.2 WHO IS THE CHRIST? THE GOSPEL OF CONFLICT ACCORDING TO LUKE	382
8.2.1 Introduction	382
8.2.2 Conflict and identity: The centurion’s confession	383
8.2.3 Leadership: The transfer of conflict to the disciples.....	387
8.2.4 The gospel of conflict: Not understanding and not knowing.....	389
8.2.5 Conclusion	391
8.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS	391
Bibliography	394

Summary

Key terms

Summary

“Who is the Christ?” The question of Jesus’ identity, as depicted in the New Testament, was crucial in the early church. In Luke, it is linked with leadership and the various conflicts that he faced with the “systems” of Luke’s gospel, namely; the Roman elite, the Jewish elite and the Jewish peasantry. From an etic viewpoint, the context of Luke’s gospel indicates that Jesus’ leadership was that of conflict, rejection and opposition. Therefore, three basic issues showcase the content of this study: leadership, conflict and identity, with specific reference to the micro narrative in Luke 9:18-22.

Nowadays, leaders are sometimes opposed because of many reasons: inequality of resources, incompatible interests, ideology, inefficiency, the leader’s identity and the inability or inexperience in handling conflict and opposition. Jesus was not exempted from this. The failure to understand him in terms of his identity and mission was the stimuli for the conflict he encountered. Unfortunately previous studies in Luke have only fairly established a link between Jesus’ identity, his leadership and conflict. Even when they do, it is not approached from a social scientific perspective, that is, a reading that takes the social dynamics of first-century Palestine seriously. Also, none of such studies have been applied to the African context. This study aims at filling these gaps, by applying the results from some conflict and leadership theories to the African context. The application of these models helps to diagnose, explain, interpret and narrow the chasm between leadership and conflict within the African society. It enables leaders not to dread conflict, but to use conflict when it occurs as a positive ingredient to societal change and innovation.

Three conclusions emerge from the question of Jesus’ identity in the dialogue of Luke 9:18-22. From an emic perspective, the Christ is an enigmatic figure in Luke’s gospel. From an etic reading, he is the Christ of reform and social transformation. From an African standpoint, he is the Christ of empowerment and development. The examination of some African models for the understanding of Jesus’ identity reveals that Jesus has been refashioned according to African understanding. This approach has definitely made Jesus African-like. There is need for relevant Christology to be

conscious that the definition of Jesus as the Christ of God does not become a barrier of separation between individuals of differing contexts. Jesus' identity is contained in the connection between his person and his suffering, rejection, death and eventual resurrection (Lk 9:22). The dialogue in Luke 9:18-22 further proposes two ways in understanding Jesus' leadership, his identity and conflict in the Gospel – spontaneous and community participatory theology.

Leadership is risk, conflict and opposition by definition. Conversely, poor leadership is scaring, aggressive and destructive. Hence, effective leadership entails mutual acceptance, perseverance and a better management and appreciation of conflict and opposition. In response to the current stalemate of misery and despair, this study postulates that a proper definition, understanding and interpretation of Jesus as the Christ is a solution to contemporary problems of leadership crisis in Africa and the world.



Key words

1. Luke
2. Luke 9:18-22
3. Narratology
4. Social scientific criticism
5. African contextualisation
6. Leadership
7. Conflict
8. Identity
9. Spontaneous theology
10. Community participatory theology
11. Legitimation
12. Jesus