

**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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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