
**CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP
AS COMMUNION IMAGINATION IN THE PUBLIC
NETWORKING OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMPANIONSHIP**
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Abstract: This essay examines contributions from *communion theology* and *social network theory* at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory to develop a theo-cultural theory for Christian leadership. At the core of this argument is a biblical-theological framework and social anthropological perspective that together develop the biblical *imago Dei* into a theological *imago Trinitatis* and eventually a theo-cultural *imaginatio Trinitatis*. These contributions make it possible to shape leadership as the theologically and socially integrative work of the imagination within the cultural flows between local churches and other organizations in society.

Introduction

This essay develops a theo-cultural theory for Christian leadership as communion imagination in the public networking of local churches and other organizations in society. It represents an attempt to make a contribution to conversations about ecclesial leadership that move beyond individualistic and traits-based understandings of leadership development and that position leadership within a public and communal understanding of discernment as truth-seeking. As such, this essay argues for a theo-cultural theory of leadership that accounts for post-Enlightenment philosophical developments especially in hermeneutical phenomenology on matters of agency and discernment. The specific contribution of this essay is to provide some theological and organizational theory warrants for the possibility of such a theo-cultural theory for leadership

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within an ecclesial context.

It is the contention of this essay that what is fundamentally at stake in the development of such a theo-cultural theory are the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying understandings of leadership and ecclesiology. The theological and organizational theory warrants presented in this essay are considered to be ontological and epistemological conditions of possibility for an understanding of Christian leadership as communal imagination in the public networking between local churches and other organizations in society. The work of the imagination, as a social fact between actors rather than the constructive expression of any particular individual actor or group of actors, emerges in this argument's development as the constitutive feature for leadership agency and discernment. Social imagination is the key for integrating the theological and theoretical reflections on Christian leadership in this essay.

This integration is primarily presented as mutually enriching contributions from *communion theology* and *social network theory* at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory. This occurs specifically at the fundamental levels of ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie both ecclesiology and organizational theory. These contributions make it possible to shape leadership as the theologically and socially integrative work of the imagination within the cultural flows of public landscapes that emerge in the companionship between local churches and other organizations in society.

At the core of this attempt to integrate theology with organizational theory at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational leadership is a biblical-theological framework and social anthropological perspective that together develop the biblical *imago Dei* into a theological *imago Trinitatis* and eventually a theo-cultural *imaginatio Trinitatis*. This development provides the theo-cultural argument for Christian leadership as communal imagination in the public networking of organizational companionship with theological, anthropological, and

sociological conditions of possibility embedded in the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying these mutually enriching contributions from theology and organizational theory.

Ecclesiology and Organizational Theory

In the first phase of developing this essay's argument, the ecclesiological and organizational theory warrants for Christian leadership are established through ecumenical contributions on *communion ecclesiology* and theoretical impulses from certain varieties of *social network theory*. This phase represents an attempt to clear the ontological and epistemological assumptions for the next two phases in which the focus shifts to the anthropological and sociological conditions of possibility for the kind of leadership that is rooted in these ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Ecclesiological Models and Organizational Theory Approaches

Few scholars of organizational and leadership theories would disagree with the analysis that organizational leaders in today's world are confronted with increasingly more complex, uncertain, and often contradictory contexts. The assessment of Mary Jo Hatch and Ann L. Cunliffe is that these contemporary organizational leadership challenges demand "the broadest set of concepts and theories" in order to "embrace complexity and uncertainty and their contradictory demands."¹ Hatch and Cunliffe are also quick to point out that all these organizational concepts and theories are embedded in varieties of underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of multiple perspectives on organizational theory.²

It is the contention in this essay's argument that the fundamental task of a theological engagement with theories of organizational leadership is on these levels of

¹ Mary Jo Hatch and Ann L. Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 11.

² *Ibid.*, 12-15.

ontological and epistemological assumptions. An engagement on these levels will not only determine the distinctive features of theological reflections on organizational and leadership theories but also shape the ways in which theological reflection on ecclesiology can be informed by organizational and leadership theories. In this sense, such a mutual enrichment has the possibility of also achieving what Hatch and Cunliffe have in mind, namely a broadening of the concepts and theories involved in organizational leadership.

At the levels of ontology and epistemology, *theological* perspectives on organizational leadership not only have to account for the reality and knowledge of God, but also for the existence and contribution of the church in the world. This idea concurs with one of the most basic assertions of ecclesiology that the church participates in the reality of God's presence and activity in the world. Therefore, from a theological perspective, developing an argument for Christian leadership at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory necessitates an integrative approach in which ecclesiology is related to the presence and activity of God in and amongst other organizations in society. Leadership from a theological perspective is entangled with the existence of the visible church as a socially-embodied reality within the networks of society's organizations at a particular time and in particular contexts. From a theological point of view, no organizational theory can avoid these ontological and epistemological assumptions of ecclesiology. Similarly, no ecclesiology can deny an ontology and epistemology that postulate the church's integral existence with other organizations in society.

The history of theological reflection on the distinctive nature of the church in the world shows the emergence of a variety of models of ecclesiology that all attempt to capture the key and unique characteristics of the church among other types of organizations. As Avery Dulles indicates in his work on ecclesiological models, the institutional and organizational categories of non-theological disciplines "cannot do justice to the full

reality of the Church.”³ Theological conversations with regard to the church’s institutional and visible characteristics are always in relation to the church’s constitutive theological dimension that primarily defines her identity as a distinctively different kind of community. This essay focuses on one such primary ecclesiological model that is known for its attempt to hold together both the institutional characteristics *and* uniquely theologically constitutive dimensions of the church’s identity, namely the model that views the church as *Communion*.⁴

Organizational theory perspectives on organizational leadership have to account for underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions by addressing existential questions related to reality and agency. While theology’s account is concerned with the reality and knowledge of God’s agency in the world, organizational theory’s account is concerned with questions of agency related to what Hatch and Cunliffe call subjectivism and objectivism.⁵ Addressing underlying ontological assumptions of three fundamental approaches within organizational theory, Hatch and Cunliffe distinguish between modernist, symbolic interpretivist, and postmodernist assumptions in this regard.⁶

Modernistic approaches assume an objective, external reality that is independent from any knowledge of it. This ontological assumption is connected to positivist

³ Avery Robert Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Image Book ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2002), 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 40-42. Dulles illustrates the communion model with primary examples from the history of both Protestant and Catholic theological thought. For him, Protestant examples are Emil Brunner’s “brotherhood” as “communion of persons” and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “communion of saints.” Catholic examples are Yves Congar’s “fellowship of persons” and Jerome Hamer’s “communion.”

⁵ Hatch and Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14. This article uses Hatch and Cunliffe’s distinction as a basic point of departure, even though distinctions between *modern* and *postmodern* are contentious in terms of philosophical nuances on what constitute such descriptions.

epistemologies that claim the possibility of testing knowledge against such an objective world. Symbolic interpretivist approaches assume existence as part of the subjective awareness of acting subjects. It reflects ontologies connected to interpretivist epistemologies in which knowledge is relative to the knower and socially constructed through multiple interpretations. Postmodern approaches assume reality only as it exists through language and situated in discourse. It reflects epistemologies that view knowledge as always fluid relative to the power play in ever changing situations.

Organizational leadership is always shaped by these operative ontologies and assumptions underlying specific approaches. Christian leadership also has to account for underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions in its constituting ecclesiology and organizational theory approaches. This essay proposes *social network theory* as complimentary to communion ecclesiology in its attempt to construct an integrated theo-cultural theory of Christian leadership that reflects particular ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Communion Ecclesiology

Theological reflection in this essay on organizational leadership in the context of socially-embodied ecclesiology draws its ecclesiological impulses from ecumenical contributions on communion ecclesiology. Communion ecclesiology emerged in the history of ecclesiological reflection from within all the main traditions of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant theology.⁷ This essay uses some core impulses from contributions in each of these three theological traditions. These impulses provide the argument in this essay with a basic framework for engaging organizational theory with theological reflections on Christian leadership from

⁷ Dennis M. Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 1, 12.

within a socially-embodied and public ecclesiology among other organizations in society.⁸

Contributions on communion ecclesiology from the Catholic tradition give the argument in this essay its basic *ecclesiological impulse* through holding together an important tension that is a determinative factor for theology's engagement with organizational theory on levels of ontology and epistemology. Dennis M. Doyle calls this a tension that occurs between "historical-pneumatological-organic" and "mystical-christological-aesthetic" versions of communion ecclesiology.⁹ This essay follows Doyle's argument for an integrative understanding of these two types of contributions that do not reduce the church to either a merely human organization or a mystification that ignores human elements and processes.¹⁰ Such an ecclesiological approach positions the church as a multi-dimensional reality that participates in God's presence and activity as a public companion with all kinds of other organizations in society.

Henri de Lubac emerges in Doyle's study as an exceptional example in Catholic theology of holding this tension together in a commitment to both "the reality of the mystery of Christian revelation" and "the social dimensions of the church in its mission in the world."¹¹

⁸ It is beyond the scope of this paper to add an African communal perspective on these impulses as a critique against underlying Western understandings of individuals-in-relationship (such as the social trinitarian theologies of Jurgen Moltmann and Miroslav Volf) and existential philosophical influences in Eastern understandings of personhood (such as John Zizioulas' work on *Being and Communion*). For the author's attempt in doing that, see Johannes G. J. Swart, "An Ecclesiology of Belonging through Otherness," in *Being the Church in the Midst of Empire: Trinitarian Reflections*, ed. Karen L. Bloomquist (Minneapolis, MN: Lutheran University Press, 2007), 209-22.

⁹ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 169. Doyle calls de Lubac "unparalleled among contemporary theologians" in this regard, but always in relationship to the seminal work of Johann Adam Möhler in the nineteenth century. The same tension surfaced in many other comparative Catholic theologies, such as Yves Congar (with an emphasis on the dynamic, historical, and pneumatological dimension of the

Holding this tension together culminates in *Lumen Gentium*, especially chapters one, two, and seven, as a reflection of Vatican II's emphasis on presenting the church as both the mystical Body of Christ (chapter one) and the People of God making their way through history as a Pilgrim church (chapter two).¹² Such a vision of communion ecclesiology brings the impulse of situating the church in the world (historically shaped) but distinctively different (constituted as the mystical Body of Christ).¹³ Communion ecclesiology in this sense holds together the transcendent and material dimensions of ontology and epistemology.

The Eastern Orthodox contribution on communion ecclesiology from John Zizioulas gives the argument in this essay an explicit *ontological impulse* for grounding theology's engagement with organizational theory in being as communion.¹⁴ For Zizioulas, communion is fundamentally an ontological category.¹⁵ Being or existence is not something prior to relationality or communion. Identity is not something that precedes relationship. Identity is achieved within the context of relationship. Relationality is at the heart of existence, and the church as both a mystical and historical community is fundamentally rooted in being as communion.¹⁶ For Zizioulas, the church as eucharistic communion is rooted

Church) and Charles Journet (with an emphasis on the Church as mystical, objective, and aesthetic).

¹² Ibid., 15.

¹³ Ibid., 16. Another prominent image in *Lumen Gentium* is the Church as a leaven in the world, which "expresses a vision of the world, with all of its ambiguities and negativities, as the essentially good arena in which the lives of those who belong to the Church are lived out."

¹⁴ John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

¹⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen gives a helpful short summary of Zizioulas' basic thesis. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 95-96.

¹⁶ Zizioulas also uses the Body of Christ image, but defines it as "mystical" in a way that includes the historical and eschatological dimensions of ecclesiology. John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 289-96.

in the life of a Communion (triune) God that constitutes being itself as communion. In the second phase of developing an argument in this essay, this ontological assumption will be key in exploring the anthropological and sociological conditions of possibility for Christian leadership at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory.

This ontological impulse positions the church interrelationally with all other organizations where it is grounded in a communion ontology in which existence (being) itself is relational. It lays the foundation for an outright rejection of modernity's metaphysical determination of God that also promotes a closed worldview in which there is no room for transcendence.¹⁷ Zizioulas' God, as we shall see in the next phase of developing an argument in this article, is not a metaphysical or neo-Platonic God that assures the ground of all other derived beings. Being as communion rooted in the life of the triune God does not constitute an objective reality as in the metaphysical tradition of *ens commune*, but reflects a relational ontology in which God is revealed as Being in Communion in the midst of the historical realities of this world. This impulse opens up the postmodern possibility of a new phenomenology in which transcendence becomes ontologically and eschatologically constitutive of the very dynamics and ambiguities of ordinary life.

The Protestant contribution on communion ecclesiology from Miroslav Volf gives the argument in this essay an *epistemological impulse* for locating theology's engagement with organizational theory in the community of the local and the particular.¹⁸ While confirming the

¹⁷ See Jean-Luc Marion's philosophical theology as a contribution that fights with Heidegger and Nietzsche against the metaphysical conception of God, while at the same time fights against especially Heidegger for closing out any possibility of transcendence as part of being's constitution. Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁸ It is not possible within the scope of this paper to do justice to the variety of profound contributions to communion ecclesiology from within mainline

relational nature of the church as communion, rooted in the life of the triune God, Volf emphasizes the importance of the individual, the local congregation, and relational aspects within particular situations and local contexts.¹⁹ He works with the above mentioned fruitful contributions of both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions (especially in dialogue with Ratzinger and Zizioulas), but rejects the way in which the sacraments and the office of the bishop guarantee the presence of the Spirit in the midst of believers.²⁰

Volf's ecclesiology is a participatory ecclesiology with a concrete theology of the laity.²¹ Using Bonhoeffer's insights on communion ecclesiology, Volf asserts a pneumatological understanding of the church's identity in which the *communio fidelium* is sociologically speaking a concrete assembly of voluntary associates.²² Even though he opens himself up for critique on his individualistic views related to voluntary association, Volf's ecclesiology emphasizes an important perspective on an ecclesiology from below that takes seriously the historical continuity of the church and the concreteness of local spiritual discernment where actual believers are in communion with each other and the world. This epistemological impulse positions the church as communion within particular contexts of local congregations' engagement with particular organizations in society and their discernment of what God is up to in the world.

Protestant traditions such as Reformed and Lutheran theology, although it is widely acknowledged that Jürgen Moltmann's messianic ecclesiology has a great influence on Volf's ecclesiology.

¹⁹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 127-89.

²⁰ Kärkkäinen gives a useful short summary of Volf's position in this regard. Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*, 135-36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 140-41.

²² Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 176-77.

Social Network Theory

Reflection in this essay on Christian leadership at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory finds its theoretical impulses from organizational theories on social networking. At the levels of ontology and epistemology, social network (SN) theory can be described in terms of its modernist origins and versions, but also its postmodern possibilities. In its simplest form it can be defined as a modernist way of “describing the structure of relationships between actors (individuals, groups, organizations).”²³ SN analysis reveals the nodes of interorganizational networks and illuminates the nature of relationships within these networks. In this sense, SN developed from within a school of sociology known as structural-functionalism and became closely associated with functionalist approaches in social anthropology and, subsequently organizational theory.²⁴ In this sense, SN theory still reflects well-designed attempts to structure and manage relationships as systemic connections within rational systems and standardized procedures.

Actor network (AN) theory is a form of SN that takes network theory conversation beyond its mere modernist shapes and forms by introducing an interpretive epistemology which explores meaning in relationships between human and nonhuman elements.²⁵ It moves beyond SN analysis as a descriptive exercise to the concern of how knowledge is created within networks. The important implication, in the words of Hatch and Cunliffe, is that “agency is constituted as an effect of the interaction of many different materials.”²⁶ Symbolically mediated interaction within specific contexts is taken more seriously within an ontology of subjective

²³ Hatch and Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 333. Hatch and Cunliffe refer to Ronald Burt in this regard as the father of SN theory and its methods of study.

²⁴ L. Michael White, "Social Networks: Theoretical Orientation and Historical Applications," *Semeia* 56, no. 1 (1991): 23.

²⁵ Hatch and Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 333.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 334.

awareness and an epistemology of social construction. Networks are not objective realities but social constructs constituted by relational interaction. Meaning is derived from within these interactions.

However, AN also has the potential to move the conversation into postmodern understandings of organizational theory. It opens up the possibility for analysis in which a de-centering of the subject as agent takes place. In this sense, SN theory reflects on the social as a type of circulation in the interactions, connections, and relationality of heterogeneous networks. AN helps SN to focus on the relationship between elements rather than the elements themselves. It downplays the importance of human actors and explores the meaning created in relationship.²⁷ Being is defined in terms of relationality. Knowledge becomes a social construct within relational power rather than the product of individual minds.

This movement toward a more postmodern understanding of SN theory can also be enhanced by conversations regarding social capital (SC). Paul Varo Martinson's definition of SC is that "social capital refers to certain social habits that make it possible for people to cooperate spontaneously, without coercion, and get things done."²⁸ SC has structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions. The structural component refers to the ability to make connections with others through informative exchanges. The relational component refers to the ability to facilitate trust and mutual obligations among different actors. The cognitive element refers to the newly created abilities that are created within the network relations. These three dimensions reflect a movement away from mere structural connections (the modernist tendency) to interpretive dynamics in relationship (the symbolic interpretive tendency) to

²⁷ Ibid., 335.

²⁸ Paul Varo Martinson, "Social Capital and the New Missionary Pragmatics," *Word & World* 18, no. 2 (1998): 156.

eventually newly created abilities with a life of their own (the postmodern tendency).

Hatch and Cunliffe point out that “in almost every discussion of social capital, trust is given a central role.”²⁹ Trust breeds trust, and this is what builds SC into networks of organizations.³⁰ This is probably one of the best examples of an ontological and epistemological move beyond modernity’s preoccupation with only the five senses. Trust as a core issue at least brings SN theory into the arena of verisimilitude (the resonance of one’s own experience with the experience of others).³¹ Modernity’s tendency toward the general is replaced with particular interpersonal contexts. It is within these particular interpersonal contexts where an openness emerges for trust to take on a fluidity of meanings (the postmodern tendency) in which there is room for the transcendent dimensions of meaning through engaging a trustworthy God as acting Subject in the power relations of ordinary life.³²

These impulses provide the argument in this essay with some basic theoretical insights for engaging SN theory with theological reflections on missional leadership from within a socially-embodied and public ecclesiology among other organizations in society. This intersection of communion ecclesiology and SN theory, with complementary possibilities embedded in their underlying ontologies and epistemologies becomes fruitful soil for engaging leadership theory. What are the

²⁹ Hatch and Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 333.

³⁰ Martinson emphasizes the same core aspect of SC, and links it with the Church as community of trust. Martinson, "Social Capital and the New Missionary Pragmatics," 156.

³¹ Hatch and Cunliffe, *Organization Theory: Modern, Symbolic, and Postmodern Perspectives*, 15.

³² The scope of this paper does not allow for elaborating on both the pneumatological dynamics of power and the reality of sin. Such an elaboration is indeed necessary to avoid analysis of power that denies the reality of the power of the Spirit in the midst of other powers, as well as to avoid any romanticized understandings of relationality and communion ecclesiology.

anthropological and sociological conditions of possibility embedded in these ontologies and epistemologies for an understanding of missional leadership shaped by these theological and organizational theory impulses?

Communion Ontology and Leadership Theory

The second phase of constructing a theo-cultural theory of Christian leadership at the public intersection of ecclesiology and organizational leadership specifically explores the anthropological conditions of possibility embedded in the relational ontology suggested by communion ecclesiology in conversation with SN theory. A communion ecclesiology constituted by a relational ontology, as well as developments in SN theory reflecting symbolic-interpretive and postmodern ontological assumptions, will be unanimous in a critique of any variety of traits-based leadership theory rooted in individualistic and psychologizing anthropology.³³ This phase explores such a critique and its constructive alternative from a biblical-theological perspective. It argues for a relational understanding of leadership rooted in the biblical *imago Dei*, constituted by a theological *imago Trinitatis* as basis for a communionly oriented theory of missional leadership at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory.

Leadership Rooted in the Biblical Imago Dei

The argument for leadership rooted in a relational understanding of personhood that critiques substantialist anthropology is made possible by the biblical witness to the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ as the *imago Dei*.³⁴ Focusing on the New Testament *imago Dei*

³³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to give detailed attention to the characteristics of traits-based leadership theory as distinct from more process-oriented theories of leadership. For a brief overview of scholarship in this regard, see Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007), 15-27.

³⁴ Emil Brunner once said that “the doctrine of the *imago Dei* determines the fate of every theology.” As quoted in Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology*

Christology as the core hermeneutic to a trinitarian understanding of the *imago Dei* also brings with it the potential of drawing from Old Testament perspectives on the *imago Dei*³⁵ while transforming it “with the belief that Jesus was the fulfillment of what God had intended from the beginning.”³⁶ The central motive in this approach is the New Testament portrayal of Christ as “the image of the invisible God.”³⁷ As such, Christ fulfills God’s creational intentions by being “the firstborn of creation” through whom all other things were created.³⁸

This New Testament hymn is the culmination of the Old Testament tradition represented in Genesis 1:26-27 into an understanding of Christ as the one in whom the relationship of God and creation comes together. Jesus Christ is “the glue that holds all things together.”³⁹ Through this, God brings renewal to all of creation in Christ (Colossians 3:10). This particular event of God’s self-revelation in Christ constitutes the relationships

and the Religious Imagination (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 84.

³⁵ For a detailed exegesis of the Old Testament perspectives on *imago Dei*, see W. Sibley Towner, “Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible,” *Interpretation* 59, no. 4 (2005): 341-91.; Deborah Krause, “Keeping It Real: The Image of God in the New Testament,” *Interpretation* 59, no. 4 (2005): 360-61.; Christian D. Von Dehsen, “The Imago Dei in Genesis 1:26-27,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1997): 259-70.; David J. Bryant, “*Imago Dei*, Imagination, and Ecological Responsibility,” *Theology Today* 57, no. 1 (2000): 36-37. The dominant primary references in these accounts come from Clauss Westermann and Walter Brueggemann on Genesis 1:26-27. The main impulse from these exegeses for the argument in this paper refers to how the *imago Dei* in Genesis is situated within the relational context of all of creation. It puts an *imago Dei* hermeneutic right from the beginning of the Old Testament within a doctrine of creation rather than anthropology.

³⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linearity of Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (2004): 618.

³⁷ Colossians 1:15. For the scope of the argument in this paper, other references in the New Testament to *eikon* (e.g. John’s use of it in the Apocalypse) are not attended to. This argument only follows the Colossians hymn and Pauline literature.

³⁸ Colossians 1:15-16.

³⁹ With reference to Colossians 1:17 in Krause, “Keeping It Real: The Image of God in the New Testament,” 366.

within all of creation (Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:28). This is what it means to be in the image of God. True anthropology is born out of a relational Christology that constitutes relationships between human beings and between human beings and the rest of creation by virtue of Christ as *imago Dei*.

Paul clearly makes extensive use of the Genesis creation tradition to explain the nature of new creation in Christ and to “delineate what is real about the experience of God in Christ Jesus.”⁴⁰ Christ as *imago Dei* not only underscores the relationship between Creator and creation, but also brings the reality of the life of God into the midst of the “clay” of everyday human existence (with reference to Paul’s metaphor in 2 Corinthians 4:7). By this happening, it is clear that the power and glory belong to God and not to creation, but also that they become part of existence through the life of God in Christ as constitutive of relations in creation.

This understanding concurs with traditions in the ancient Near East, in which *eikons* were seen as representative of and mediating the presence of the deity who is physically absent. The *eikon* is not completely separate from the one represented, but actually participating in the deity it depicts. Conversely, the spirit of the deity actually dwells in the *eikon*.⁴¹ This is how Jesus Christ manifests the reality of God. It is important to notice that, in this tradition of understanding, the *eikon* is not representative in the sense of exactly imitating what the corresponding deity looks like, but rather representative by making the deity present. The *eikon* manifests the deity and the blessings that accompany that presence.⁴²

From this brief biblical account it becomes clear that theological anthropology is only possible through Christ

⁴⁰ Ibid., 365.

⁴¹ Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linearity of Theology,” 619–21. Grenz gives a detailed analysis on the use of *eikon* in tradition and Pauline literature.

⁴² Ibid., 622.

as *imago Dei*. Grenz sums it up by saying that “the humankind created in the *imago Dei* is none other than this new humanity conformed to the *imago Christi*, and the *telos* toward which the OT creation narrative points is the eschatological community of glorified saints.”⁴³ The emergence of this new humanity provides the climax to the entire salvation-historical story and becomes the ultimate defining moment for the Genesis account of the creation of humankind in the *imago Dei*.

Von Dehsen indicates how any anthropological point of departure is only a short step from then associating the *imago Dei* with external similarities between God and humans or with particular psychological, personal, and intellectual characteristics of people.⁴⁴ Instead, the *imago Dei* concerns “the purpose of relationship and responsibility of creation”⁴⁵ made possible by the life of God as revealed in Christ as *imago Dei*. The function of Genesis 1:26-27 is “not so much as an ontological declaration about human nature,” but rather “as a prologue to all that follows in the biblical narrative” where Christ is the *imago Dei* and a new humanity is formed according to the image of Christ as the *imago Dei*.⁴⁶ The *imago Dei* then becomes a theological statement about the identity of God rather than the “divine characteristics” of human beings.⁴⁷

This interpretation of the biblical *imago Dei* not only makes it possible to critique traits-based leadership theory that is rooted in substantialist anthropology, but also to root missional leadership in a relational understanding of the life of God as revealed in the

⁴³ Ibid., 623. This view is affirmed by Old Testament scholars such as Westermann, who sees many problems with an approach to the Genesis narrative that presupposes the text to primarily saying something about people. Von Dehsen, “The Imago Dei in Genesis 1:26-27,” 261-62.

⁴⁴ Von Dehsen, “The Imago Dei in Genesis 1:26-27,” 261.

⁴⁵ Javier R. Alanis, “The *Imago Dei* as Embodied in *Nepantla* - a Latino Perspective,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32, no. 6 (2005): 448.

⁴⁶ Grenz, “Jesus as the *Imago Dei*: Image-of-God Christology and the Non-Linearity of Theology,” 622.

⁴⁷ Von Dehsen, “The Imago Dei in Genesis 1:26-27,” 263.

relational reality constituted by Christ as *imago Dei*. The decisive movement from substantialist anthropology to relationality in the life of God, as revealed in Christ, becomes even clearer in the development of historical theological reflection based on the biblical *imago Dei*.

No one after the Second World War has been cited as much on a relational view of the *imago Dei* as Karl Barth.⁴⁸ Influenced by Bonhoeffer, Barth's emphasis comes as a deliberate alternative to a more functional view of the *imago*. He bases his understanding on the plural "our image" in Genesis 1:26 as reference to genuine relational plurality in the divine being. Although he does not think that it necessarily refers to the Trinity as such, he proposes that it can "properly be understood only against the background of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity."⁴⁹ For Barth, the quality that resembles the divine image in human beings is exactly the differentiation and relationship that exists within the triune God.⁵⁰ He sees this Old Testament *locus classicus* as an anticipation of the New Testament narratives on the triune nature of God. This position of Barth leads to the interpretation of Christ as God's image in his preexistence, *before he became* human, and therefore God's image *as* human.⁵¹ Christ is the image of the actual eternal self-distinction of God in the persons of God.

As such, Christ as *imago Dei* "is the archetype of the vertical and horizontal relationship of all humanity to its respective divine and human sources."⁵² In the words of Eberhard Jungel with reference to Acts 17:28, "ontologically, man is not at all grounded in himself as an

⁴⁸Randall E. Otto, "The *Imago Dei* as *Familitas*," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35, no. 4 (1992): 503.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 504. Otto quotes from Barth's *Church Dogmatics* III/1.

⁵⁰ Towner, "Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the Image of God in the Hebrew Bible," 343.

⁵¹ With reference to Edmund Schlink's interpretation, as quoted in Otto, "The *Imago Dei* as *Familitas*," 505.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 507.

essence. He cannot come to himself without already being in an Other.”⁵³

Imago Dei Leadership as a Critique on Substantialist Anthropology

This interpretation of the biblical *imago Dei*, rooted in a relational ontology, sets up the conversation for a thoroughly theological critique of substantialist anthropology as the basis for missional leadership at the intersection of communion ecclesiology and SN theory. Whereas the substantialist tradition locates the *imago* in human nature, the *relational* tradition conceives of the *imago* as an inclination or proclivity occurring within relationships. It is the inclusive ontological assumption of biblical faith that being as such is relational. The basic ontological category of the tradition of Jerusalem is not, as with Athens, that of *being* as such, but *being with*. An ontology of communion is the natural outcome of the biblical conception of God.

Catherine LaCugna is one of the prominent voices in trinitarian theology emphasizing “relation as the category of being”⁵⁴ in non-speculative philosophical categories. She explicitly roots a relational ontology in the self-revelation of the triune God in Christ through the Spirit. It is not rooted in an eternal, ontological relationship absolutely interior to the life of the triune God without any reference to reality outside the internal life of God, as was the case during scholasticism post Augustine’s theology of relations in his *De Trinitate*.⁵⁵

LaCugna’s critique on Augustine’s influence helps to deconstruct a psychological approach to interpreting the biblical *imago Dei*. LaCugna points out that Augustine’s theology of relations is rooted within a metaphysical ontology of the inner life of God and can only lead to the *imago Dei* as *imitation* of that inner reality of the Trinity.

⁵³ As quoted in *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 57.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

Augustine's premise of the soul seeking to return to God leads him to view "the rational soul" as "a mirror (*speculum*) that reflects, if only dimly, the reality of God that eventually we shall see face to face."⁵⁶ As a consequence, the search for the image of the Trinity within the individual soul becomes decisive to the extent that LaCugna concludes, "If the soul of every human being contains the vestiges of the Trinity, then we need only look within ourselves to discover God and God's *oikonomia*."⁵⁷ This, of course, *de facto* makes Christ as *imago Dei* redundant and irrelevant to a theology of God, and therefore a true *imago Trinitatis* impossible. This is the case since "the true economy is that of the individual soul, whose interior structure discloses the reality of the Trinity."⁵⁸

This focus on the individual apart from relations, says LaCugna, flows directly from an ontology defined by substance and ends up as a psychological approach to the mystery of the Trinity in which Trinity is cut off from the economy of salvation in Christ.⁵⁹ As such, it also lays the foundation for an anthropology of "self-contained relationality" with a focus on the individual soul and a disembodiment from social realities.⁶⁰ It brings with it the logical implications of a disembodied ecclesiology that focuses on spiritualizing God's salvation in Christ within the walls of the church, rather than a missional understanding of the socially-embodied ecclesiology participating in God's self-revelation in Christ as it ontologically plays out in the networks of relationships within all of creation.

The psychological *imago Trinitatis*, with its modal and subordinating tendencies, results in a view on the relationship of the persons within the life of God as relations of origin. The consequence is that agency is not

⁵⁶ As quoted in *Ibid.*, 93.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-03.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

only of a psychological nature, but also an imitating agency that can only lead to traits-based conceptions of leadership that focuses on the qualities and agency of individual human beings. From such disembodied ecclesiological implications and traits-based leadership implications, it is only a short step to understanding missiology as fundamentally the mission(s) of the church rather than a missional church that implies social embodiment.

However, as Robert Jenson indicates, it is also important in trinitarian conversations to make sure both polytheism and modalism are avoided without resorting to subordinationism. In the history of theological reflection, the Cappadocian Fathers provided that impulse in the decade after 370. This impulse came to fruition during the first Council of Constantinople in 381 and was brought to its conclusion at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 when both Nicea and Constantinople were proclaimed as one creed and dogma for the whole church.⁶¹

Augustine, in fact, rejects the central Athanasian and Cappadocian insight that the three persons of the Trinity are God precisely by the relations between them. The “dissonance between the metaphysical principles of the Greeks and the storytelling of the gospel” was also Augustine’s undoing.⁶² This misunderstanding in effect led to a dysfunctional doctrine of the Trinity that became obsolete by the time of Schleiermacher. The important implication for Jenson is that “reversal of Augustine’s misstep is vital, for a religious fellowship in which the differentiating relations between Father, Son, and Spirit had ceased to shape ritual and theology would no longer be the church, no matter how otherwise dedicated it was to one or another Christian value or slogan.”⁶³

⁶¹ Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology: The Triune God*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 107.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 113-14.

Communion Leadership as Imago Trinitatis

Zizioulas' appreciation for the Cappadocian Fathers' contribution is indeed for their ability to break with a Platonic thought pattern when considering the *imago Dei*. After sketching the Cappadocians' historical context of reacting against Sabellianism and Eunomianism, Zizioulas refers to both the philosophical and anthropological implications of the Cappadocian contribution.⁶⁴ On the philosophical implications, Zizioulas says, "The doctrine of the Trinity offered the occasion to the Cappadocians to express their distance both explicitly and implicitly from Platonism in particular and thus to introduce a new philosophy."⁶⁵

Zizioulas makes particular mention of St Gregory of Nazianzus, who refers to Plato "as having spoken of God as a crater which overflows with goodness and love." He notes that Gregory rejects that notion as "implying a process of natural or substantial generation of existence."⁶⁶ He rejects the non-personal images about God and to speak of the generation of the Son or the spiration of the Spirit in terms of substantial growth. This was typical of the Cappadocian Fathers' challenge to any philosophy that views nature or substance as preceding the person. They challenged this neo-Platonic philosophy of their time through their trinitarian theology that gives ontological primacy to the person as relational. For them, the particular is not secondary to being or nature, and thus frees existence from the logical necessity of substance.⁶⁷

This trinitarian rejection of platonic philosophy has profound anthropological implications. Human beings as *imago Dei* are not God by nature for Zizioulas, since human beings are *created* with beginnings and are subject to limitations of space and time. Nevertheless, Zizioulas

⁶⁴ Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, 156-68.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 163-65.

can claim that human beings are “called to exist in the way God exists.”⁶⁸ Zizioulas bases this view on the Cappadocians’ distinction between nature and person. Nature or substance only points to the *what* of something, while person or *hypostasis* points to the *how* of being. Zizioulas says, “The ‘image of God’ in man has precisely to do with this *how*, not with the *what* man is; it relates not to nature—man can never become God by nature—but to personhood.”⁶⁹ Human beings are indeed capable of living according to the *what*, but that can only entail “individuation leading to decomposition and finally death.”⁷⁰ Living to the image of God, to the contrary, means living according to the image of God’s personhood and therefore *becoming God* as the *theosis* of human beings. He says, “Without an attempt to free the person from the necessity of nature one cannot be the ‘image of God.’”⁷¹ In this way the Cappadocian Fathers, through Zizioulas’ interpretations, promote a relational understanding of personhood as an ontological concept in the ultimate sense.

Therefore, for Zizioulas, the person “constitutes the ‘way of being’ of God himself.”⁷² This view also suggests the person cannot exist in isolation. The other and relationship with the other give identity to someone. Person does not mean individual, but relationship.⁷³ The ability to be a person is revealed only to the extent that a human being relates to God and the rest of creation.⁷⁴ Therefore, Zizioulas says that “the highest form of capacity for man is to be found in the notion of *imago Dei*,” which specifically cannot mean *imago Dei* in a deistic manner but rather must be trinitarianly understood as “*imago Trinitatis*.”⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 166.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 168-69.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 248.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 249.

However, it is important to look at Zizioulas' relational ontology of personhood rooted in the triune God's being as communion from both Christological and pneumatological perspectives. Christ as *imago Dei* is indeed "the ontological ground of every man," as constitutive of an anthropology rooted in such a relational trinitarian ontology.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, it is "a conditioning of Christology by pneumatology" that prevents Christ as *imago Dei* to become *imitatio Christi*.⁷⁷ Zizioulas says, "Christology does not offer Christ to anthropology as a model for imitation, for this would be perhaps of an ethical but certainly not of an ontological significance to anthropology."⁷⁸

It is also important to see that the relationship between Christology and pneumatology is not a relation of origin, since "the Spirit is not to be brought into the picture *after* the figure of Christ, but Christology is pneumatologically conditioned in its very roots."⁷⁹ This contribution puts the *imago Dei* even more within the relational reality of God's being and moves it beyond any possibility of an *imitating Dei* to a true *imago Trinitatis* as pneumatological embodiment. Zizioulas says, "In each man's relation to Christ, the Spirit is not simply an assistant to the individual in reaching Christ, but the *in*, in which he is participant in Christ is *in* the Spirit and *into* Christ."⁸⁰

Communion Epistemology and Leadership Imagination

The last phase of constructing a theo-cultural theory of Christian leadership at the public intersection of ecclesiology and organizational leadership specifically explores the sociological conditions of possibility embedded in the relational epistemology suggested by communion ecclesiology in conversation with SN theory.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 243.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 244.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

A communion ecclesiology constituted by a relational ontology (as developed in the above mentioned biblical-theological framework of an *imago Trinitatis* based on the biblical *imago Dei*), connected with SN theory's emphasis on the construction of meaning within networks of relationships based on trust and companionship, opens up real possibilities of social imagination in the companionship between local congregations and other organizations within the public companionship of social networks. The theological perspective in this second phase of developing this essay's argument needs to be integrated with a cultural perspective on how meaning is publicly constructed and how the *social imaginaire* is shaped in the interrelationships of social networks.

Communion Leadership as Imaginatio Trinitatis

The third movement in developing my framework for understanding change integrates this biblical-theological interpretation of the *imago Dei* as *imago Trinitatis* with philosophical and cultural anthropological insights regarding the *social imaginaire* and *cultural change*. It represents an argument for an *imaginatio Trinitatis* as the socially-embodied and relational ontology of an ecclesiological trinitarianism through what several philosophers, cultural anthropologists, and social scientists termed the *social imaginary*.⁸¹

Socially embodied relations in society are always more than the simple collection of individuals. Even beyond and prior to a variety of determining human conditions, a *public* is always a construct rather than a mere given. The argument in this regard follows Graham Ward's suggestion that what is "disclosed" in the construction of the public ("that makes the public appear to be a natural phenomenon, a given") is the "social ontology" of

⁸¹ Graham Ward also refers to the work of Benedict Anderson, Jurgen Habermas, and Cornelius Castoriadis for helpful insights to the *social imaginary*. Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119.

“being-in-relation.”⁸² This concurs with the hermeneutical turn (or even a phenomenological approach to imaginative lifeworlds)⁸³ that helps us understand that our being is always a being-in-the-world.⁸⁴ We are thrown into the world, not as empty or neutral beings, but as people formed through fragments of languages, images, and words that all play a part in shaping our imagination of what it means to exist in the world.⁸⁵ Imagination has been caught up in the misconception that mental images are entities in an individual. That means also that imagination is socially and historically constituted and conditions the subjectivity of agency.⁸⁶

A socially embodied understanding of imagination builds on an anti-representationalism approach to imagination, which highlights the value of imaginatively constructing new perspectives on our world as a prelude to changing it. Charles Taylor defines this *social imaginary* as “the way people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between

⁸² Ibid., 120.

⁸³ Dave Trotman, “Interpreting Imaginative Lifeworlds: Phenomenological Approaches in Imagination and the Evaluation of Educational Practice,” *Qualitative Research* 6, no. 2 (2006): 245.

⁸⁴ Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Paul Avis also traces the history of the fate of imagination through modernity into postmodernity. Imagination developed in modernity as the counterpart of rational discourse. A modernistic view of the latter sees reason as the vehicle of knowledge and progress, while imagination is associated with superstition and illusion. The first is the source of truth and the second the source of falsity. In postmodernity the reverse might be true and “everything has the potential to become a symbol, but nothing is a symbol of the transcendent.” The same logic applies to both modernity and postmodernity in relation to the imagination, divorcing it from rational discourse. Paul D. L. Avis, *God and the Creative Imagination: Metaphor, Symbol, and Myth in Religion and Theology* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 14-29.

⁸⁵ Melissa Freeman, “Performing the Event of Understanding in Hermeneutic Conversations with Narrative Texts,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 13, no. 1 (2007): 928.

⁸⁶ Allen Chun, “Writing Theory: Steps toward an Ecology of Practice,” *Anthropological Theory* 5, no. 1 (2005): 517.

them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”⁸⁷ Taylor’s explicit emphasis is on how the imagination has broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth, and ritual (places modernity allocated to the imagination) and has now become a part of the ordinary lives of people in society. The imaginary is constitutive of the very situation of any doing or action. As such, Ward says the *social imaginary* constitutes the public as “being a collective agency” that “perpetuates further images, stories, discourses and practices that constitute and disseminate the imaginary.”⁸⁸

Paul Ricoeur’s concern with *l’imaginaire social* is of special interest in this regard.⁸⁹ His concern is particularly with the relations between rhetoric and action, what he terms a “poetics of the will.”⁹⁰ Ricoeur explicitly relates the imagination to *poiesis* and therefore articulates it in terms of its transformative power and as “the practical functioning in and between people.”⁹¹ In doing so, Ricoeur relates his view of the imagination to his productive theory of metaphor. Both metaphor and imagination are associated with “semantic innovation” and therefore “language makes possible what we see.”⁹² Imagination gives a glimpse at the new possibilities that metaphor provokes.

According to this idea, imagination enables us to see differently. Imagination enables us to see alternatives and possibilities. Wards sums it up by saying, “Since seeing *as* infers that such seeing is implicated in figuration—that is,

⁸⁷ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

⁸⁸ Graham Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 128.

⁸⁹ See also Jeanne Evans, *Paul Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of the Imagination* (New York: P. Lang, 1995).

⁹⁰ See Ward’s brief outline of where Ricoeur’s “poetics of the will” fits into his repertoire and especially his “philosophy of the will.” Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice*, 130.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 131.

seeing *as* infers seeing *by way of*, seeing *analogically*, seeing *metonymically*, seeing *metaphorically*, seeing *synecdochically*, etc.—then the dynamic power of imaginative conception is inextricably linked to the power of language to provoke new ways of seeing and sense-making.”⁹³ The importance of Ricoeur is that the imagination becomes associated with cultural transformation and critical engagement through its projective function that is part of the very dynamics of action.⁹⁴ This projective function “works with an anticipation for the future, and ‘is involved in the very process of motivation.’”⁹⁵ For Ricoeur, action is rooted in imaginative possibility, which in turn empowers action. Imagination opens up the possibilities that arise from the ontological surplus excessive to the *status quo*. These are the possibilities created by the eschatological life of God.

Christian Leadership as Communion Imagination

In developing this argument for the anthropological and sociological conditions of possibility embedded in a communion ontology and epistemology at the intersection of ecclesiology and organizational theory, a particular definition of Christian leadership emerged. It is fundamentally a theo-cultural definition shaped by a relational ontology rooted in the life of the triune God in the world. Leadership is constituted by a social imagination rooted in the given of the triune God’s agency in the world. It is a participatory style of leadership in which the shapes of leadership are determined by disclosure and discernment in communion. As soon as Christian leadership is primarily established as socially-embodied participation within the reality of God’s presence and activity in the world, any

⁹³ Ibid., 132.

⁹⁴ See also G. M. Newlands, *The Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theory* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

⁹⁵ As quoted from Ricoeur’s *Imagination in Discourse and Action* in *From Text to Action* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991) in Ward, *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice*, 136.

possibilities of traits-based or heroic understandings of leadership disappear. Christian leadership as *imaginatio Trinitatis* is shaped by the theological reality of a communion ecclesiology rooted in the life of the triune God and socially-embodied in the cultural flows of the world.

Discernment, as a core practice of Christian leadership, seeks the movement of the triune God in relationship with all of creation. In this sense, it is a communion imagination that participates in the movement of the Spirit in the world. Discernment is exercised in the context of a socially-embodied ecclesiology within the public networks of others in the world. Christian leadership is integrally part of the church as the Body of Christ in companionship with other organizations in society. This understanding of missional leadership deconstructs the Christendom paradigm that presupposes a powerful church that sees itself as socially sanctioned to fulfill a spiritual leadership role *for* the sake of the world. Instead, it presents a leadership understanding that positions the church in humble relationship *with* the world. The exercise of leadership in this sense is not about the capacities and strategies of how to transmit the truth *to* others, but about how to be in truth-seeking relationships and networks *with* others.