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THE TRINITARIAN FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP:  
WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOD'S GLORY  
IN UNITY AND DIVERSITY

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty  
of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by  
Matthew Dean Ross  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

THE TRINITARIAN FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP:  
WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOD'S GLORY  
IN UNITY AND DIVERSITY

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In dedication to Jamie, my excellent wife,  
and our children, McClendon, Caroline, and Charles

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## PREFACE

I was first given the opportunity to think about the practical application of trinitarian thinking while I was working on my M.Div. at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte. While working on this degree, I was able to take an elective with Dr. Douglas Kelly on the doctrine of the Trinity. In the context of this course, I was tasked with writing about how the doctrine of the Trinity related to political structures. It was in researching this paper and participating in Dr. Kelly's lectures that I was first introduced to the idea that unity and diversity are equally ultimate in the Trinity. Almost immediately, I began to see the practical significance of this insight.

Although this present research is fairly far removed from any intentional application to political structures, in many ways, it is an opportunity to give a prolonged explanation and application of the equiprimal relationship between unity and diversity that I first began to discover in Dr. Kelly's course on the Trinity. This relationship is founded on trinitarian thinking that understands the three Persons of the Trinity to be equally ultimate to the one God. Although this is clearly a mystery that cannot be fully explained, it is also an epistemological starting point that provides helpful insights into a distinctly Christian understanding of personal identity and workgroups.

I am thankful for all the courses that I was able to take for the completion of this degree at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Although I am thankful for all of these courses, I am particularly thankful for Dr. Timothy Paul Jones's course on the Theological Foundations of Educational Research, Dr. Michael Wilder's course on the Theological Foundations of Leadership, and for Dr. Shane Parker's course on Social and Organizational Change. Each of these courses gave me the opportunity and freedom to

write research papers that extended the practical application of trinitarian thinking to the fields of leadership and education.

In writing this research, I am indebted to my coworkers at Midway Covenant Christian School. Not only did the teachers and staff of this school grant me the necessary time and resources for completing this project, but they also provided much helpful feedback and leadership opportunities that proved to be a beneficial testing ground for some of the ideas presented here. I look forward to many more years of continued service at this school and many more opportunities to engage in loving relationships, dialogue, and covenant. I hope that those who read this research will find it as applicable to their environments as I did at Midway Covenant Christian School.

Matt Ross

Acworth, Georgia

December 2014



## CHAPTER 1

### THE CHALLENGE OF HEROIC LEADERSHIP

Modern approaches to leadership frequently have an Emerson-like confidence in individual capacity. This confidence is typified in Ralph Waldo Emerson's 1841 essay "Self-Reliance." Here he said, "No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition, as if every thing were titular and ephemera but he."<sup>1</sup> In a modern context, leaders frequently convey a similar type of self-reliance. The tendency of many leaders is to look inward, trust their instincts, and fight against organizational obstacles rather than to humbly question the self and to open the self to criticism from others. At the heart of these tendencies is a trust in autonomy and a disconnection from the world.<sup>2</sup>

In contemporary leadership studies this confidence in individual capacity has manifested itself in theories such as charismatic leadership. Peter Northouse summarizes the ideal personality characteristics of charismatic leaders as "being dominant, having strong desire to influence others, being self-confident, and having a strong sense of one's own moral values."<sup>3</sup> Although this type of leadership might engender an affection for

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-reliance," in *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, The Library of America (New York: Viking, 1983), 262.

<sup>2</sup>Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 12-13.

<sup>3</sup>Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 188.

leaders that leads to obedience, it also suffers from a “heroic leadership” bias that is elitist and undemocratic.<sup>4</sup>

Many other researchers have noticed the problems of “heroic leadership” and demonstrated the appearance of its characteristics in a broad range of leadership theories.<sup>5</sup> Heroic leadership refers to the tendency to focus primarily on the individual characteristics of those in power. In disagreeing with Thomas Carlyle’s “Great Man” theory of leadership, James Davison Hunter summarizes this view well when he says, “[Great men of the past] form an aristocracy of knowledge, talent, ability, ambition, and virtue, and so endowed have stood like switchmen on the train tracks of history; it is their genius and the genius of other heroic individuals that have guided the evolution of civilization this way or that; for better or for worse.”<sup>6</sup> The result of this focus on the heroic elements of leadership is the development of a very hierarchical approach to structure and a command-and-control leadership style. Critics of heroic leadership bluntly claim that the “Great Man” theory of leadership posited by Thomas Carlyle is “just plain wrong.”<sup>7</sup>

A paradigm shift is taking place in many contemporary leadership theories, rather than focusing on individual leaders, heroes, or great men or women, the new emphasis is to focus on relational dynamics, flattened hierarchies, and distributed forms

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>5</sup>See Joyce K. Fletcher, “The Paradox of Post Heroic Leadership: Gender Matters” (Center for Gender in Organizations Working Paper No. 17, Simmons School of Management, Boston, 2003); Charles C. Manz and Henry P. Sims, “SuperLeadership: Beyond the Myth of Heroic Leadership,” *Organizational Dynamics* 19, no. 4 (1991): 18-35; Dennis Tourish, *The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership: A Critical Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 10-14.

<sup>6</sup>James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 38.

<sup>7</sup>James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 23.

of leadership.<sup>8</sup> Rather than focusing on the leader at the top, the new emphasis is on networks throughout the entire organizational structure.<sup>9</sup> This emphasis on networks is marked by a focus on relationships. “Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow . . . . A relationship characterized by mutual respect and confidence will overcome the greatest of adversaries and leave a lasting legacy.”<sup>10</sup> By emphasizing the relational aspects of leaders, the new paradigm has created a more flattened environment in which traditional hierarchies are less emphasized.

This turn to the flattened and relational could prove problematic for Christian leaders, if it is not grounded in biblical truth. As Christians develop leadership theories, they must do so from a distinctly biblical perspective. Frequently, there is a temptation to develop a leadership model based on a syncretic blend of Christian and non-Christian theories. Christians need to exercise discernment when they interact with leadership models developed on a distinctly non-Christian epistemological foundation. If relational styles of leadership value relationships more than biblical truth, they can be especially susceptible to disregarding the traditional orthodox teachings of the church. These models will value syncretism and irenicism above biblical truth. The resulting styles of leadership will be less likely to base leadership methodology on doctrine or revelation because belief in unchanging objective truth can be difficult and problematic in the contemporary postmodern milieu.<sup>11</sup> If truth propositions are believed to diminish

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<sup>8</sup>Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, “All Those Years Ago: The Historical Underpinnings of Shared Leadership,” in *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*, ed. Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003).

<sup>9</sup>Hunter, *To Change the World*, 38.

<sup>10</sup>Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 24.

<sup>11</sup>Richard J. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2010), 107-16; Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 40-44.

collaboration and conversation, then relational styles of leadership will be less likely to incorporate these dogmas into their leadership methods.

Two examples of the way syncretism has affected communication, can be found in Robert Wuthnow's idea of "code switching" and Kenda Creasy Dean's "cult of the nice." Wuthnow uses the concept of "code switching" to describe the way that Christians frequently conflate psychological or therapeutic language with religious language in their prayers. Leaders of churches frequently pray in language that asks God for comfort, protection, or inner peace. "The words are ambiguous, referring to something spiritual on the one hand, and to ordinary psychological states on the other hand."<sup>12</sup> This ambiguity values peace and relationship more than truth. Leaders cannot value relationship with other people more than the truths of Scripture.

In a second example of syncretism, Dean refers to superficial communication as the "cult of the nice." According to Dean, the cult of nice tends to avoid ultimate loyalties for the sake of getting along with other people. Rather than genuinely getting to know other people, it tends to reduce others to "replicas of ourselves."<sup>13</sup> The idea of being relationally "nice" for the sake of teamwork can prevent people from building more intimate relationships that require higher degrees of confrontation. Leadership decisions frequently involve the necessity of speaking difficult truths even when they are not necessarily ready to be heard. This type of behavior requires loving a person on a deeper level than what is frequently associated with informal leadership styles. Christian leaders cannot participate in the homogenizing tendencies of the cult of nice. They must be willing to speak difficult truths when they need to be heard.

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<sup>12</sup>Robert Wuthnow, *The God Problem: Expressing Faith and Being Reasonable* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 81.

<sup>13</sup>Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*, Kindle ed. (New York: Oxford, 2010), loc. 621.

Despite these syncretic tendencies that can develop when relationships are emphasized, it should also be noticed that the relational turn has many positive elements as well. During the early part of the twentieth century a different form of syncretism was occurring in Christian leadership. As the theories of scientific management and the influence of Frederick Taylor became increasingly popular, churches tended to adapt his style to their leadership structures. These adaptations included a top-down management style, a heavy emphasis on record keeping, the assigning of various tasks to church members, and a programmatic style of education.<sup>14</sup> This system had the effect of measuring a person's worth by their contributions to the system.<sup>15</sup> The result was a very pragmatic or utilitarian understanding of human dignity. This pragmatic understanding of the person is unbiblical and needed revision. The contemporary styles of leadership tend to emphasize human relationships, emotions, and ethical behavior more than the older scientific management styles of leadership.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, these newer styles leadership have a much better understanding of the person.

As noted earlier, relational styles of leadership also tend to emphasize a more flattened leadership structure. In *Teaming*, Amy Edmondson highlights some of the benefits of flattened hierarchies. She points to the idea that flattened hierarchies in leadership create a situation in which collaboration is more likely to result in innovation. She is especially critical of the stifling nature of the authoritarian management style that was birthed out of the industrial revolution. According to Edmondson the authoritarian management style valued efficiency, but at the expense of innovation. Regarding this

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<sup>14</sup>Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces that have Shaped the Administration of the Public Schools* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>15</sup>Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 17.

<sup>16</sup>Jon R. Katzenbach and Zia Zhan, *Leading Outside the Lines: How to Mobilize the (in)formal Organization, Energize Your Team, and Get Better Results*, Kindle ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), loc. 496.

style, she says, “The managerial mindset that enables efficient execution actually inhibits an organization’s ability to learn and innovate. The narrow focus of getting things done inhibits the experimentation and reflection that are vital to sustainable success in an unpredictable and evolving business environment.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Edmondson emphasizes that flattened hierarchies tend to build trust and respect among team members. These aspects make the workplace more amenable to continuous learning.<sup>18</sup> This emphasis on cooperation and learning indicate that many aspects of the new leadership styles should be seen in a positive light.

However, in order to rightly utilize these relational leadership models it is necessary to first develop a proper epistemological frame. When Christian leaders borrow from the models of the world around them, they need to do so through the critical lens of the Scriptures. Only by starting with a thorough understanding of the Scriptures can the researcher be in a position to acknowledge the many common grace insights that may be available from the research of unbelievers. These insights will need to be reinterpreted from a biblical perspective, but they are nonetheless valuable insights.<sup>19</sup>

It should also be noticed that syncretism is nothing that is new to the church. The new flattened environment has introduced many new syncretic aspects to the church, but the church has always had to fight the tendency to syncretize aspects of its surrounding environment. This was no less true fifty years ago than it is today. Much of the church leadership structure of the past was borrowed from capitalistic business structure. Harry Reeder fears this association with Christian leadership and contemporary capitalism when he writes, “The leadership model that is infecting the church today –

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<sup>17</sup>Edmondson, *Teaming*, 21.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>19</sup>David Powlison, “Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies),” in *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 276-77.

with disastrous results – is a product of contemporary capitalism, which is a greed-based, wealth-consuming mutation that has replaced the historically Christian-influenced system.”<sup>20</sup> This model has traditionally emphasized top down, authoritarian leadership rather than teamwork and collaboration.

Leadership that emphasizes efficiency and top-down authority can be called the authority-compliance style of leadership. “This style of leadership places heavy emphasis on task and job requirements, and less emphasis on people, except to the extent that people are tools for getting the job done. Communicating with subordinates is not emphasized except for the purpose of giving instructions about the task.”<sup>21</sup> In Christian leadership the influence of the authority-compliance style tends to create an environment that focuses on the personality and skill sets of a particular leader. By emphasizing the particular leader, this style of leadership is susceptible to the criticisms of heroic leadership. Furthermore, it tends to minimize collaboration and turn followers into spectators.<sup>22</sup>

Because relational styles of leadership better account for human sin and human dignity, they serve as better dialogue partner for developing a biblical understanding of leadership than the authority-compliance style of leadership. However, these relational styles of leadership should also be kept in a subordinate role to the Scriptures. Rather than looking to the surrounding culture or business environment for a new leadership model, what is needed is a thorough reinvestigation of the Scriptures that seeks to build a leadership model on biblical and theological ground. From this foundation it is possible

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<sup>20</sup>Harry L. Reeder, *The Leadership Dynamic: A Biblical Model for Raising Effective Leaders*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), loc. 68.

<sup>21</sup>Northouse, *Leadership*, 79.

<sup>22</sup>Reeder, *The Leadership Dynamic*, loc. 143.

to criticize and build upon other existing models.<sup>23</sup> Some models of leadership that begin with biblical or theological foundations are incarnational leadership, servant leadership, and team leadership. Before developing a trinitarian foundation for leadership, it will be helpful to look at these three types of leadership.

### **Incarnational Leadership**

Incarnational styles of leadership originated in the context of missions. In his description of the missionary movement, Andrew Walls describes two principles that are central to the incarnation and incarnational styles of leadership: the indigenizing and pilgrim principles. The indigenizing principle recognizes that Christianity cannot be completely separated from the larger culture, and it encourages believers to follow the example of Jesus' incarnation and to live as members of a particular society.<sup>24</sup> The pilgrim principle has a slightly different emphasis. This principle emphasizes the transformative work of the Holy Spirit and the traits that will distinguish Christians from other aspects of culture. According to Walls, "Not only does God in Christ take people as they are: He takes them in order to transform them into what He wants them to be."<sup>25</sup> Taken together, the indigenizing and pilgrim principles emphasize both the humanity and divinity of Christ in the incarnation. Christ took on full humanity, was born into a particular community, and behaved according to the customs of that community. He also was the eternal Son of God and fully divine. As the divine Son of God, Jesus was uniquely sinless and not shaped by his culture.

Because youth leadership involves ministry to a distinct subculture, youth ministers were the first to incorporate this missiological insight into ministry. "Adults in

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<sup>23</sup>Powlison, "Cure of Souls," 276-77.

<sup>24</sup>Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 7.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.



youth ministry have long viewed themselves as missionaries to an alien culture, a special breed of theological anthropologists who must learn the language, taboos, artifacts, and rituals of the teenage universe in order to make the gospel accessible to them.”<sup>26</sup>

Incarnational ministry attempts to learn the culture of those to whom they are attempting to minister and build relationships in hopes of building influence.<sup>27</sup>

Recently, incarnational ministry has been translated into a distinct leadership style and is gaining interest outside of the realms of youth ministry. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay describe incarnational leadership in their book *The Tangible Kingdom*. This book is built on the premise that the church is the body of Christ to the world and that because of this the church is responsible for building incarnational communities in our culture that model the love of Christ. According to this book, “The primary function [of the church] is to actively move into the culture to embody and en flesh the good news into every nook and cranny of this world. The function of the church is to be God’s missionary hands to a world that is looking for something tangible to grab onto.”<sup>28</sup> While this is undeniably an important emphasis in the Scriptures, it is mistaken to identify missions or enculturation with the primary function of the church.

Although mission is an extremely important part of the life of the church, it should be thought of as a secondary purpose rather than the primary purpose of the church. John Piper summarizes this point succinctly and eloquently in his book on missions when he says, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed

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<sup>26</sup>Dean, *Almost Christian*, loc. 1658.

<sup>27</sup>Andrew Root, *Revisting Relational Youth Ministry: From a Strategy of Influence to a Theology of Incarnation*, Kindle ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), loc. 761.

<sup>28</sup>Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community*, A Leadership Network Publication (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 108.

fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.”<sup>29</sup> When incarnational leadership reverses these priorities it can have dangerous consequences.

One negative consequence that might result if these priorities are reversed is a faulty hermeneutic. Since in a very general sense the Gospels and Acts can be characterized by their emphasis on the missionary activity of Jesus and the epistles can be characterized as containing more doctrinal teachings, there can be a tendency to elevate the teachings of the Gospels above the epistles. Halter and Smay display this faulty hermeneutic when they say, “Would Christians today be different if we only had the four Gospels to interpret? What if we all had to look over all these centuries were the four accounts of Christ’s life? Would we be better Christians on the streets? I think we probably would.”<sup>30</sup>

While it is certainly true that a loving ethic is portrayed in the Gospels, it should also be noticed that it is impossible to properly love and serve people if we fail to understand doctrinal teachings about grace. Loving people occasionally requires hard statements to be made that might give offense to a person. The Gospels themselves are full of these types of statements in Jesus’ interactions with the Pharisees. Knowing when to make hard statements and when to make kind statements comes from a wisdom that is conditioned by a right understanding of doctrine.

A second criticism of incarnational leadership is that this philosophy of leadership, as it is described by Halter and Smay, encourages churches to place non-Christians into leadership positions in the church. Halter and Smay are careful to say that they would not want a non-Christian to be the primary worship leader or to be a Bible

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<sup>29</sup>John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 2.

<sup>30</sup>Halter and Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom*, 20.

teacher, but they are fine with a non-Christian being a member of the praise band or teaching small children. According to these authors, placing non-Christians in leadership positions will “convey that your community is a place where anybody, in any phase of spiritual curiosity, can be in an environment in which God can touch their hearts.”<sup>31</sup> This willingness to get people involved in leadership positions in hopes of increasing the commitment level of the follower highlights an instrumental use of relationships. Incarnational ministry risks making influence the goal of human relationships.<sup>32</sup> This reduces human relationships to a manipulative tool.

The description of incarnational leadership provided by Halter and Smay provides a framework for leadership that is similar to what is traditionally called transformational leadership. This style of leadership utilizes charismatic personalities and relationships to get followers more involved, transcend their own self-interests, and elevate the followers concerns for the well-being of others.<sup>33</sup> Incarnational leadership shows vision in attempting to get people more relationally involved in the mission of the organization, but it also succumbs to some of the same criticisms that apply to transformational leadership. These models of leadership are more concerned with cohesion to the detriment of internal dissent.<sup>34</sup> Leadership must allow differing opinions to be heard. Since the visionary element of transformational leadership is carried out by a

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 118. The willingness to allow non-Christians to teach children is particularly damaging. Children are naturally inquisitive and will ask many questions regarding the Bible studies that they are learning. At best, a non-Christian will not be able to adequately answer a child’s questions about the Bible. At worst, the non-Christian will answer the questions in a way that contradicts the way the Bible is taught in the Christian home.

<sup>32</sup>Root, *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*, loc. 773.

<sup>33</sup>Bernard M. Bass and Ruth Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Application*, Kindle ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), loc. 20808.

<sup>34</sup>Dennis Tourish and Ashly Pinnington, “Transformational Leadership, Corporate Cultism, and the Spirituality Paradigm: An Unholy Trinity in the Workplace?” *Human Relations* 55, no. 2 (2002): 147.

solitary charismatic leader or a small group of leaders, it discourages this healthy type of dissent.

Transformational leadership is inherently a heroic style of leadership. The passion of a particular person comes before sober argumentation and dialogue. “A compelling vision, passionately argued for, has a head start over a sober presentation, in which doubt, uncertainty and an acknowledgement of the possibility of error hold sway.”<sup>35</sup> When this type of heroic leadership is combined with an emphasis on the incarnation, the leader can seem as if a false messiah. J. Todd Billings shares this concern when he states, “The tendency of practitioners of incarnational ministry to see their own presence as inherently redemptive is one of the fatal flaws that penetrates many forms of incarnational ministry.”<sup>36</sup>

Despite these negative criticisms, there are also several positive aspects of incarnational leadership. According to the Philippians 2, it is biblical that we should imitate the incarnation in some sense. This imitation is especially true of the humble service that Christ evidenced in his earthly ministry. Furthermore, this style of leadership encourages outreach, service, evangelism, missions, and a strong sense of community. All of these behaviors are very biblical and should be encouraged by Christian leadership. However, because incarnational leadership places the secondary priorities of the church into the place of the primary priority, it is an inadequate model for the church to use. This model is very likely to lead to faulty hermeneutics and poor models of leadership.

### **Servant Leadership**

A second leadership model based on biblical and theological concepts is servant leadership. Servant leadership is, by far, the most popular leadership theory

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>36</sup>J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 125.

Christian organizations. “As both a theoretical and pragmatic paradigm, the servant motif leaves other leadership paradigms . . . far behind.”<sup>37</sup> This philosophy of leadership is much different than the authority-compliance style that was discussed earlier. Servant leadership encourages the leader to build personal relationships with their followers in order to encourage them to be better people. “Servant leaders put followers *first*, empower them, and help them develop their full personal capacities. Furthermore, servant leaders are ethical . . . and lead in ways that serve the greater good of the organization, community and society at large.”<sup>38</sup>

Servant leadership was originally developed by Robert Greenleaf. In his seminal essays on the topic he took a fresh look at the issues of power and authority and determined that people need to learn to relate to one another in “less coercive and more creatively supporting ways.”<sup>39</sup> This servant style of relating means “the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader.”<sup>40</sup> Servant leadership values intuition and introspection. According to Greenleaf, when servants notice a problem, they understand that the first step toward finding a remedy begins through introspection before changing institutional structures.<sup>41</sup>

This emphasis on intuition and introspection is consistent with Greenleaf’s Quaker beliefs. The Quaker tradition values mysticism, the internal leading of the Spirit,

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<sup>37</sup>Jack Niewold, “Beyond Servant Leadership,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 1, no. 2 (2007): 119.

<sup>38</sup>Northouse, *Leadership*, 219.

<sup>39</sup>Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, ed. Larry C. Spears, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 23.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 58.

and anti-structuralism.<sup>42</sup> Each of these characteristics is evidenced to various degrees in the works of Greenleaf. Because this type of anti-structural and introspective spirituality has become especially popular in the postmodern age, there has also been a corresponding increased interest in servant leadership.<sup>43</sup> The counter-spirituality of servant leadership has helped it to appeal to large audience in the contemporary United States.<sup>44</sup> Noticing these Quaker values in the writings of Greenleaf and the conflation of his values with existential and Eastern mystical writers, Jack Niewold has commented that Greenleaf's writings look like a type of Christian existentialism.<sup>45</sup> Despite these mystical and existential emphases, servant leadership has become extremely popular in Christian writings on leadership.

In the Christian setting, servant leaders are often encouraged to “lead like Jesus.” It is commonly asserted that Jesus used a servant leadership style and that pastors and Christian leaders should also emulate this style. Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges believe the core of servant leadership is found in Matthew 20. In this chapter, Jesus encourages his disciples to not behave like the Gentiles whose rulers and high officials lord over them. Instead, Jesus encourages his disciples to behave like servants if they are to be truly great. Regarding this statement, Blanchard and Hodges say, “For followers of Jesus, servant leadership isn't an option; it's a mandate. Servant leadership is to be a living statement of who we are in Christ, how we treat one another, and how we demonstrate the love of Christ to the whole world.”<sup>46</sup> Similarly, Harry Reeder points out

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<sup>42</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1975), 2:822-23.

<sup>43</sup>Corné J. Bekker, “Prophet and Servant: Locating Robert K. Greenleaf's Counter Spirituality of Servant Leadership,” *Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010): 4.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>45</sup>Niewold, “Beyond Servant Leadership,” 119.

<sup>46</sup>Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus: Lessons from the Greatest Leadership*

that Jesus' primary mission was to redeem his people, to defeat Satan, and to purchase for himself a triumphant church, but in the process of doing so he "simultaneously displayed a model of leadership and implemented a strategy for leadership multiplication."<sup>47</sup>

Servant leadership is certainly a more biblical approach to leadership than incarnational or transformative leadership. However, it too has several shortcomings. One interesting criticism about servant leadership comes from Peter Northouse. He claims that "the title 'servant leadership' creates semantic noise that diminishes the potential value of the approach. Because the name appears contradictory, servant leadership is prone to be perceived as fanciful or whimsical."<sup>48</sup> Although the contradictory title may be confusing to some, this is not necessarily a reason to dismiss the theory. Many aspects of the Christian gospel seem contradictory on the surface level. This is especially true for concepts like the substitutionary atonement or federal headship. The seemingly contradictory aspect of the title can be viewed in a way that makes servant leadership fit in well with the Christian idea of leadership.

The aspect of Northouse's criticism that is more concerning is the idea that servant leadership seems "fanciful or whimsical." In some instances authors who promote servant leadership speak in ways that seem fanciful. After Harry Reeder discusses the servant leadership of Christ, he goes on to describe the ministry of the disciples who became "leaders who in turn implemented the same model so that within less than a generation the known world is turned upside down."<sup>49</sup> Reeder then goes on to say that the American church needs to implement this model. The implication seems to be that by following the model the American church could turn the world upside down within a

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*Role Model of All Time* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2005), 12.

<sup>47</sup>Reeder, *The Leadership Dynamic*, loc. 350-57.

<sup>48</sup>Northouse, *Leadership*, 234.

<sup>49</sup>Reeder, *The Leadership Dynamic*, loc. 357.

generation. Similarly, Greenleaf himself tends to make several comments that seem utopian. In emphasizing the importance of serving people one life at a time, he says, “The urgent problems of our day – the disposition to venture into immoral and senseless wars, destruction of the environment, poverty, alienation, discrimination, overpopulation – are here because of human failure, individual failure, one person at a time, one action at a time failures” These types of claims seem to validate Northouse’s criticism regarding the fanciful nature of servant leadership.

Furthermore, the emphasis on leading like Jesus seems to create a selective reading of Jesus’ ministry that diminishes the significance of his redemptive work. When the focus on Christ is shifted from redeemer to model leader, it can be easy to overlook some of the most significant aspects of Christ’s work. The most important aspects of Christ’s work, such as his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, are events that cannot be emulated by others. When the gospels are gleaned for behaviors that can be emulated in leadership these significant events are likely to be glossed over. Servant leadership also reads the gospels selectively by focusing only on the aspects of Christ’s ministry in which he emphasized service. This selective reading overlooks the aspects of Jesus’ ministry in which he manifested his lordship such as the transfiguration. Similarly, the lack of emphasis writers on servant leadership place on the many instances in which Christ addresses both his disciples and the Pharisees with authoritative speech reveals a selective reading of the Scriptures.

Niewold’s criticism of servant leadership is especially helpful. In his discussion of the ministry of Jesus, he highlights both the *kenotic* (empty) and *pleromatic* (full) aspects of Jesus’ ministry.<sup>50</sup> According to Niewold, servant leadership models tend to emphasize the kenotic aspects of Jesus’ ministry at the expense of the pleromatic. This

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<sup>50</sup>Niewold, “Beyond Servant Leadership,” 121.



has the effect of presenting a description of Jesus that reduces him to a moral exemplar and closely resembles nineteenth-century classical liberalism.<sup>51</sup> Because servant leadership is characterized by inward-directedness, he sees in it a type of Pelagianism. By this Niewold means, “The servant posture often presents itself as the means whereby both the leader and the follower find their human fulfillment, apart from the transforming power of Jesus Christ.”<sup>52</sup> Using more contemporary language, Niewold compares servant leadership to existentialism. He says, “In true existentialist fashion, this choosing renders the leader’s existence authentic, and such existence, whatever it may mean, is alone efficacious for organizational well-being.” The strong emphasis that servant leadership places on intuition and introspection make it susceptible to these types of criticisms.

Like incarnational leadership, servant leadership has many strong points. Its emphasis on altruism and humility is especially refreshing to the field of leadership.<sup>53</sup> A Trinitarian model of leadership will inevitably look very similar a form of servant leadership. However, also like incarnational leadership it is likely to cause a misreading of the Bible. This misreading is especially evident in the way that servant leadership interprets the life of Christ. Focusing only on the servant aspects of Jesus’ ministry reduces him to a moral exemplar and neglects some of the most important aspects of his earthly ministry. Also, like incarnational leadership, since servant leadership focuses on the introspection and decisions of individual leaders, it is susceptible to the criticisms of heroic leadership.<sup>54</sup> In order to dialogue better with relational leadership models, it is helpful to give consideration to other theological models that better emphasize

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 126.

<sup>53</sup>Northouse, *Leadership*, 234.

<sup>54</sup>Tourish, *The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership*, 203-4.

relationships. Because of these criticisms it is important that the church consider other models of leadership that are less individualistic or likely to succumb to a faulty hermeneutic. In recent years a very popular alternative leadership model has become team leadership.

### **Team Leadership**

Christian team leadership approaches leadership from a slightly different scriptural starting point. Since shared leadership and the trinitarian foundation that is being presented can be conceived as a specific type of team leadership, team leadership will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2. However, some preliminary remarks about the biblical foundations of team leadership are appropriate here. Rather than focusing attention primarily on the ministry of Christ, it takes a more systematic approach to the Scriptures. This makes team leadership a more beneficial model for use in Christian settings. Kenneth Gangel begins his description of team leadership by describing the church. He believes, “Team leadership, commitment to shared responsibility and authority, depends on a proper understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ. It emphasizes again the truth of being ‘laborers together,’ not only with God but also with each other, carrying out the tasks of the church and establishing its witness in the world (Rom 12:5).”<sup>55</sup> This emphasis on ecclesiology gives team leadership a very solid foundation on which to build a theology of leadership for Christian organizations. Rather than focusing primarily on the ministry of Christ in the gospels, Christian team leadership takes a much more balanced redemptive-historical approach to the Scriptures that considers everything the Scriptures say about the ecclesial organization and the principles of leadership.

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<sup>55</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple Gifts to Build a Unified Vision* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997), 32.

After discussing the importance of the church, Gangel goes on to build an Old Testament and a New Testament theology of team leadership. He studies each time that God commanded his covenant people to work in groups and determines the principles that are central to forming an adequate understanding of Biblical leadership in teams. Among the aspects Gangel believes to be most important in team leadership are accountability, shared power, organizational skills, preparation, theological perspective, understanding the culture, stewardship, and modeling good behavior.<sup>56</sup> Although Gangel does an excellent job of surveying the Scriptures for examples of team leadership, he does not devote much time at all to looking at particular theological concepts that are central to team leadership.

Orbelina Eguizabal and Kevin E. Lawson recognize the need for more theological insight into team leadership. They state, “While many authors discuss a few relevant passages from Scripture that relate to team ministry, a more thorough review and reflection would be helpful to assess the compatibility of current writing on teams with the church’s ministry efforts.”<sup>57</sup> Eguizabal and Lawson then go on to identify and discuss seven theological concepts that relate to team leadership: the body, unity, love, co-laborer, plurality of leadership, shared leadership, and servanthood.<sup>58</sup> Although this list and the brief discussions of each of these points is very helpful, there is still much theological work that needs to be done on the concept of team leadership. Conspicuously missing from all of Gangel as well as Eguizabal and Lawson’s work is any reference to the Trinity. Eguizabal and Lawson never mention the Trinity and Gangel only mentions the Trinity once in his 480 pages on team leadership. In the one instance that Gangel does

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 43-64.

<sup>57</sup>Orbelina Eguizabal and Kevin E. Lawson, “Leading Ministry Teams, Part I: Theological Reflection on Ministry Teams,” *Christian Education Journal* 6, no. 2 (2009): 251.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 258-62.

mention the Trinity, he only does so to use the Trinity as a model to show that God is a social being working together as a team.<sup>59</sup>

In a team context, the doctrine of the Trinity should be used as more than a model of a well functioning team. The doctrine also describes the dynamic characteristics that should be evident in the relationships of team members. In John 17:21, Jesus prays that future believers will be “one just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Rather than seeing the Trinity as a model of community, the Trinity is foundational to community. Christians should experience unity “just as” the Father and Son experience unity. Furthermore, the ground that makes possible this unity is participation in the life of the Trinity through union with Christ. This unique style of community has an apologetic significance that testifies to the credibility of God’s character. This type of unique community should be more regularly discussed and applied to patterns of Christian leadership. According to Dwight Zscheile,

Without the Trinity, Jesus is reduced to a mere moral exemplar or wise teacher, and the Holy Spirit is either eliminated altogether or severed from an integral relationship with Jesus. The cruciform character of God’s life, in which God bears the suffering of humanity in a movement of genuine self offering and exchange, is replaced by an impassible, detached God. A loss of a vision of God as a divine community comprised of the one and the many (in which otherness is constitutive of God’s own life) can diminish the church’s imagination for itself as a community of reconciled diversity, instead of uniformity.<sup>60</sup>

Zscheile is excited about the general increased interest in the Trinity over the past several decades, but he mourns the lack of discussion this doctrine has seen in Christian leadership.

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<sup>59</sup>Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry*, 133.

<sup>60</sup>Dwight J. Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (2007): 47.

## **The Need for Reflection on the Trinity**

This lack of discussion about the Trinity is a very significant oversight in the current literature on Christian team leadership.<sup>61</sup> This is not only true because the Triune God is in some sense the perfect example of cooperation and shared leadership, but it is also true that the doctrine of the Trinity is foundational to our system of beliefs as Christians. We are reconciled to God the Father through Christ in the Spirit (Eph 2:18). Robert Letham firmly believes that Evangelical Christians have disregarded the doctrine of the Trinity to their own detriment. He insists that the “Christian experience of God in its entirety, including worship, prayer, or what have you, is inescapably Trinitarian.”<sup>62</sup> Although Evangelicals experience the Trinity in the process of salvation and in their worship, they rarely articulate this experience in meaningful ways. “The need is to bridge the gap between this prearticulated level of experience and a developed theological understanding, so that this is explicitly, demonstrably, and strategically realized in the understanding of the church and its members.”<sup>63</sup> It is especially important for leaders of Christian organizations to strategically think about how the doctrine of the Trinity should affect their processes of making decisions and methods of accomplishing their task objectives. Despite the significance of this doctrine very little work has been done to relate the Trinity to leadership.

This research addresses the problems of heroic leadership and other individualistic tendencies in leadership by explaining how the doctrine of the Trinity relates to the formation of a uniquely Christian self-concept. Trinitarian thinking provides a framework for holding together seemingly paradoxical concepts such as unity-diversity

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<sup>61</sup>Those few authors who have devoted significant attention to the Trinity in their development of leadership theories, such as George Cladis, Bruce Ware, Michael McKibben, and Benjamin Williams, will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

<sup>62</sup>Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 8.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

and community-personality. From this starting point it is possible to develop a unique view of the self that is open to the influence of others and secure in its own identity. A trinitarian understanding of the self values both uniformity and distinction. Not only does trinitarian thinking provide a unique framework for thinking about these concepts, but also each of these concepts is foundational to developing a robust leadership theory.

By beginning with Christian concepts, a leadership model can be developed that avoids the syncretic conflation of Christian models of leadership with non-Christian models of leadership. The doctrine of the Trinity can provide a helpful starting point for thinking about identity and leadership subjects from a Christian vantage point. In particular, the doctrine of perichoresis can be helpful because it describes the mutual indwelling of each of the trinitarian persons within the other. It provides a unique way of defining personhood in which each person is identified by his relationship to the others. The doctrine is a “way of showing the ontological interdependence and reciprocity of the three persons of the Trinity: how they [are] only what they [are] by virtue of their interrelation and interanimation, so that for God to be did not involve an absolute simplicity but a unity deriving from a dynamic plurality of persons.”<sup>64</sup> The idea of perichoresis contains both a unifying and diversifying principle.<sup>65</sup> The Trinity should not be treated as if it were a univocal representation of team leadership, but instead properly functioning Christian relationships should contain “a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is.”<sup>66</sup> These properly functioning relationships are an integral part of Christian leadership.

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<sup>64</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), 152.

<sup>65</sup>Randall E. Otto, “The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54, no. 3 (2001): 373.

<sup>66</sup>Colin E. Gunton, “The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community,” in *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 75.

In order to use the doctrine of Trinity as starting point for filtering the insights of contemporary relational leadership modes, this work will glean insights from the “renaissance of trinitarian thought” that has occurred in recent scholarship.<sup>67</sup> This renaissance refers to the many theologians who have started the process of discovering practical insights from the doctrine of the Trinity. These insights include applications to political structures,<sup>68</sup> life in community,<sup>69</sup> spiritual devotion,<sup>70</sup> physics,<sup>71</sup> and a plethora of other topics. By examining the trinitarian research of the mid-twentieth century until the present, the hope is that a more post-heroic and relational understanding of Christian leadership can be constructed that will place its focus on glorifying the Triune God through Christian community.

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<sup>67</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 33.

<sup>68</sup>See Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

<sup>69</sup>See Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991).

<sup>70</sup>See Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

<sup>71</sup>See Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (New York: Oxford, 1981).

## CHAPTER 2

### A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT LITERATURE

It is well established that a significant revival of trinitarian theology occurred during the twentieth century. Stanley Grenz summarizes the significance of this revival by stating, “Whenever the story of theology in the last hundred years is told, the rediscovery of the doctrine of the Trinity that sprouted and then came to full bloom during the eight decades following the First World War must be given center stage, and the rebirth of trinitarian theology must be presented as one of the most far-reaching theological developments of the century.”<sup>1</sup> However, just one year after Grenz made this comment Fred Sanders was able to lament the “dearth of significant evangelical books that offer worthwhile constructive treatments of the doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>2</sup>

Although less than a decade has passed since Sanders described this “dearth” of a significant evangelical contribution to trinitarian theology, much has changed in recent years. Describing evangelicals in a recent article, Jason Sexton claims, “Being trinitarian today is quite fashionable.”<sup>3</sup> He even comments on the ubiquity of evangelical works on the Trinity that are contributing to an “evangelical trinitarian resurgence.”<sup>4</sup> One of the places this resurgence is most prominent is in the works of practical theology.

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<sup>1</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Fred Sanders, “The State of the Doctrine of the Trinity in Evangelical Theology,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 47, no. 2 (2005): 153.

<sup>3</sup>James S. Sexton, “The State of the Evangelical Trinitarian Resurgence,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54, no. 4 (2011), 788.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



Recent works have appeared relating the Trinity to pastoral ministry,<sup>5</sup> family ministry,<sup>6</sup> and leadership.<sup>7</sup> These ministerial applications of trinitarian doctrine are particularly appropriate to evangelical Christianity.

Despite the fact that evangelicals belatedly began to apply the insights of the trinitarian renaissance, they have always thought about their ministry through a trinitarian framework. Because of this, Fred Sanders says, “Evangelical Christians have been in reality the most thoroughly Trinitarian Christians in the history of the church.”<sup>8</sup> This practical approach to trinitarian doctrine is especially applicable to leadership. Recent insights into the field of leadership have criticized the effectiveness of traditional models of leadership that focus on heroic leaders, command-and-control styles of authority, and efficiency.<sup>9</sup> Many contemporary researchers have shifted the focus in leadership studies to models that value a diffusion of power, shared authority, and teams.<sup>10</sup> Because this new focus in leadership is concerned with the dynamics of interactions within a group, it

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<sup>5</sup>See Philip W. Butin, “Preaching as a Trinitarian Event,” in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009); Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God: The Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service*, Kindle ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005).

<sup>6</sup>See Bruce A. Ware, “The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: The Trinity as Theological Foundation for Family Ministry,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 1, no. 2 (2011): 6-12.

<sup>7</sup>See Thomas F. Tumblin, “The Trinity Applied: Creating Space for Changed Lives,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (2007): 65-73; Dwight J. Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (2007): 43-63.

<sup>8</sup>Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 10.

<sup>9</sup>Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 205-6; Joyce K. Fletcher, “The Paradox of Post Heroic Leadership: Gender Matters” (Center for Gender in Organizations Working Paper, No. 17, Simmons School of Management, Boston, 2003), 5-6; J. Richard Hackman, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 253.

<sup>10</sup>Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, “All Those Years Ago: The Historical Underpinnings of Shared Leadership,” in *Shared Leadership*, 13; Erika E. Small and Joan R. Rentsch, “Shared Leadership in Teams: A Matter of Distribution,” *Journal of Personnel Psychology* 9, no. 4 (2010): 203-11; Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2012), 3-4.

is an appropriate place to apply some of the recent trinitarian insights regarding personhood and identity. The doctrine of the Trinity, with its unique emphasis on the equal ultimacy of both unity and diversity, provides the framework for an understanding of relational identity that is foundational to understanding how Christian work teams can best function in a shared leadership construct.

### **The Trinity and Work Teams**

The concept of team leadership is not new to Christianity. The team model is frequently utilized throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The research of Kenneth Gangel is very helpful in demonstrating the plethora of examples of team leadership in the Bible. After surveying the Bible for many examples of team leadership, Gangel distills fifteen “dimensions” that are representative of biblical team leadership. He says,

Biblical team leadership takes place when divinely appointed men and women accept responsibility for obedience to God’s call. They recognize the importance of preparation time, allowing the Holy Spirit to develop tenderness of heart and skill of hands. They carry out their leadership roles with deep conviction of God’s will, clear theological perspective from His Word, and an acute awareness of the contemporary issues which they and their followers face. Above all, they exercise leadership as servants and stewards, sharing authority with their followers and affirming that leadership is primarily ministry to others, modeling for others and mutual membership with others in Christ’s body.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the apparent comprehensiveness of this definition of biblical team leadership, Gangel’s wordy definition also has some inherent weaknesses. For example, according to Peter Northouse, “A team is a specific type of group composed of members who are interdependent, who share common goals, and who must coordinate their activities to accomplish these goals.”<sup>12</sup> Gangel’s definition of a biblical team says very

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<sup>11</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple Gifts to Build a Unified Vision* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997), 64.

<sup>12</sup>Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 287.

little of the concepts that are central to Northouse's description of a team. This is especially true of ideas such as interdependence, common goals, and coordination. A similar observation can be made using J. Richard Hackman's description of a "real team." He says, "A manager's first responsibility in creating a work team . . . is to make sure that the work to be done is appropriate for team performance and that it requires members to work together interdependently to achieve an identifiable collective outcome."<sup>13</sup> Although Gangel is extremely beneficial in pointing out the ubiquity of leadership teams in the Bible, he seems to miss the mark in regard to some of the most important aspects of team structure.

One of the reasons that Gangel's assessment of teams seems incomplete is because he largely uses the Bible in an exemplary fashion. Rather than searching the Scriptures for biblical principles that relate to work teams, he begins by searching the Scriptures for examples of teams and then attempts to distill principles from these examples. A different approach is necessary for integrating the discipline of leadership with the idea of Christian work teams. Ken Badley encourages an approach to integration that he calls a "perspectival approach." He describes this approach by saying, "The entire educational approach is viewed from a specific perspective. Thus, a worldview supplies the coherence, in the sense that disparate and even conflicting elements cohere as they fit into a larger framework of thought and practice."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, David Powlison describes a systematic approach to integrating Scripture with a particular discipline. He suggests three epistemological priorities for discussing integration. His first priority is to develop a "systematic practical theology" of the issues related to the discipline.<sup>15</sup> This first priority

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<sup>13</sup>Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 43-44.

<sup>14</sup>Ken Badley, "The Faith/Learning Integration Movement in Christian Higher Education: Slogan or Substance?" *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (1994): 25.

<sup>15</sup>David Powlison, "Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies)," in *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 277.

takes precedence over the other priorities of exposing errors in alternative models and learning from defective models.<sup>16</sup>

This systematic or worldview approach to integration is different from a proof-texting or exemplary approach. Paul Kjoss Helseth notices that this type of work depends on the development of a regenerated aesthetic that develops the “formative assumptions of the biblical worldview.”<sup>17</sup> One of these formative assumptions of the biblical worldview is a distinctly trinitarian way of thinking. Trinitarian thinking understands there to be an analogical relation between the being of God and created order.<sup>18</sup> This type of thinking must always maintain a distinction between the Creator and the creature. For this reason it is important to clarify that thoughts and language about the relationship between the Trinity and creation are analogical rather than univocal.<sup>19</sup> Cornelius Van Til summarizes this idea well in discussing the philosophical problem of the one and the many when he says, “In answering this question of the One-and-Many we find it necessary to distinguish between the Eternal One-and-Many and the temporal one and many . . . . We find this necessary of course because our conception of God as the triune God stands at the center of our thinking.”<sup>20</sup> In suggesting that there is a relationship between the Trinity and work teams, it must also be made certain that this relationship is not one of modeling.<sup>21</sup> The work team cannot model the Trinity. Instead trinitarian-

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Paul Kjoss Helseth, “Christ-Centered, Bible-Based, and Second-Rate? ‘Right Reason’ as the Aesthetic Foundation of Christian Education,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 69, no. 2 (2007): 401.

<sup>18</sup>Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Reforming Ontology and Logic in Light of the Trinity: An Application of Van Til’s Idea of Analogy,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 57, no. 1 (1995): 187-88.

<sup>19</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *A Survey of Christian Epistemology* (Hanford, CA: Den Dulk Foundation, 1969), 203.

<sup>20</sup>Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1967), 25.

<sup>21</sup>Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” 52.

thinking supplies the distinctive formative assumptions that shape the way a person thinks about concepts such as personhood, identity, authority, relationality, unity, and community.

### **Foundational Studies in Trinitarian Leadership**

Some Christian writers on leadership have applied these concepts to work teams. Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter summarize some of these writers in their survey of current approaches to Christian leadership. They describe trinitarian leadership as a systems approach to leadership that is similar to Peter Senge's idea of a "learning organization." This refers to "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."<sup>22</sup> In Banks and Ledbetter's estimation, a trinitarian learning organization is one that emphasizes community.<sup>23</sup> In particular this community should emphasize interdependence, personal freedom, relational leadership, flattened hierarchies, and mutual respect.<sup>24</sup>

Other important voices in regard to trinitarian leadership include Benjamin D. Williams and Michael T. McKibben. These authors are writing from a distinctly Eastern Orthodox perspective. Because of this they call their perspective "oriented leadership." In this title they are referencing the Eastern Orthodox practice of baptism in which the infant and sponsor are turned toward the west to reject Satan and then turned (or "oriented")

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<sup>22</sup>Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 3.

<sup>23</sup>Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), loc. 1680-95.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

toward the East to acknowledge salvation in Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> Williams and McKibben summarize this process by saying, “At the time of your Baptism you were *oriented* toward the East, to the direction from which the sun rises and from which the Sun of Righteousness will return . . . . As Orthodox Christians, we need to be certain that our leadership – not to mention our whole life – is *oriented* toward Jesus Christ.”<sup>26</sup> Although these authors are writing from an Orthodox perspective, they nonetheless are using principles that are intended to apply to all Christians.

The doctrine of the Trinity is foundational to the oriented leadership model. According to Williams and McKibben the Trinity is the “starting point” for thinking about Christian leadership.<sup>27</sup> From this starting point these authors extrapolate a triad of perspectives for thinking about leadership. These perspectives include source, implementation, and enthusiasm. These perspectives are associated with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit respectively.<sup>28</sup> Williams and McKibben understand that it is essential to relate leadership to the Trinity because “we cannot explain anything practical or theoretical, apart from the Trinity who created us.”<sup>29</sup> Other authors have also associated the doctrine of creation with the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>30</sup> However, Williams and McKibben are somewhat unique in linking this association to leadership.

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<sup>25</sup>Although Williams and McKibben are writing from an Eastern Orthodox perspective in which infant baptism is practiced, infant baptism itself does not add a significant contribution to their leadership theory. Williams and McKibben are using this practice as an illustration of a focal shift away from the world and toward Christ. This focal shift is the more important feature of oriented leadership and it can be practiced in traditions that practice paedobaptism or credobaptism.

<sup>26</sup>Benjamin D. Williams and Michael T. McKibben, *Oriented Leadership: Why Every Christian Needs It* (Wayne, NJ: Orthodox Christian Publication Center, 1994), 6.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>30</sup>See Stanley J. Grenz, *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theology*, *The Matrix of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 292; Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Van Til,

Building from this trinitarian foundation, Williams and McKibben develop three core concepts: “personhood, hierarchical conciliarity, and life as a communion of love.”<sup>31</sup> When Williams and McKibben talk about personhood, they are frequently reacting against “individualism.” According to these authors, when individualism is applied to leadership, it leads to abusive and dehumanizing behavior that is overly focused on power and control.<sup>32</sup> The problems of individualism are very similar to the problems of heroic leadership that were discussed in chapter 1. Rather than focusing on individualism (or heroism), trinitarian thinking encourages leaders to focus on persons in community and service to one another.<sup>33</sup>

The second core concept of oriented leadership is hierarchical conciliarity. This is the most unique contribution in Williams and McKibben’s work. In describing a hierarchical conciliarity, they redefine hierarchy to refer to “a structure of decision-making” and conciliarity refers to the “dynamic of communications.”<sup>34</sup> They believe that this structure must function as group of teams that interact with one another in an organized structure. They summarize this by saying, “We would define Hierarchical Conciliarity as an organizational dynamic based on the attributes of relationship among the Persons of the Holy Trinity, which affirms both the position of the Father as ‘first among equals’ and the relationship of the three Persons as ‘unique yet inseparable’”<sup>35</sup>

The final core concept in Williams and McKibben’s work refers to the communion of love that exists within the Trinity. This communion should be emulated in

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*The Defense of the Faith*, 27.

<sup>31</sup>Williams and McKibben, *Oriented Leadership*, 83.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 85-99.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 115.

the Christian work team. For Williams and McKibben, love should not be thought of as merely an emotional principle but rather an activity that aims to bind together the community in unity, joy, and peace.<sup>36</sup>

Aspects of Williams and McKibben's triadic description of oriented leadership seems to be forced and to confuse the Creator/creature distinction by encouraging a form of modeling. Ted Peters warns that this type of "model-theory of morality" can lead to selectivity and a misunderstanding of the Trinity.<sup>37</sup> Yet at the same time, it should be maintained that there is some connection between the Trinity and human relations. If human beings are created in the image of God, then there is certainly some aspect of humanity that should reflect the relations within the Godhead. Miroslav Volf gives two conditions that are helpful in considering this relationship. He reminds his readers that trinitarian language should be analogous rather than univocal. "As creatures, human beings can correspond to the uncreated God only in a *creaturely* way; any other correspondences other than creaturely ones would be wholly inappropriate."<sup>38</sup> Secondly, Volf reminds his readers that analogies to the Trinity must take into account the fall and human sin. He summarizes this by saying, "Human beings can correspond to the Triune God only in *historically* appropriate ways; any other correspondences than historically appropriate ones would be misplaced, not because human beings should put up with evil, but because the struggle against it will be effective only if we recognize the depth of its entrenchment is in persons, communities, and structures."<sup>39</sup> Keeping in mind these two limits of trinitarian analogies, it seems that Williams and McKibben are at their strongest

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 116-20.

<sup>37</sup>Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 186.

<sup>38</sup>Miroslav Volf, "'The Trinity is Our Social Program': The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 405.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.



when they discuss the core concepts of oriented leadership. In applying these concepts they are frequently noticing principles that can be emulated rather than attempting to model a triadic description of leadership.

Bruce Ware provides a second foundational study in the description of trinitarian leadership. In his book *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, he presents the Trinity as the pattern for human life and relationships. He summarizes this position by saying,

The doctrine of the Trinity is eminently practical, and the church can benefit much from understanding and modeling its own life, work, and relationships after the Trinity . . . . We are made in the image of God, and so we can live rightly and best only when we mirror in our relationships the relationships true of the eternal God himself. Yes, we are called to be like God in Character, but we are also created to be like God in relationship with one another.<sup>40</sup>

Recognizing this relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and the image of God provides Ware with the framework for carefully considering the internal relationships and roles within the Godhead in order to notice unity and distinction that can be applied to human relationships.

One of the most important aspects of Ware's work is the attention he gives to the authority-submission relationships within the Trinity.<sup>41</sup> In his analysis of the Scriptures he notices that the Son submits to the authority of the Father throughout his ministry and likewise the Father exercises authority over the Son in a way that is loving,

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<sup>40</sup>Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), loc. 215.

<sup>41</sup>It is beyond the scope of this work to analyze and critique the various views regarding the eternal functional subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father. However, it should be conceded that regardless of whether or not subordination is associated with the ontological Trinity, almost all scholars agree in recognizing an element of subordination in the economic Trinity. For purposes of this research, it is sufficient to notice that the authority-submission structures that exist within the economic Trinity are exemplary of the relationships that should be imitated by humans. For further information on the eternal functional subordination debate see Millard J. Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), loc. 6125-6353.

generous, and humble. Ware understands the Trinity to be “the paradigm, the prototype of what it means for the one who is on the top to care deeply and sacrificially about those under his authority.”<sup>42</sup> If the Trinity is understood in a paradigmatic way, as Ware contends, then this understanding of the authority-submission relationships within the Trinity have obvious implications for the workplace environment.

Furthermore, Ware highlights the significance of interconnection and interdependence within the Trinity. He identifies these as “key themes . . . that we need to see lived out increasingly in our lives and churches.”<sup>43</sup> He continues to encourage Christians to give “thoughtful and prayerful attention to building Trinity-like communities of interdependence and interconnection with one another, working with each other, for each other, and doing so with harmony and love for one another.”<sup>44</sup> In drawing attention to these community aspects of trinitarian leadership, the insights of Ware are extremely beneficial for developing a trinitarian foundation for leadership.

However, these insights need further development. In Ware’s short book he is primarily concerned with making applications to the family and the church. In particular, he is concerned with using Trinitarian models to defend a complementarian understanding of family life and religious leadership.<sup>45</sup> In developing a trinitarian foundation of leadership the goal will be to develop the insights regarding authority-submission relationships and the interconnectivity of “Trinity-like communities” in a way that is applicable to a broader range of workplace environments than those which Ware initially applies these insights. In order to make these applications, it is necessary to move

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<sup>42</sup>Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, loc. 770.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, loc. 1912.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>Wayne Grudem also uses the doctrine of the Trinity to defend complementarianism in a similar way. See Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 45-49.

beyond exemplary and modular ways of imitating the Trinity and instead to develop a distinctive way of thinking that is founded on the Trinity. This distinctive trinitarian way of thinking will provide a method for understanding how interdependence and interconnectivity is possible in work-place environments.

Likewise, Ware's helpful explanation of the authority-submission relationships within the Trinity are significant in further developing a dialogue with the shared leadership literature. Williams, McKibben, and Ware all notice the importance of authority and submission within the Trinity. Shared leadership frequently emphasizes flattened hierarchies, but these writings emphasize the importance of maintaining an authority structure. A biblical shared leadership construct that is founded on trinitarian thinking will not necessarily abandon all vertical dimensions of leadership. Significantly, some of the literature on shared leadership also recognizes the importance of this concession to a completely flat hierarchical structure.<sup>46</sup> This model of shared leadership that is interconnected yet compatible with vertical dimensions of leadership looks similar to the hierarchical conciliarity described by Williams and McKibben.

A final foundational study in trinitarian leadership is presented by George Cladis. In *Leading the Team-Based Church*, he builds a model of teamwork that is founded on the doctrine of Trinity. He believes that the Trinity provides a helpful image of human community. In this image, "hierarchical distinctions in human community give way to a sense of the body of Christ, with each part equal and important (1 Cor 12-14). The individual persons of the church are distinct parts yet are bound together in a common sharing."<sup>47</sup> This description bears some similarities to Williams and McKibben,

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<sup>46</sup>Craig L. Pearce and Henry P. Sims, "Shared Leadership: Toward a Multi-level Theory of Leadership," in *Advances in Interdisciplinary Studies of Work Teams*, ed. Michael M. Beyerlein, Douglas A. Johnson, and Susan T. Beyerlein (New York: JAI, 2000), 135.

<sup>47</sup>George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 5.

but there is more emphasis on a flattened hierarchy. In Cladis's concept of team-leadership, the trinitarian doctrine of perichoresis is central. He believes that collaboration between team members should be perichoretic. By this he means that, "A collaborative team is one that shares its resources and gifts in order to move in harmony toward a divine purpose. This sharing and movement imitate the person of God in holy fellowship."<sup>48</sup>

This emphasis on "movement" and "sharing" in Cladis's concept of a team stems from his definition of perichoresis. According to Cladis, perichoresis means "circle dance." Because of this definition, "A *perichoretic* image of the Trinity is that of the three persons of God in constant movement in a circle that implies intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love."<sup>49</sup> This vague definition of perichoresis allows Cladis to expand the meaning of the word so that it can cover a very wide range of topics. These topics include covenant, vision, culture creation, collaboration, trust, empowerment, and learning.<sup>50</sup> Although many of these topics can be related to a normal understanding of perichoresis many of them are forced to fit by a vague definition.

A more typical understanding of perichoresis includes the idea of making space for the other.<sup>51</sup> In this sense perichoresis refers to mutual indwelling, interpenetration of persons and coinherence.<sup>52</sup> Because of Cladis's very vague use of the term perichoresis, he misses some of the most important concepts that could be related to

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 92.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 31-47.

<sup>51</sup>Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 102.

<sup>52</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 1997), 198-99; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, 1st U.S. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 174-75; Randall E. Otto, "The Use and Abuse of Perichoresis in Recent Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 54, no. 3 (2001): 368-72; Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 102.

leadership. In particular, Cladis fails to associate perichoresis with anthropology in any significant way. Noticing that many theologians working within the trinitarian revival focus on the doctrine of perichoresis, Stanley Grenz comments,

Insofar as this emergent trinitarianism elevates the perichoretic life of the three persons as comprising the one God, the renewal of trinitarian theology entails a more profound understanding of God as inherently relational and dynamic. Moreover, the rebirth of trinitarian theology has opened the door for the doctrine of God, understood now as the delineation of the relationality of the trinitarian persons, to take its rightful role within anthropology, which role it had abdicated to the human sciences. In short, the retrieval of the doctrine of the trinity has paved the way for a fully theological anthropology.<sup>53</sup>

By failing to associate perichoresis with coinherence or what Thomas Torrance calls the “onto-relational concept of the divine persons”<sup>54</sup>, Cladis misses the mark in many of his applications. His applications tend to be only parenthetically related to perichoresis. His focus is more on general principles of good leadership. Subjects covering the relational dynamics within teams are not central to his description of leadership.

### **Shared Leadership**

A growing body of research has contributed significantly to the study of the relational dynamics within teams. This research fits broadly under the title of “shared leadership.” Although this body of research does not directly mention the doctrine of the Trinity, the emphasis on interteam dynamics is very open to reflection on a trinitarian understanding of anthropology and ontology. Shared leadership refers to the “dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both.”<sup>55</sup> Central to this understanding of leadership is a reframing of the typical description of leadership.

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<sup>53</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, *The Matrix of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 16.

<sup>54</sup>Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 102.

<sup>55</sup>Pearce and Conger, “All Those Years Ago,” 1.

Rather than describing leadership as a hierarchical influence structure as is frequently associated with traditional forms of leadership such as the skills approach to leadership,<sup>56</sup> shared leadership focuses on the dynamic social process within a group of people.<sup>57</sup> “Whereas vertical leadership entails the process of one individual projecting downward influence on individuals, shared leadership entails the process of shared influence between and among individuals.”<sup>58</sup> Although most of the work on shared leadership has not been done from a distinctly Christian perspective, some Christian perspectives are foundational for understanding how shared leadership relates to a trinitarian foundation of leadership.

In his research on biblical eldership, Alexander Strauch describes a system of leadership that he relates to shared leadership. Strauch believes that the New Testament describes a unique method of oversight in the church that does not depend on one individual. This model of leadership uses a group of individuals that are open to one another, accountable to one another, and dependent on one another.<sup>59</sup> Strauch contrasts this style of leadership with what he calls imperial pastors who shrink from accountability and dependence on one another.<sup>60</sup> This description of leadership focuses on the relational dependency of a plurality of leaders. Because of this focus, it bears many similarities to what is frequently called “shared leadership.”

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<sup>56</sup>Northouse, *Leadership*, 43.

<sup>57</sup>Joyce K. Fletcher and Katrin Käufer, “Shared Leadership: Paradox and Possibility,” in *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Why of Leadership*, ed. Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 22; Michael D. Koccolowski, “Shared Leadership: Is It Time for a Change?” *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 3, no. 1 (2010): 24; Christina L. Wasenaar and Craig L. Pearce, “The Nature of Shared Leadership,” in *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. David V. Day and John Antonakis (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 363-64; Michael Shane Wood, “Determinants of Shared Leadership in Management Teams,” *International Journal of Leadership Studies* 1, no. 1 (2005): 64.

<sup>58</sup>Pearce and Sims, “Shared Leadership,” 116.

<sup>59</sup>Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 38-44.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 44.

Some researchers have noticed the development of multiple strands of shared leadership. One style of shared leadership emphasizes empowerment and autonomy and a second style of shared leadership emphasizes influences within the context of social interaction.<sup>61</sup> Although both of these styles of leadership might be referred to as shared leadership, they are not both equally applicable to trinitarian leadership. If the Trinity is foundational to leadership, then open mutual relationships must be prioritized over closed autonomous relationship. A mark of a healthy Christian team is good interactions among team members.<sup>62</sup> The goal of trinitarian leadership is not autonomous contributors, but relational collaborators. Like a collaborative understanding of shared leadership, trinitarian leadership “occurs when all members of team are fully engaged in the leadership of the team and are not hesitant to influence and guide their fellow team members in an effort to maximize the potential of the team as a whole.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Identity and Leadership**

Some have noticed that this type of openness to others and willingness to influence peers requires a more social construction of the self than what is typically associated with western cultures. Noticing that shared leadership requires a shift in values from an individualistic to a collective orientation has caused some to comment on the implicit tension. It is difficult for organizations to develop a climate that values openness “because American work culture has traditionally promoted individualism as opposed to

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<sup>61</sup>C. Shawn Burke, Stephen M. Fiore, and Eduardo Salas, “The Role of Shared Cognition in Enabling Shared Leadership and Adaptability,” in *Shared Leadership*, 105; Anson Seers, Tiffany Keller, and James M Wilkerson, “Can Team Members Share Leadership? Foundations in Research and Theory,” in *Shared Leadership*, 79-80.

<sup>62</sup>Thom S. Rainer, “Selecting and Building Leadership Teams,” in *Christian Leadership Essentials: A Handbook for Managing Christian Organizations*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2011), 193.

<sup>63</sup>Craig L. Pearce, “The Future of Leadership: Combining Vertical and Shared Leadership to Transform Knowledge Work,” *Academy of Management Executive* 18, no. 1 (2004): 48.

collective orientation.”<sup>64</sup> This can create some resistance to the development of shared leadership. Cultures that have traditionally valued independence can especially encounter resistance because “in some cases, team members might resist sharing the lead because of personal ambition or narcissism.”<sup>65</sup> Kenwyn K. Smith and David N. Berg refer to this tension between personal ambition and group life as the “paradox of identity.” They say, “The paradox of identity is expressed by the struggle of individuals and the group to establish a unique and meaningful identity where each is an integral part of the other.”<sup>66</sup> However, if shared leadership is to work it is imperative that team members develop an open interaction toward others that is willing to influence and submit to accountability. Because shared leadership cannot exist unless team members are prepared to exert lateral influence, it is important that members understand this to be a performance expectation.<sup>67</sup>

Several other writers on shared leadership have noticed this paradoxical relationship between team membership and individual ambition that can be called the paradox of group life.<sup>68</sup> Joyce K. Fletcher and Katrin Käufer notice three paradoxes that are likely to occur in shared leadership contexts. The first paradox notices that hierarchical leaders are charged with creating less hierarchical organizations.<sup>69</sup> In describing the second paradox, they say, “shared leadership practices ‘get disappeared.’”<sup>70</sup> By this they are referring to the observation that relational theory is

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<sup>64</sup>Burke, Fiore, and Salas, “Shared Cognition,” 116.

<sup>65</sup>Craig L. Pearce, “Follow the Leaders,” *Wall Street Journal/MIT Sloan*, July 7, 2008.

<sup>66</sup>Kenwyn K. Smith and David N. Berg, *Paradoxes of Group Life: Understanding Conflict, Paralysis, and Movement in Group Dynamics* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 90.

<sup>67</sup>Jonathan F Cox, Craig L. Pearce, and Monica L. Perry, “Toward a Model of Shared Leadership and Distributed Influence in the Innovation Process: How Shared Leadership Can Enhance New Product Development Team Dynamics and Effectiveness,” in *Shared Leadership*, 53.

<sup>68</sup>Smith and Berg, *Paradoxes of Group Life*, 89-90.

<sup>69</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 24-25.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.



foreign to many organizational cultures and that the organizational system itself will act on the behavior.<sup>71</sup> Stated differently, team members tend to dismiss the relational aspects of the help they received once they have accomplished their goals.<sup>72</sup> The third paradox that Fletcher and Käufer notice is that it takes different skills to get a job than it does to do a job well in shared leadership context.<sup>73</sup> This observation refers to the idea that resume building and interviews are frequently focused on individual success and differentiation while doing a job well in a shared leadership context means that team members must be capable of celebrating the success of others and collaborating.

In order to alleviate the tension caused by these paradoxes, Fletcher and Käufer utilize a feminist relational model of identity. Both of these authors believe the Stone Center relational model is foundational to understanding the relational self.<sup>74</sup> This theory posits, “Connection is at the core of human growth and development. Isolation is seen as the primary source of human suffering.”<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, Stone Center Relational Theory describes connection in feminist terms.<sup>76</sup> This theory believes that most organizations are based on masculine models that “privilege separation and independence rather than interdependence and collectivity.”<sup>77</sup> In this scheme of things it is important for teams to develop a more feminine approach to relationships to increase organizational health. According to Stone Center Relational Theory, “relationality is not a gender-neutral

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<sup>71</sup>Joyce K. Fletcher, “Relational Theory in the Workplace,” in *The Complexity of Connection: Writings From the Stone Center’s Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*, ed. Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker, and Linda M. Hartling, Kindle ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2004), loc. 3901.

<sup>72</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 25.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 27-30.

<sup>75</sup>Judith V. Jordan and Maureen Walker, “Introduction,” in *The Complexity of Connection*, loc. 50.

<sup>76</sup>Fletcher, “The Paradox of Post Heroic Leadership,” 11.

<sup>77</sup>Fletcher, “Relational Theory in the Workplace,” Kindle loc. 3721.

concept.”<sup>78</sup> This framework affirms a model of development that associates males with power/control and females with empathy/love.<sup>79</sup> Because of these foundational premises, Fletcher and Käufer believe that the integration of more feminist ideals in the workplace is necessary to develop a greater emphasis on connectivity and relationality in organizations.

A second model for alleviating the tensions created by the paradoxes of group life is posited by Michael A. Hogg. In his social identity theory of leadership he utilizes a social self-concept that suggests that groups derive their “descriptive and evaluative properties” in relation to other groups.<sup>80</sup> This can be summarized by saying, “*leader* and *follower* are interdependent roles embedded within a social system bounded by common group or category membership.”<sup>81</sup>

Because groups of people are defined by their relationship to each other within a team the leadership dynamic is composed of “three core processes that operate in conjunction.”<sup>82</sup> These three core processes are “prototypicality, social attraction, and attribution and information processing.”<sup>83</sup> Prototypicality refers a relationship between collective orientation and influence. Those members of a group who are most prototypical (or representative of group values) will have greater influence in the group.<sup>84</sup> According to the social identity theory of leadership, prototypicality is always associated

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<sup>78</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 30.

<sup>79</sup>Judith V. Jordan, “Relational Resilience,” in *The Complexity of Connection*, loc. 403.

<sup>80</sup>Michael A. Hogg, “A Social Identity Theory of Leadership,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 5, no. 3 (2001): 186.

<sup>81</sup>Mary Uhl-Bien, “Relational Leadership Theory: Exploring the Social Processes of Leadership and Organizing,” *Leadership Quarterly* 17, no. 6 (2006): 659.

<sup>82</sup>Hogg, “A Social Identity Theory of Leadership,” 188.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup>Barbara Van Knippenberg and others, “Research in Leadership, Self, and Identity: A Sample of the Present and a Glimpse of the Future,” *Leadership Quarterly* 16 (2005): 497.

with the correlative property of depersonalization. In depersonalization, “people are not viewed as unique and multifaceted individuals but as matches to the relevant ingroup or outgroup prototype; prototypicality, not individuality, is the focus of attention.”<sup>85</sup>

According to Hogg this refers to a perceptual change and not an ontological change. He is careful not to associate “depersonalization” with “deindividuation” or “dehumanization.”<sup>86</sup>

The other two core processes are built on the foundation of prototypicality. Social attraction refers to the ideas that “consensual depersonalized liking, particularly over time, confirms differential popularity and public endorsement of the leader.”<sup>87</sup> Attribution and information processing refers to the idea that prototypicality allows people to think of others as leaders as they conform more to the expectations of a particular role.<sup>88</sup>

Both Stone Center Relational Theory and the Social Identity Theory of Leadership operate on the principle that “the self is a key organizing principle in human sensemaking”<sup>89</sup> This recognition is very important in developing a shared leadership construct because in the shared leadership context the dynamics of a group take priority over the personality of an individual leader.<sup>90</sup> However, both of these theories also suffer from inherent weaknesses. Stone Center Relational Theory attempts to solve the paradoxes of group life in organizations by presenting a theory that rests on a paradoxical

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<sup>85</sup>Hogg, “A Social Identity Theory of Leadership,” 187.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 189.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 190.

<sup>89</sup>David V. Day and Michelle M. Harrison, “A Multilevel, Identity-Based Approach to Leadership Development,” *Human Resource Management Review* 17, no. 4 (2007): 371.

<sup>90</sup>Marissa L. Shuffler and others, “Leading Teams: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership*, ed. Michael G. Rumsey (New York: Oxford, 2013), 153.

foundation. It seems self-defeating to posit a theory that emphasizes connectedness while at the same time building this theory on a foundation of isolation and differentiation. Yet this is precisely what Stone Center Relational Theory does when it uses feminist principles to make connectivity an issue of gender. A new theory of connectivity and relationality that builds on the foundation of personhood rather than gender is necessary.

Similarly, the Social Identity Theory of Leadership rests on a paradoxical foundation. The Social Identity Theory of Leadership presents the relationship between group life and individuality as if it were a zero sum relationship. In this framework of thinking the more a person conforms himself to the group, the less individuality he maintains. Although this theory attempts to make a distinction between perception and reality by distinguishing between the words “depersonalization” and “dehumanization”, it is still a problematic theory. This distinction rests on the premise that there is a radical difference between perception and reality. It is necessary to formulate a new theory of social identity that allows for an integral relationship between perception and reality.

### **The Foundations of Trinitarian Leadership**

Trinitarian thinking allows a much more consistent theory of shared identity to be formulated. Trinitarian thinking does not allow the researcher to make a distinction between the individual and the person as is done in the Social Identity Theory of Leadership. As Williams and McKibben rightly notice, “To be created in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity is to be a *person*.”<sup>91</sup> For this reason trinitarian leadership cannot allow for the type of “depersonalization” called for in the Social Identity Theory of Leadership. Similarly, the concept of creation in the image of God does not allow for the type of gender division that is associated with Stone Center Relational Theory. Since both male and female are created in the image of God the relationship between them is

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<sup>91</sup>Williams and McKibben, *Oriented Leadership*, 14.

intended to reflect the glory of God.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, it is not appropriate to prioritize the relationality of one sex above the other.

In developing a theory of identity that is applicable to trinitarian leadership four foundational concepts are helpful to consider. These concepts illustrate how the doctrine of the Trinity relates to ontology and anthropology. Colin Gunton, John Zizioulas, Miroslav Volf, and Stanley Grenz have developed helpful systems that can be used as a foundation for developing an understanding of the self for trinitarian leadership. These systems can be summarized respectively as, perichoretic creation, being as communion, catholic personality, and the ecclesial self.

The most sweeping of these applications of trinitarian thought is made by Colin Gunton. He develops an ontology that applies the doctrine of the Trinity to all created reality. In *The One, The Three, and The Many*, Gunton attempts to establish a trinitarian method for evaluating culture. He notices that both modernity and postmodernity suffer from the same defect. In the end both reduce all things to a valueless homogeneity. Modernism does so by emphasizing conformity to universal principles and postmodernism does so by emphasizing all particulars equally.<sup>93</sup> Gunton's solution to this problem is to emphasize the doctrine of God as creator. "Modern relativism and scepticism are . . . in part the outcome of the failure of a doctrine of God, and particularly of a doctrine of God as creator."<sup>94</sup> In making this comment Gunton is referring to the idea that "conceptions of unity and diversity of nature derive in some way from an understanding of the unity-in-trinity of God."<sup>95</sup> He also applies this

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<sup>92</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 269.

<sup>93</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), 69.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>95</sup>Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, 139.

understanding of nature directly to the doctrine of perichoresis by explaining “the character of the universe as a *perichoresis* of interrelated dynamic systems.”<sup>96</sup> He further clarifies this point by saying,

We consider the world as an order of things, dynamically related to each other in time and space. It is perichoretic in that everything in it contributes to the being of everything else, enabling everything to be what it distinctively is. The dynamism of mutual constitutiveness derives from the world’s being a dynamic order that is summoned into being and directed towards its perfection by the free creativity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup>

In asserting the perichoretic nature of creation, he is clear to make the point that he is speaking analogically. He is careful not to confuse the creation with the creator. Ideas and systems are not “one” in the same sense that God is “One.” Nor are particulars and persons distinct in the same way that the three Persons of the Trinity are. Gunton frequently uses the idea of “echo” to refer to this analogical relationship. He refers to the dynamics of earthly systems as a “conceptual echo of trinitarian theology.”<sup>98</sup> Similarly he refers to the church as a “temporal echo of the eternal community that God is.”<sup>99</sup> He establishes this theology of an echo by saying, “If God is God, he is the source of all being, meaning and truth. It would seem reasonable to suppose that all being, meaning and truth is, even as created and distinct from God, in some way marked by its relatedness to its creator.”<sup>100</sup>

This idea of perichoretic creation establishes a foundation for thinking about systems in a unique way. Applying a perichoretic framework to systems thinking

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<sup>96</sup>Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 151.

<sup>97</sup>Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 166.

<sup>98</sup>Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 151.

<sup>99</sup>Colin E. Gunton, “The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community,” in *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 75.

<sup>100</sup>Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 167.

encourages the observer to see a relationship between systems and persons. Neither the system nor the person should be seen as prior to the other. There is a type of “equal ultimacy” that exists between the system and the person.<sup>101</sup> “Perichoresis requires both the ultimacy of the many – for there must be three to indwell one another before there can be a doctrine of perichoresis – and the ultimacy of the one – for in addition to the fact that mutual indwelling means oneness, perichoresis also insists that the three do not exist first as separate substances which come into relation at some later time, but they exist in mutual relationship from the beginning.”<sup>102</sup>

A second relational understanding is found in John Zizioulas. He develops his system of “being as communion” from the study of the Cappadocian description of the Trinity.<sup>103</sup> Zizioulas believes that the Cappadocians contributed to a “historic revolution” when they associated idea of person with *hypostasis*.<sup>104</sup> This revolutionized thought because previously *hypostasis* had been used as a synonym for substance. Through the Cappadocian association, “communion becomes an ontological concept.”<sup>105</sup> By this Zizioulas means that “Nothing in existence is conceivable in itself . . . . It is communion which makes beings ‘be’”<sup>106</sup> Applying this theology to work teams gives dignity to the contributions of team members. It serves to remind the member that “true personhood

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<sup>101</sup>The idea of “equal ultimacy” between universals and particulars is central to the theological thinking of Cornelius Van Til. See Cornelius Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1978), 23.

<sup>102</sup>Ralph Smith, *Paradox and Truth: Rethinking Van Til on the Trinity* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2002), 65.

<sup>103</sup>John D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 44.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>105</sup>John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985), 17.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*

arises not from one's individualistic isolation from others but from love and relationship with others, from communion."<sup>107</sup> Personhood requires openness to others and a desire for communion.<sup>108</sup>

Miroslav Volf's idea of catholic personality provides a third foundational concept for understanding identity in trinitarian leadership. Although Volf disagrees with the way that Zizioulas ultimately grounds particularity in the person of the Father, he still agrees with Zizioulas's larger point that personhood is a relational concept.<sup>109</sup> Volf develops his idea of catholic personality in the context of ecclesiology. His goal is to defend the catholicity of free churches against criticism from Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians.<sup>110</sup> In developing his definition of catholicity he notices that catholicity implies a relationship between unity and plurality. Because of this, he says, "Any church which claims catholicity must include plurality in its unity and find in its plurality its unity."<sup>111</sup>

After defending particularity in the church, Volf moves on to explain the idea of catholic personality. He says, "Just as each church is a catholic church because in it the totality of Christ is present, likewise each believer is a catholic person because in each one the totality of Christ is present by the Holy Spirit."<sup>112</sup> Thus it is through union with

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<sup>107</sup>Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity," 58-59.

<sup>108</sup>John D. Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28, no. 5 (1975): 407-8.

<sup>109</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, ed. Alan G. Padgett, Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 87. Volf believes that because Zizioulas grounds the personhood of the Son in the personhood of the Father, he does not allow for the Son to maintain his own particularity. Furthermore, Volf is concerned that because Zizioulas understands all people to be constituted in an analogous way, "persons would disappear in 'one vast ocean of being,' namely, in the divine being."

<sup>110</sup>Miroslav Volf, "The Catholicity of 'Two or Three': Free Church Reflections on the Catholicity of the Local Church," *Jurist* 52 (1992): 526.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 528.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 542.



Christ that individuals are made capable of experiencing community. Volf develops this point further to make the point that the experience of community involves connection to other people, not simply connection to an organization. He says, “Unlike monads without windows, persons are constituted by God by means of their social relationships . . . . The ecclesial person is not constituted by the Spirit of God by means of his or her relationship to the whole, whatever might be its nature, but by means of the person’s multiple relations to other concrete Christians.”<sup>113</sup>

In terms of identity, Volf calls this description of the person a “de-centered centered self.”<sup>114</sup> The self is de-centered because it has been crucified with Christ and centered because it has been re-centered in union with Christ.<sup>115</sup> “The new center opens the self up, makes it capable and willing to give itself for others and to receive others in itself.”<sup>116</sup> This willingness to receive others in the self is applicable not only to perceived friends but especially to those who are perceived as to be at enmity.<sup>117</sup>

The final foundational premise in a trinitarian understanding of leadership is supplied by Stanley Grenz’s idea of the ecclesial self. Grenz develops the idea of the ecclesial self in the context of describing the image of God. He describes the ecclesial self as an eschatological concept. It is through union with Christ (the perfect image of God) and the sanctifying work of the Spirit that a person fully becomes the image of God. “Although this is the case already in the here and now, the participation in the divine life that constitutes the ecclesial self remains ultimately future, and hence it is present in this

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., 544.

<sup>114</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 71.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 146.

age in a proleptic manner. The ecclesial self, therefore, is ultimately eschatological.”<sup>118</sup> This linking of the ecclesial self and union with Christ is a reminder that “personal identity arises *extra se*”<sup>119</sup> Because of this Grenz believes, “The image of God does not lie in the individual per se, but in the relationality of persons in community.”<sup>120</sup> Although Grenz’s understanding of the image of God provides a helpful reminder of the communal and relational aspects of the image, care needs to be taken that the image of God is not understood in communal terms only. This understanding of the image runs the risk devaluing the dignity of individuals.

Although these ideas cannot be received uncritically, taken together, these four premises of perichoretic being, being as communion, catholic personality, and the ecclesial self lay the anthropological foundation for a trinitarian understanding of leadership. These premises create a context for discussing how the doctrine of Trinity and the self relate to leadership ideas such as a learning cognitive frame, openness and accountability to others, and the development of a shared vision. Because the trinitarian description of these topics rests on an ontology that emphasizes the relational aspects of creation and the equiprimordial relationship between universals and particulars, it will inevitably look much different than the existing theories that attempt to describe the place of the self in a shared leadership context. The Social Identity Theory of Leadership prioritizes community over personhood. Because of this it values depersonalization in favor of prototypicality. Conversely, Stone Center Relational Theory prioritizes the traits of a particular gender. Because of this it presents a paradoxical description of leadership that calls for connectivity yet foundationally rests on differentiation. The trinitarian

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<sup>118</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 322.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>120</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, “The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Theology of the *Imago Dei* in the Postmodern Context,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton, and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 89.

foundation of leadership presents a model that equally values both connectivity and individuality. From this foundation, people are encouraged to discover their true self as they work together with others in community. The following chapter will provide the exegetical and theological basis for thinking about these relational concepts in a distinctly evangelical way.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SELF

In the previous chapter, a review was conducted of the current literature on shared leadership. This review examined both Christian and non-Christian perspectives on leadership theory, and in the process noticed that shared leadership theory requires a different conception of the self than that which is frequently utilized in contemporary thinking. Although certain authors (in particular Joyce Fletcher, Katrin Käufer, and Michael Hogg) have attempted to address this disparity, a significant gap in the literature exists regarding the application of a distinctly Christian understanding of the self that can be applied to shared leadership. According to Joyce Fletcher, developing the relational understanding of the self that is necessary in a shared leadership context requires a new set of beliefs and a different mental model.<sup>1</sup> In light of this insight, it is posited that the application of trinitarian thinking to anthropology provides the best foundation for developing this new set of beliefs regarding the self.

The goal of this chapter is to examine, evaluate, and build upon the four foundational trinitarian concepts that were mentioned in the conclusion of the previous chapter. These foundational concepts include (1) perichoretic being, (2) being in communion, (3) the ecclesial self, and (4) catholic personality. Some have voiced concern that an overemphasis on the relational aspects of anthropology creates a reductionist understanding of the self that fails to adequately account for its particularity.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Joyce K. Fletcher, "The Paradox of Post Heroic Leadership: Gender Matters" (Center for Gender in Organizations Working Paper, No. 17, Simmons School of Management, Boston, 2003), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Michael S. Horton, "Image and Office: Human Personhood and the Covenant," in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 179.

As with other relational understandings of the self, these four concepts can be dangerous in this regard if they are not tempered by a thoroughly biblical anthropology. Since it is central to the idea of trinitarian leadership that has thus far been outlined that universality and particularity be considered equiprimal, it is especially important that these concepts are not understood in a way that disregards particularity. In order to ground these concepts in biblical anthropology they will be reevaluated from the standpoint of the core biblical doctrines that are typically associated with Christian identity. These doctrines include the image of God, union with Christ, and covenant.

### **The Concept of the Self**

Before discussing these doctrines in detail, it is important to determine exactly what is meant by the key concept of “self.” A helpful definition is provided by Janet L. Surrey. She calls the self, “A construct useful in describing the organization of a person’s experience and construction of reality which illuminates the purpose and directionality of her/his behavior.”<sup>3</sup> This definition of the self highlights two important components that need to be explored. These two important components include a person’s understanding of reality and purposeful behavior. Neither of these components function alone. A person’s behavior is related to his or her understanding of reality. In one sense, this concept seems axiomatic. Obviously a person will act in accord with his or her understanding of reality. However, in another sense, this concept can be very challenging. In Romans 1:18-23 a slightly different description of this relationship is presented. According to these verses, behavior also determines a person’s understanding of reality. In particular, the behavior of rebellion against God will negatively affect a person’s understanding of reality.

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<sup>3</sup>Janet L. Surrey, “The ‘Self-in-relation’: A Theory of Women’s Development” (Working Paper, 13, Centers for Women, Stone Center for Developmental Services and Studies, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, 1985), 1.

Of primary concern for this chapter is the source of these two facets of self. Two fundamentally different conceptions of the self have been drawn: the centered self and the de-centered self. The centered self can be understood as self-contained. Because it is self-contained, its conception of reality and behavior are internally generated. The de-centered self is positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum. It can be understood as a socially constructed self in which understanding and behavior are determined by the relational web in which a person is situated.<sup>4</sup>

A goal of developing a relational anthropology is to highlight the importance of both the centered and the de-centered self. Rather than thinking of these two ideas as polar opposites at the end of a spectrum, it is important to consider these ideas in an equi-primal relationship. The centered self carries the biblically important notion of accountability. If the self is socially determined, then a person could claim that he or she were not ultimately responsible because social forces that were out of his or her control had a causative influence on behavior. This absence of individual accountability and responsibility is clearly not the biblical presentation of the self (Matt 12:36; 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:12). For this reason, Christian reflection on the self must retain an emphasis on the centered self.

However, an overemphasis on the centered self can also be problematic. If the self is understood to be completely self-contained, then there is no room for the individual to be shaped by the community. Adversity to this understanding to the self is particularly related to a libertarian understanding of freedom that does not allow for any outside influence on the will. However, the biblical description of freedom is different than the libertarian description. God alone has absolute freedom, and longing for this type

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<sup>4</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, *The Matrix of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 16-17.

of freedom is akin to an attempt to undermine God's authority.<sup>5</sup> The biblical understanding of the self clearly emphasizes the importance of community (1 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:18-20; Eph 4:4; Heb 10:24).

While the centered self emphasizes the importance of individual accountability and responsibility, the de-centered self emphasizes the importance of community and the sovereignty of God in situations and relationships. Rather than polarizing these concepts, the Bible emphasizes the importance of both the individual and communitarian aspects of human life. The tendency of many thinkers is to submerge one of these aspects into the other. In contrast to this tendency, the doctrine of the Trinity serves as a reminder that both unity and particularity are equiprimal in regard to God. When this doctrine is applied to anthropology, the self is understood to be an echo of the personal relationships that exist within God. Three foundational theological concepts for explaining this analogical relationship between the being of God and anthropology are the doctrines of the image of God, unity with Christ, and covenant. In examining these doctrines, an exegetical and theological framework of the self can be developed that can be used to evaluate alternative perspectives.

### **The Image of God**

The image of God is the doctrine that is most frequently associated with developing a theological anthropology. Unfortunately, it is also a doctrine in which very little consensus exists regarding its meaning. This problem is compounded by the infrequency of references to the image of God in the Scriptures. The most significant text for understanding the image of God is Genesis 1:26-27. Apart from this text, the image is only mentioned in two other portions of the Old Testament (Gen 5:2 and 9:6). Despite

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<sup>5</sup>Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 192-93.

these scant references, the emphasis theologians have placed on this doctrine demonstrates, “that the importance of this doctrine is out of all proportion to the laconic treatment it receives in the Old Testament.”<sup>6</sup>

One reason that this doctrine is given a seemingly disproportionate amount of theological weight is due to the New Testament identification of Christ with the image of God (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15, Heb 1:3). This association magnifies the theological significance of the image of God and gives the image of God a distinctly Christological and redemptive-historical interpretation. The preeminence of Christ as the image of God encourages interpreters to designate “him as the true image of God and therefore as the true human”<sup>7</sup>

However, even when the New Testament focus on Christ as the image of God is considered, references to the image of God are relatively limited. Because of this, Edward M. Curtis notices, “Commentators have not been able to agree on what the decisive clues are, and the interpretation of the image of God has often reflected the *Zeitgeist* and has followed whatever emphasis happened to be current in psychology, or philosophy, or sociology, or theology.”<sup>8</sup> In order to rise above the *zeitgeist* it is important to consider the various understandings of the image of God in history and to reflect on these historical interpretations in light of Scripture. By reflecting on the historical interpretations in light of Scripture, an understanding of the image can be formulated that is not only looking to the felt needs of the contemporary culture, but is also considerate of the broader theological context. This understanding of the image of God can then be more carefully applied to a relational anthropology.

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<sup>6</sup>D. J. A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 53.

<sup>7</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 216.

<sup>8</sup>Edward M. Curtis, “Image of God,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992).



## Substantive Interpretations

Historically, theories have been posited that understand the image of God in substantive or functional terms.<sup>9</sup> The most traditional of these understandings is a version of the substantive position.<sup>10</sup> Occasionally, this understanding of the image of God looks to some physical aspect within humanity as representative of the image of God within humanity, but more frequently it is associated with particular spiritual qualities such as reason, self-consciousness, or self-determination.<sup>11</sup> This interpretation of the image of God is exemplified by Irenaeus, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas.<sup>12</sup> Each of these theologians identified the image of God with particular cognitive or volitional aspects of the person.

Despite the prevalence of this particular understanding of the image of God for a large portion of church history, many contemporary theologians are critical of this perspective. Gentry and Wellum are among these contemporary critics. According to them, “The traditional view is inadequate because it is not the result of grammatical and historical interpretation of the text. Rather, it is based largely on a kind of reasoning from

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<sup>9</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 520-31; John S. Hammett, “Human Nature,” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2007), 372-77; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 68-73; Richard Lints, “Imaging and Idolatry: The Sociality of Personhood in the Canon,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 206.

<sup>10</sup>Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 185-86.

<sup>11</sup>Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 55-56.

<sup>12</sup>Although each of these theologians typifies the traditional substantial understanding of the image of God, there is variation in their descriptions of the image. Irenaeus focused on reason and will as the primary characteristics of the image of God. According to Irenaeus, these were the characteristics that remained in persons as the image of God after the fall (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.6.1). Augustine had a slightly different emphasis. He believed that the image of God consisted of reason, will, and memory (Augustine *On the Trinity* 14.8.11). Thomas Aquinas narrowed the focus on reason, in a way that emphasized the dynamic rather than static aspects of the image of God. He did this by identifying change in the image of God as it progressed through the stages of nature, loving God, and perfection (Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* 1.93.2-3). See Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 142-61; Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 33-42.

systematic theology.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Erickson notices that the traditional understanding of the image is fueled by the *zeitgeist*. He notices, “During more subjectively oriented times, reason receives less attention. In a period such as the latter part of the twentieth century, with its strongly voluntaristic and visceral emphases, reason plays a lesser role.”<sup>14</sup> Together, both of these criticisms emphasize that the traditional version of the substantive understanding of the image of God is susceptible to cultural syncretism because it is founded on a form of rationalism rather than Scripture.

Although Gentry, Wellum, and Erickson are all somewhat critical of the traditional understanding of the image of God, they all affirm some version of the substantive understanding of the image.<sup>15</sup> Millard Erickson’s summary of the image of God is particularly helpful in explaining the substantive understanding of the image. He says, “The image is something in the very nature of humans, in the way in which they were made. It refers to something a human *is* rather than something a human *has* or *does*. By virtue of being human, one is the image of God; it is not dependent upon the presence of anything else.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly Gentry and Wellum comment, “It is important to note that this definition of the divine image is not a functional but an *ontological* one . . . . Ruling is not the essence of the image itself. Thus those who define the image merely in functional terms are in error both linguistically and theologically.”<sup>17</sup> Both of these interpretations are substantive because they place the focus on what a person *is* rather than what a person *does*.

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<sup>13</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 186.

<sup>14</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 521.

<sup>15</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200-201.

<sup>16</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 532.

<sup>17</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200-201.

Unlike the traditional substantive understanding of the image of God, more contemporary substantive understandings have not looked to a particular set of characteristics to define the image of God. Instead they affirm with Wayne Grudem that “every way in which man is like God is part of his being in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>18</sup> This unified understanding of the image of God does much more justice to the biblical texts than does the particularist, traditional understanding. The biblical texts never give a list of particular qualities that are definitive of the image. Because of this, the traditional position is much more susceptible to identify the content of the image of God with particular cultural and psychological fads.

Although, there is some variation between the different substantive interpretations, all substantive interpretations believe that the image of God is something that a person *is* rather than something that a person *does*. Because the focus is on ontology rather than ethics, this understanding of the image has the advantage of upholding the dignity of all people regardless of their ability or behavior. Since the biblical literature clearly points to image of God as an important source of dignity (cf. Gen 9:6 and Jas 3:9), this is an especially significant aspect of the substantive contribution to understanding of the image of God.

### **Functional Interpretations**

Despite this significant contribution in upholding the dignity of all people, many contemporary interpreters of the image of God have looked elsewhere for the primary meaning regarding the content of the image of God. Some interpreters of Genesis 1 have focused their attention more on the behaviors that are expected immediately after the creation of man and woman. This focus has caused these interpreters to adopt a more

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<sup>18</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), loc. 11507.

functionalist approach to understanding the image of God. The functionalist approach associates the content of the image of God with behaviors such as dominion or relationships.<sup>19</sup>

Interpreters that focus on dominion, frequently do so by using a comparative method that examines the meaning of “image” in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, or a supposed Canaanite “silent source.”<sup>20</sup> J. Richard Middleton represents this methodology when he says, “When the clues within the Genesis text are taken together with comparative studies of the ancient Near East, they lead to what we could call a functional – or even missional – interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1:26-27.”<sup>21</sup> According to this version of the functionalist perspective, one of the most important interpretive clues to understanding the image of God is the command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28) that is given immediately after “God created man in his own image” (Gen 1:27).

The comparative method also notices similarities in the way the word “image” is used in other ancient Near Eastern texts. By analyzing the use of the word “image” in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, a correlation can be drawn between “image” and kings. This is especially true in Egypt. For this reason Edward M. Curtis concludes, “It seems likely that the image of God idea was introduced into Israel through her contacts with Egypt, and the idea was emptied of content that was compatible with Israelite theology and used to express the apparently uniquely Israelite idea that all persons, not

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<sup>19</sup>Hammett, “Human Nature,” 374; Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 69.

<sup>20</sup>Phyllis Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation,” *Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 2 (1981): 140-43.

<sup>21</sup>J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), loc. 291.

just the king, occupy a preeminent place in created order.”<sup>22</sup> Since this interpretation focuses on the ruling function of the king, this understanding of “image” is used in support of the royal image idea that emphasizes the functional behavior associated with the dominion mandate.

Another interpretive clue within the Genesis 1 narrative highlights the literary structure of the text. Some interpreters see a literary structure in the six days that points to the dominion function of humanity. According to this interpretation of the six days of creation, the first three days represent created realms and the final three days represent rulers of the respective realms. The sun and moon rule the light and darkness; the fish and birds rule water and skies; and land animals and human beings rule the land.<sup>23</sup> Because humanity is created in the image of God and reigns under the authority of the creator, this understanding of humanity presents God’s final act of creation as the “vassal-king” of all that is created.<sup>24</sup> By using the comparative method and examining the literary structure of Genesis 1, interpreters with a functional understanding of image of God focus on humanity’s responsibility to rule and fulfill the cultural mandate.<sup>25</sup>

A second type of functional interpretation of the image of God makes much of the phrase “male and female he created them” in Genesis 1:27. By focusing attention on this phrase these interpreters emphasize less the royal function of the image of God and more the relational function of the image of God.<sup>26</sup> The origin of the relational

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<sup>22</sup>Curtis, “Image of God,” 391.

<sup>23</sup>Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 381-83.

<sup>24</sup>Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2000), 42-45.

<sup>25</sup>Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, loc. 338.

<sup>26</sup> Many interpreters, such as Millard Erickson and J. Richard Middleton, consider the relational image of God in a separate category than the functional understanding of the image of God. However, since the relational image of God emphasizes that humanity images God through the *act* of

understanding of the image is frequently associated with Karl Barth. In an effort to develop an exegetically grounded understanding of the image that was not determined by the influence of popular philosophical ideas, Barth looked to the sexual differentiation mentioned in Genesis 1 as the key to developing a relational analogy of the image of God. According to Barth, “[The divine likeness] is expressed in a confrontation, conjunction and inter-relatedness of man as male and female which cannot be defined as an existing quality or intrinsic capacity, possibility or structure of his being, but which simply occur.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Barth explicitly relates this inter-relatedness among the sexes to the inter-relatedness that exists within the Godhead. Although Barth, acknowledges that the “Let us make” of Genesis 1:26 is not a full reference to the Trinity, he nonetheless believes that it is a reference to plurality within the Creator. Regarding this verse he comments, “The picture of a God who is the one and only God, yet who is not for that reason solitary, but includes in Himself the differentiation and relationship of I and Thou – is both nearer to the text and does it more justice than the alternative suggested by modern exegesis in its arrogant rejection of the exegesis of the Early Church.”<sup>28</sup> According to Barth, the most important characteristic of the image of God is the act of differentiation and relationship that occurs in community.

Although many have followed Barth in understanding the image of God in relational terms, this view also has many critics. Many Old Testament scholars are particularly critical of Barth’s Trinitarian interpretation of “Let us make.” Among these critics is Phyllis Bird. Regarding Barth’s interpretation of Genesis 1 she writes, “Despite close reference to the biblical text as his primary source, he has failed to discern *its*

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relating in “I-Thou” relationships, it is here being considered in the functional category. This is consistent with the interpretation of Anthony Hoekema who considers the interpretations of Barth and Berkouwer to be functional understandings of the image of God. See Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 69.

<sup>27</sup>Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, vol. 3.1 of *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 195.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 192.

anthropology – and theology – and has advanced only a novel and arresting variation of the classical trinitarian interpretation.”<sup>29</sup> Bird is representative of the many exegetes who emphasize the importance of understanding Genesis 1 in a way that does justice to the original intent of the author.

However, even if the trinitarian references in Barth are dismissed,<sup>30</sup> it should still be noticed that human sexuality and relationships are an important part of the narrative in Genesis 1 and 2. Commenting on Genesis 1, Wayne Grudem writes, “Although the creation of man as male and female is not the only way in which we are in the image of God, it is a significant enough aspect of our creation in the image of God that Scripture mentions it in the very same verse in which it describes God’s initial creation of man”<sup>31</sup> Further commenting on the image of God and the importance of personal relationships, he states, “God did not create human beings to be isolated persons, but, in making us in his image, he made us in such a way that we can attain interpersonal unity of various sorts in all forms of human society.”<sup>32</sup> Although it would be inaccurate to label Grudem’s understanding of the image of God to be strictly relational or even functional, he clearly incorporates relational and functional aspects of humanity into his theology of image.

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<sup>29</sup>Bird, “Male and Female He Created Them,” 132.

<sup>30</sup>Although a trinitarian association with “let us make” in Gen 1:26 is exegetically difficult to maintain, this does not necessarily mean that the verse is void of any reference to the Trinity. It should be noticed that the most popular rival interpretations also encounter various exegetical challenges. The two most popular rival interpretations are normally presented as the “plural of majesty” or the “divine council.” The plural of majesty has no evidence in the Old Testament and the divine council interpretation encounters the theological problem of including angels in the act of creation. Because of these problems, many evangelical scholars still believe the best interpretation of “let us make” may be to reference the Trinity. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, loc. 5658-73; Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 97; Douglas F. Kelly, *The God Who Is: The Holy Trinity*, vol. 1 of *Systematic Theology* (Ross-Shire: Mentor, 2008), 323-25; Robert Letham, “The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 71.

<sup>31</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, loc. 11795.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, loc. 11800.

Like the substantive interpretation of the image of God, there is some variation in the functional interpretation. Both dominion and relational perspectives of the image can be considered functional because they shift the focus from substance to behavior. In general functional interpretations of the image are more concerned with what people *do* than what people *are*. An important contribution offered by the functional perspective is the focus that is given to task and responsibility. By making this interpretive shift, the content of the image of God is shifted from ontology to ethics.

### **The Image of God and Identity**

The relational anthropology being presented in this research agrees with the functionalist claim that the image of God refers to mankind's responsibility to represent God by taking dominion over creation and engage in loving relationships with others, but it also affirms the insights of the substantial perspective affirming the dignity of all people. Anthony Hoekema summarizes well the need to understand substance and function together. He introduces his discussion of the functional aspects of the image of God with an analogy that utilizes an eagle. He emphasizes that one of the functions of an eagle is to fly. However the eagle would not be able to fly if it did not have wings. The wings are part of the substance of the eagle. For an eagle to accomplish its function of flying it must have the substance of wings. He concludes his analogy by saying, "Similarly, human beings were created to function in certain ways: to worship God, to love the neighbor, to rule over nature, and so on. But they cannot function in these ways unless they have been endowed by God with structural capacities that enable them to do so."<sup>33</sup> When considering the image of God, it is important not to polarize substance and

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<sup>33</sup>Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 69. Although it is important to associate the image of God with both substance and function, this does not mean that those who have limited mental or physical abilities are any less the image of God. In this regard, it is important to remember the redemptive process. Those who lack certain functional capabilities in the present will be capable of fulfilling the functional aspects of the image of God in the glorified state (Rev 21:4).



function. It is the whole person that is the image of God. This includes body and soul as well as substance and function.<sup>34</sup>

Gentry and Wellum also describe the image of God in terms that emphasize both the substantial and functional perspectives. These authors notice a slight difference in the meaning of the terms “image” and “likeness.” The “likeness” of God refers to the relationship between God and humans that can be characterized as the “son of God.”<sup>35</sup> The “image” of God refers to the relationship between God and humans that can be characterized as a “servant king.”<sup>36</sup> In their understanding, the terms image and likeness compliment one another by referring to both the vertical and horizontal aspects of reflecting God’s glory. They summarize their understanding of likeness and image by saying, “Although both terms specify the divine-human relationship, the first focuses on the human in relation to God and the second focuses on the human in relation to the world. These would be understood to be relationships characterized by faithfulness and loyal love, obedience and trust.”<sup>37</sup> Gentry and Wellum further emphasize both the vertical and horizontal aspects of the image of God by saying, “In this sense the divine image entails a covenant relationship between God and humans on the one hand, and between humans and the world on the other.”<sup>38</sup>

If the image of God is understood in only functional terms, then a pragmatic anthropology is likely to result that understands human value in terms of its utility. However, if substance is emphasized without regard for function, a reductionist

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<sup>34</sup>Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” 57; Bruce A. Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem, Foundations for the Family, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), loc. 1406.

<sup>35</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 194.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

anthropology will result that fails to account for the particularity of people. In this regard, the comments of Hoekema are helpful. He says, “We need to maintain both aspects. Since the image of God includes the whole person, it must include both man’s structure and man’s functioning . . . . Human beings were created to function in certain ways . . . but they cannot function in these ways unless they have been endowed by with the structural capacities that enable them to do so.”<sup>39</sup> Bruce Ware calls this understanding of the image of God functional holism.<sup>40</sup>

This emphasis on both substance and function is supported by a trinitarian theology that holds God’s actions and being together. Rather than conceiving of God in purely abstract, substantial terms, “A properly trinitarian understanding of God would rather conceive him as one who is known in his otherness only through his relation.”<sup>41</sup> Significantly for describing the image of God, Trinitarian theology provides an ontological framework for understanding uniformity and diversity in an equiprimal relationship.<sup>42</sup> The insights of the substantial perspective emphasize uniformity in the image of God. According to this perspective all people are created in the image of God and share a common likeness to God.<sup>43</sup> In contrast to this emphasis, the functionalist perspective emphasizes growth and diversity in the image of God.<sup>44</sup> An ontology based on trinitarian theology provides the basis for understanding both the substantive and functional aspects of the image of God to be equally important.

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<sup>39</sup>Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 69.

<sup>40</sup>Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God,” loc. 1399.

<sup>41</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *Act & Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), loc. 187.

<sup>42</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, ed. Alan G. Padgett, *Sacra Doctrina* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 193.

<sup>43</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 532.

<sup>44</sup>G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God*, trans. Dirk W. Jellema, *Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 98-99.

Stanley Grenz's understanding of the ecclesial self is based on this trinitarian ontology. In particular, Grenz emphasizes the concept of perichoresis. In his assessment, "The ingenious use of perichoresis to describe the manner in which the trinitarian persons are constituted by the mutuality of relationships within the life of the triune God opened the way for the development of a dynamic ontology of persons-in-relationship or persons-in-communion."<sup>45</sup> This understanding of the image of God seeks to do justice to both the uniformity and particularity of people. Grenz uses the insights of Gunton and Zizioulas to explain the relationship between these two categories. Both Gunton and Zizioulas emphasize the idea that participation in community is constitutive of a person's particularity.<sup>46</sup> On one hand, the diversity of a community is realized in an individual when a person opens him or herself to the influence of others. On the other hand, the particularity of each person is realized when the individual gives of him or herself to the community. This notion of the self that is open to others in loving relationships influences the way authority structures should be constructed in the work place. The implications of this understanding of the self and the image of God will be further explored in the following chapter.

### **Union With Christ**

Grenz's understanding of the ecclesial self emphasizes the close relationship between the doctrine of the image of God and the doctrine of union with Christ. According to Grenz, the image of God has an eschatological character.<sup>47</sup> Two related themes in the New Testament highlight the eschatological character of the image of God.

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<sup>45</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 317.

<sup>46</sup> John D. Zizioulas, "Human Capacity And Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28, no. 5 (1975): 409; Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), 166.

<sup>47</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 322-28.

The first of these important themes is the fact that Christ is referred to as the perfect image of God (John 14:8-9; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3). A second important theme for understanding the eschatological character of the image of God is the transformative power of union with Christ (John 15:5; Rom 6:4-6, 8:29; Gal 2:20). Taken together, these two concepts reinforce the idea that the image of God is renewed in people through union with Christ. It is through union with Christ that the self is enabled to open itself in love to others.

In Grenz's description of the ecclesial self, the love found at the center of the triune God is made present in believers through union with Christ.<sup>48</sup> Although he is not attempting describe a particular self-concept, Hoekema also believes that there is close association between the image of God and union with Christ. Furthermore, like Grenz's description of the ecclesial self, Hoekema emphasizes the significance of love. Through union with Christ, people are able to fulfill the intention of their creation by loving God and others. According to Hoekema, "[The Holy Spirit] initially brings a person into a living union with Christ and changes his or her heart so that he or she who was spiritually dead becomes spiritually alive, now ready and willing to believe the gospel and serve the Lord."<sup>49</sup> Because Christ is the perfect image of God, union with Christ wakes the spiritually dead to love as Christ loved. For this reason, Hoekema is able to say, "If it is true that Christ perfectly images God, then the heart of the image of God must be love."<sup>50</sup>

Although the idea of Christ's love being renewed in the life of a believer helps to illustrate the close connection that exists between the image of God and union with Christ, it is also important to consider the concept of union with Christ in a broader sense. Apart from its associations with the doctrine of the image of God, union with Christ is

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 312-22.

<sup>49</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 86.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 22.

one of the most important doctrines in shaping Christian identity.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, like the doctrine of the image of God, trinitarian thinking informs a right understanding of union with Christ. A helpful starting point for beginning a discussion on the application of trinitarian thinking to union with Christ is highlighted in Constantine Campbell's description of the doctrine. He describes union with Christ as an umbrella concept that not only relates to the idea of union but also participation, identification, and incorporation.<sup>52</sup> It should be noticed that this description contains both individual and communal aspects. According to Campbell, the idea of "identification" relates to "believers' location in the realm of Christ and their allegiance to his lordship" while "incorporation" relates to the "corporate dimensions of membership in Christ's body."<sup>53</sup>

Another way of looking at this difference is to consider that union with Christ involves reciprocity. Not only is the believer united to Christ, but Christ is also united to the believer (John 15:5). The former element involves incorporation into a community. The latter element involves vivification of particular believers.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, through union with Christ, the believer is called to a particular task and given a specific place in the diversified body of Christ. The ontology of trinitarian theology because it emphasizes the equal ultimacy of both unity and diversity provides the foundation for making sense of both of these aspects. If both of these poles are not equally emphasized the tendency is to allow one to be absorbed into the other. Through faith the believer is given a new identity in union with Christ, but he also is incorporated into a new community. Both of

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<sup>51</sup>J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 2.

<sup>52</sup>Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 413.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 596.

these aspects are significant in the development of the relational anthropology being described in this research.

### **Corporate Aspects of Union With Christ**

A contemporary trend in discussing union with Christ is to highlight the communal and ecclesial aspects of union with Christ over the individual and existential.<sup>55</sup>

The corporate emphasis on union with Christ emphasizes the solidarity that is experienced between believers as they are joined together in him. As believers participate in the life of Christ they are declared “one” (John 17:21). From this foundation, there is impetus to establish unity within the body of Christ. In this way, union with Christ is capable of overcoming social, ethnic, or sexually determined boundaries (Gal 3:27-29; Eph 3:6). “A theology of union with Christ provides strong grounds for a relational, culture-crossing ministry that is always pointing beyond itself to Jesus Christ.”<sup>56</sup> In the early centuries of the church this principle of equality would have seemed especially

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<sup>55</sup>This corporate emphasis on union with Christ is frequently utilized in discussions about justification. Although this research is more concerned with the relationship between identity and community, the associations between union with Christ and justification are tangentially related to this conversation. Occasionally union with Christ is contrasted with imputation. In this way of thinking, justification occurs through union with Christ rather than imputation. Furthermore, those focusing on union with Christ also tend to redefine justification. Rather than focusing on the vertical relationship between a person and God, justification focuses on the horizontal relationship between a person and a community. N. T. Wright affirms this position when he says, “[Justification] always referred specifically to the coming together of Jews and Gentiles in faithful membership of the Christian family” (N. T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan & Paul’s Vision* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009], 116). This research affirms the idea that justification should be understood in the more narrow terms of imputation. The horizontal and community focused aspects of salvation are significant but they logically flow from justification. However, the insights of Constantine Campbell are helpful. Campbell affirms both the idea of imputation and the association of justification with union with Christ. He believes the separation of union with Christ from justification represents a false dichotomy. He summarizes his point of view by saying, “Imputation is a theological concept that might properly be understood as an outworking of union with Christ; through their union with Christ, his righteousness is imputed to believers . . . Imputation ought to be understood as the unmerited reception of a righteousness that belongs wholly to another, and this reception of ‘alien’ righteousness is facilitated through the ‘un-alienation’ of two parties” (Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 400-401).

<sup>56</sup>Billings, *Union with Christ*, 14.

revolutionary.<sup>57</sup> However, the revolutionary implications of this unity were far from being completely realized in the early centuries of the church. Contemporary foci in theology have revived interest in the idea of equality that is founded on union with Christ.

When discussing union with Christ and the oneness experienced in human communities, it is important to pay careful attention to John 17:20-23. According to these verses, union with Christ creates a unity among believers that is in some way related to the unity that exists between the intratrinitarian relationships. John 17 explicitly mentions the relationship between the Father and the Son, but earlier in the Gospel Jesus made it clear that the relationship between the Spirit and the Son is such that the Spirit mediates the presence of Son. Commenting on the Spirit's designation as *another* Paraclete in John 14:16, G. K. Barrett says, "This implies that Jesus himself is a Paraclete . . . . The context . . . suggests very strongly continuity between the offices of Jesus and the Paraclete."<sup>58</sup> Given this connection between the Spirit and the Son, it can be inferred that the relationships discussed in John 17 are intratrinitarian although the Spirit is not directly mentioned. Commenting on these relationships, Beasley-Murray states, "In the depths of the being of God there exists a *koinonia*, a 'fellowship,' between the Father and the Son that is beyond all compare, a unity whereby the speech and action of the Son are that of the Father in him, and the Father's speech and action come to finality in him."<sup>59</sup> Through union with Christ and the ministry of the Spirit, believers are brought into relationships that are in some way analogous to this trinitarian relationship. Andreas Köstenberger and Scott Swain summarize this perspective by saying, "The triunity of the Father, Son and

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<sup>57</sup>F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 191.

<sup>58</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 461-62.

<sup>59</sup>G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Nelson, 1999), 253-54.

Spirit forms the paradigm and basis for the love and unity among Jesus' followers and for their mission to the world as they re-present his message and follow their Lord."<sup>60</sup>

Through union Christ no barriers exist between individual believers.

Although John 17 presents an analogy between union with Christ and life within the Trinity, careful consideration needs to be given to the nature of this analogy. According to John Zizioulas, "baptism as new birth" is the act that constitutes a new person through regeneration and leads to a new mode of existence.<sup>61</sup> In the Eastern Orthodox thinking of Zizioulas, baptism is understood differently than it is Protestant theology. He considers baptism to be "essentially nothing else but the application to humanity of the very filial relationship which exists between the Father and the Son."<sup>62</sup> Although Zizioulas does not use the language of "union with Christ," his description of baptism is very similar to this doctrine. In the thinking of Zizioulas, baptism applies the life of Christ to an individual and brings about regeneration. Miroslav Volf summarizes Zizioulas's understanding of baptism by saying, "The new birth mediated in baptism occurs through the union of our created nature with the uncreated God in Christ."<sup>63</sup>

In Zizioulas's description the result of this union is the birth of a new mode of existence in which an "individual" becomes a "person" by experiencing "being as communion."<sup>64</sup> In order to posit this type of existence, he uses the analogy between

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<sup>60</sup>Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 43.

<sup>61</sup>John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 53.

<sup>62</sup>Zizioulas, "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity," 438.

<sup>63</sup>Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 88. Although Zizioulas's description of baptism is more sacramental and ecclesial than what Protestants normally refer to as union with Christ, it is similar to union with Christ in the sense that it is the concept that Zizioulas most closely associates with the application of Christ's life to the person. In Zizioulas's description, baptism incorporates a person into Christ, gives him a new identity, and allows him to participate in new life.

<sup>64</sup>Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 15-17.



Trinitarian life and human relationships that is described in John 17:21-23. However, Zizioulas's interpretation of this analogy is problematic. It is significant that his description of personhood is "being *as* communion" rather than "being *in* communion." Zizioulas believes that "nothing in existence is conceivable in itself, as an individual . . . . It is communion that makes things 'be.'"<sup>65</sup> Although this account of personhood is helpful in that it encourages individuals to consider their relations with others as constitutive of their own identity, it ultimately falls short of the biblical model for anthropology because it emphasizes unity over particularity. Rather than holding unity and particularity in an equiprimal relationship it allows particularity to be absorbed into unity. Travis Ables summarizes well the problem with this understanding of identity. He says, "Zizioulas's relational ontology eventuates in an erasure of personal particularity."<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, an anthropology that emphasizes unity over particularity cannot account for freedom. The relationship between freedom and love makes this limitation especially important to the development of a biblical relational anthropology. As mentioned above in discussing Grenz's understanding of the ecclesial self and the image of God, love for others is central to right understanding of the self just as it is central to a right understanding of God (1 John 4:8). If communion is necessary for being, then love cannot be freely given to another. Because the biblical understanding of love requires an element of freedom, this element of necessity in communion damages the biblical concept of love. Najeeb G. Awad summarizes this argument well when he says, "Love, in essence, is a free state of communion with the other or a free acceptance of the will of the

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>66</sup>Travis E. Ables, "On the Very Idea of an Ontology of Communion: Being, Relation and Freedom in Zizioulas and Levinas," *The Heythrop Journal* 52, no. 4 (2011): 679. Ables's criticism of Zizioulas is much more broad than what is indicated in the above quotation. Not only does Ables criticize Zizioulas's failure to account for particularity, but he also criticizes the idea of the church as a mediating category for personhood. This emphasis on the unified church over the individual is also a consequence Zizioulas's failure to account for the equiprimal relationship between unity and particularity.

other to enter into communion with me.”<sup>67</sup> According to Awad, without freedom “‘love as communion’ is reduced to a duty or a to a survival tactic, in which one is obliged to enter into a premeditated, conditional, and conditioning form of communion with others that does not allow him to reflect in the very love he shares with others his distinction and personal particularity.”<sup>68</sup> Without particularity, freedom is lost and love is bound to duty.

A second problem with an over emphasis on unity is the failure to maintain the distinction between creator and creature. At times, Grenz’s description of the ecclesial self tends to error in this direction. This error is noticeably evident in his description of perichoresis. Grenz favorably quotes Catherine Mowry LaCugna’s description of perichoresis.<sup>69</sup> According to LaCugna, “*Perichōrēsis* expressed the idea that the three divine persons mutually inhere in one another, draw life from one another, ‘are’ what they are by relation to one another.”<sup>70</sup> Although Grenz initially seems to apply this definition only to the intratrinitarian life, LaCugna elaborates on this definition and makes this same perichoresis inclusive of all believers. Later she says, “There are not two sets of communion – one among the divine persons, the other among human persons, with the latter supposed to replicate the former. The one *perichoresis*, the one mystery of communion includes God and humanity.”<sup>71</sup> Although Grenz does not directly indicate that there is one perichoresis, his language is similar when he says, “The biblical God longs to reconcile sinful humans, adopting them as children of God . . . to draw the

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<sup>67</sup>Najeeb G. Awad, “Personhood as Particularity: John Zizioulas, Colin Gunton, and the Trinitarian Theology of Personhood,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4, no. 1 (2010): 14.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 317.

<sup>70</sup>Catherine Mowry Lacugna, *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 270-71.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 274.

reconciled new humanity together with all creation into glorious communion within the divine perichoretic life.”<sup>72</sup>

Properly understood, the relationship between believers through union with Christ is analogous to the perichoretic life within the Trinity, but this analogy should not be understood as a sharing in the same perichoresis. Robert Letham clarifies this point when he says, “There is a pattern here, an analogy, between the indwelling of the Father and the Son on the one hand and the indwelling of Christ and his disciples on the other. There is an obvious difference; the Father and the Son are one in being, eternal, immense, while Christ and his disciples are distinguishably separate.”<sup>73</sup> If redeemed persons share in one perichoretic life with the Trinity, the identity of the persons of the Trinity, is determined by their relationship to created humans. This description clearly contradicts the aseity of the Trinity (Exod 3:14; Job 41:11; Ps 50:10-12; Rom 11:35-36). A biblical description of the Trinity recognizes that the three persons form a self-contained unity.<sup>74</sup> This description recognizes unity and diversity, but it is self-contained.<sup>75</sup> God does not need (nor is it possible for) any aspect of creation to add to his diversity or unity. Descriptions of perichoresis that include human participation in the divine life go beyond the biblical idea that is presented in John 17:20-23. In these verses relationship between believers who are united to Christ are analogous to the divine life of the Trinity, but they are not constitutive of it.

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<sup>72</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 320.

<sup>73</sup>Robert Letham, *Union with Christ: In Scripture, History, and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 49.

<sup>74</sup>Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 304-8; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, loc. 3938; Horton, *The Christian Faith*, 230-35; Kelly, *The God Who Is*, 279-85.

<sup>75</sup>John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 416-17.

## **Union with Christ and Particularity**

By overemphasizing unity, two reductionist errors occur that damage a biblical understanding of anthropology. These two errors can be summarized as failure to properly acknowledge the Creator-creature distinction and failure to account for the particularity of personhood. In an equiprimal understanding of unity and diversity, particularity must be defended in a way that does not allow it to be collapsed into unity. Union with Christ is not only foundational for understanding community but it is also foundational for understanding diversity. It is only through union with Christ that individual people are empowered to become the particular person that God has created them to be (Eph 2:10).

In order to affirm the particularity of the person through union with Christ, it is necessary to look at the transformative and regenerative aspects of union (John 15:5; Rom 6:3-4; Rom 8:10-11; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20). J. Todd Billings considers these transformative aspects of union with Christ in the idea of adoption. Regarding adoption he says, “It highlights the radical character of life in Christ as a change in identity, as being conferred a new identity in Christ as children of God – filled with the Spirit, united to Christ, and given access to the Father in God’s household.”<sup>76</sup> Through union with Christ, a person is filled with the Spirit and made a member of God’s household. This biblical illustration not only highlights the trinitarian character of union with Christ, but it also highlights an emphasis on both person and community.

It is relatively easy to associate membership in the household of God with a communitarian interpretation of union with Christ. Campbell summarizes this understanding well when he says, “Believers are grafted into a community that is founded, shaped, and directed by Christ. Their belonging to this Christ-community affects how they are to live in way that honors the body. Thus, belonging to Christ means

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<sup>76</sup>Billings, *Union with Christ*, 21.

that we belong to one another.”<sup>77</sup> However, it is not as obvious how being filled with the Spirit has a particularizing effect. To make this point more clearly it is helpful to think about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not destroy human particularity and freedom (2 Cor 3:17). Instead, he activates it and directs it to its proper goal. Billings affirms a similar idea when he says, “God’s action by the Spirit in the human does not threaten the human’s own agency but actually enables it. When humans are empowered by the Spirit to live in Christ – when they act ‘in Christ’ rather than ‘in themselves’ – they are being restored as the children of God they were created to be.”<sup>78</sup>

In Colin Gunton’s understanding of perichoretic being, the ministry of the Spirit is especially important. According to his assessment, “The Spirit is the principle of reality’s variety and multiplicity, for it is the Spirit who enables all things to be what they are particularly created to be.”<sup>79</sup> The Spirit accomplishes this task by enabling persons to realize their “dynamic interrelatedness.”<sup>80</sup> Gunton connects the ministry of the Spirit more directly to union with Christ when he says, “The world does indeed cohere in the Son, but is diversified and particularised as the second hand of the Father enables things to be what they are created to be in the Son.”<sup>81</sup> Since the Holy Spirit allows each person to be what he is created to be, when a person is united to Christ and indwelt by the Spirit, the person becomes most truly human. This diversity in humanity glorifies God by returning to him in a multiplicity of praise. For Gunton, “The matter of particularity is . . .

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<sup>77</sup>Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 409.

<sup>78</sup>Billings, *Union with Christ*, 60-61.

<sup>79</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 14.

<sup>80</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 1997), 153.

<sup>81</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 161.

the matter of enabling the things and people of which our world consists, each in their own way to serve as vehicles of praise of God.”<sup>82</sup>

Despite this laudable emphasis on the particularity of persons and the subsequent glory to God that is given through particularity, Gunton’s proposal is not without its problems. The most significant problem in his work is the denial of substance. According to Gunton, “The *substantiality* of God resides not in his abstract being, but in the concrete particulars that we call the divine persons and in the relations by which they mutually constitute one another . . . . God is what he is only as a communion of persons, the particularity of whom remain at the centre of all he is.”<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, Gunton applies this ontology to all of creation, “Everything in the universe is what it is by virtue of its relatedness to everything else.”<sup>84</sup> In the estimation of Bernhard Nausner, “This shift leads him to the sublation of substance-talk in relationality-talk with the result that the notions of oneness and substance are derived solely from the perspective of the particular as constituted by the whole.”<sup>85</sup>

This collapse of substance into particularity is especially problematic in regard to the formation of relational self-concept. “Within the human sphere persons always remain single entities despite their dependence on relations . . . . The essence of a person cannot be solely reduced to these relations”<sup>86</sup> In order for a person to engage in a genuine relationship with another, he must exist as more than a pure relation. The formation of a distinct identity requires there to be a boundary that sets one person as distinct from

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<sup>82</sup>Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 73.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 191.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>85</sup>Bernhard Nausner, “The Failure of a Laudable Project: Gunton, the Trinity and Human Self-Understanding,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 4 (2009): 413.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 415.

another.<sup>87</sup> Volf comments on this problem by saying, “Persons cannot be translated fully into relations. A person is always already outside of the relations in which he or she is immersed . . . . Hence the need for boundary maintenance – a certain kind of assertion of the self in the presence of the other and a certain kind of deference of the other before the self.”<sup>88</sup> By reducing persons to pure relations, Gunton creates a similar type of homogeneity to that which he so eagerly seeks to avoid.<sup>89</sup>

The problem of homogeneity is most evident in Gunton’s ecclesiology. Because he begins with an understanding of particularity in terms of pure relations, he is unable to account for any structure that accounts for authority and submission. Although Gunton admits that there is authority and submission in the economy of the Trinity, he is unwilling to allow this *taxis* to be applied to the church.<sup>90</sup> Regarding the church, he says, “The Church is what it is by virtue of being called to be a temporal echo of the eternal community that God is.”<sup>91</sup> For Gunton, not only does this mean that men and women should have access to the exact same positions in the church, but he calls into question the very idea of ordination.<sup>92</sup> Rather than an “ordained caste,” he encourages church leaders to move toward an “ecclesiology of perichoresis.” By this he means, “[An ecclesiology] in which there is no permanent structure of subordination, but in which there are overlapping patterns of relationship, so that the same person will be sometimes

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<sup>87</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 91.

<sup>88</sup>Miroslav Volf, “‘The Trinity is Our Social Program’: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (1998): 410.

<sup>89</sup>Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 30.

<sup>90</sup>Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 197; Colin E. Gunton, “The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community,” in *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 65.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 76.

‘subordinate’ and sometimes ‘superordinate’ according to the gifts and graces being exercised.”<sup>93</sup> Because Gunton does not believe it is appropriate to imitate the economy of the Trinity, he is unwilling to accept any permanent authority structure in the church.<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, Gunton’s approach to scripture requires the acceptance of a type of autonomy that misunderstands covenant. In the context of his discussions on community and ecclesiology, he acknowledges that Paul affirms a certain authority structure that governs relationships between men and women. However, Gunton claims, “Paul’s exegesis and theology are both questionable . . . . On a duly apophatic treatment of the trinitarian relations, it is illegitimate to attribute Fatherly, and so apparently superordinate, functions to man; but son-like, and so subordinate, functions to woman.”<sup>95</sup> This interpretation misunderstands covenant, because it places the interpreter in a position that is capable of judging God’s revelation.

More will be said about covenant below, but for now a second problem in Gunton’s treatment of the church needs to be addressed. By placing himself in a position to judge Scripture, Gunton makes it difficult to guard himself against the charges of what Karen Kilby calls “projection.” By projection, Kilby is referring to a process by which the interpreter projects his or her reflections on society onto the Trinity and then claims that these reflections have divine warrant because they are inherent in the life of the Trinity.<sup>96</sup> This is exactly the type of criticism that Nauser uses against Gunton. According to Nauser, Gunton abandons the idea of substance for a theory of relationality because “of his passionate aspiration to heal the wounds of an egocentric, individualistic and

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>94</sup>Keith E. Johnson, “*Imitatio Trinitatis*: How Should We Imitate the Trinity?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 75, no. 2 (2013): 318.

<sup>95</sup>Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 73.

<sup>96</sup>Karen Kilby, “Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity,” *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (2000): 442.



alienating modern culture through an ontology of communion.”<sup>97</sup> Because Gunton has set himself above Scripture in some regards, he has no defense against projectionism. A right application of trinitarian doctrine to society must emphasize that through union with Christ the Holy Spirit transforms the thoughts of persons so that they surrender to the order of God as he is revealed in the Scriptures.

### **Union With Christ and Identity**

Union with Christ emphasizes both community and particularity. This idea is especially captured through the metaphor of the body of Christ in the New Testament (Rom 7:4; 1 Cor 10:17; 1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 4:12-13).<sup>98</sup> The power of this metaphor resides precisely in its association with the idea of union with Christ. “As believers are included in him, so they are incorporated into his body and become its members.”<sup>99</sup> Thus, through union with Christ believers are connected to one another and experience a powerful unity. However, as Ware confirms, “Unity is not sameness, and harmony requires differences working together.”<sup>100</sup> In relation to personhood and identity, this means that each person is substantively unique, but he is also defined by his relationships with others. Volf elucidates this idea by saying, “A person’s particularity is constituted by its being irreplaceable within the community rather than by being delimited as an individual opposite other individuals.”<sup>101</sup>

Moreover, it can be confirmed that this relationship between community and particularity that is experienced by believers through union with Christ in some way

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<sup>97</sup>Nausner, “The Failure of a Laudable Project,” 403.

<sup>98</sup>Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology*, 126.

<sup>99</sup>Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 383.

<sup>100</sup>Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), loc. 1838.

<sup>101</sup>Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 83.

mirrors the intratrinitarian relationships between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is especially made clear by John 17:20-23. In these verses Jesus prays for those who believe in him to experience the same type of unity that he experiences with the Father.

Throughout the New Testament it is clear that the relationship between Jesus and the Father is one in which the two Persons are mutually definitive of the other's identity (Matt 11:27; John 1:1; 6:46; 17:21). Indeed, the very name "Father" and "Son" imply a relationship in which the two are mutually defined.<sup>102</sup> One aspect of the way the Persons relate is through structures of authority and submission. Again Ware is helpful, "It is the nature of God both to exert authority and to obey in submission. And since this is the eternal nature of God, we may know that it is beautiful and it is good."<sup>103</sup> Far from demonstrating the type of homogeneity that occurs when the Trinity is reduced to pure relations, there is real difference within the life of the Trinity.

In summarizing the significance of union with Christ in developing a relational anthropology, two important poles are acknowledged. The first of these important poles is the idea that in union with Christ, the believer's identity is determined through his relationship with another person.<sup>104</sup> In Grenz's estimation this is the "genesis of the ecclesial self."<sup>105</sup> Through union with Christ the self opens itself to Christ and is received into his body. This opening of the self is also expressed in the body of Christ as the person engages with others in mutual self-giving love. This element of reciprocity in the self should be understood in a redemptive-historical sense. God originally designed humanity to engage in loving relationships with others in order to reflect the relationships

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<sup>102</sup>Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 145-47.

<sup>103</sup>Bruce A. Ware, "Cur Deus Trinus? The Relations of the Trinity to Christ's Identity as Saviour and to the Efficacy of His Atoning Death," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (2006): 51.

<sup>104</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 325.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 326.

within the triune Persons.<sup>106</sup> After the fall, relationality continues to be an important aspect of the humans as they are created in the image of God, but these relationships are corrupted.<sup>107</sup> However, through union with Christ right fellowship with God and others is restored.<sup>108</sup> Finally, the full experience of reciprocity will be experienced in the state of glorification. Grenz summarizes this eschatological aspect of the image of God realized through union with Christ by saying, “God’s goal is that as the Son, Jesus Christ be preeminent within a new humanity stamped with the divine image. Consequently, the humankind created in the *imago dei* is none other than the new humanity conformed to the *imago Christi*, and the *telos* toward which the Old Testament creation narrative points is the eschatological community of glorified saints.”<sup>109</sup> Although the process of salvation changes the way people open themselves up to others in relationships, the principle of the relationally determined self is a significant aspect of biblical anthropology.

The second important pole in applying the doctrine of union with Christ to a biblical anthropology is to affirm the particularity of the self. In order to engage in real relationships with others, the self must be bounded in some sense. The self cannot exist as a pure relation, but there must be a particular person who is capable of responding to another. In genuine relationships these two people help to define one another, but they must be distinct persons in order for this reciprocity to occur. Union with Christ highlights the significance of this diversity through the concepts of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31) and vocation (Eph 2:10).

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<sup>106</sup>Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 97; Letham, “The Man-Woman Debate,” 71; Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, loc. 1875.

<sup>107</sup>Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, “Anthropology, Sexuality, and Sexual Ethics: The Challenge of Psychology,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 123-24; Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology*, 109-11.

<sup>108</sup>Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 381-83.

<sup>109</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, “The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Theology of the *Imago Dei* in the Postmodern Context,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 82-83.

Volf draws attention to both of these poles by talking about the centered and the de-centered self. Commenting on Galatians 2:20, he notices that in union with Christ the self is de-centered by participation with Christ in the crucifixion and yet it is also re-centered through the life of Christ. “The center of the self—a center that is both inside and outside—is the story of Jesus Christ, which has become the story of the self.”<sup>110</sup> Volf calls this new re-centered self, the “de-centered centered self.” It is characterized by openness. “The new center opens the self up, makes it capable and willing to give itself for others and to receive others in itself.” In reflecting the image of God through union with Christ and transformation by the Spirit, the new self is particularly characterized by sacrificial love for others.<sup>111</sup>

This reciprocity is especially important in discussions about shared leadership. In order for the principle of mutual influence that is central to shared leadership to work, it must be grounded in an understanding of the self that is simultaneously bounded and open. Awad notices the relationship between reciprocity and influence when he says, “The person is not relational if he or she cannot both initiate a particular action toward a certain other, as well as correspond in a certain way to an initiation made toward him or her by another.”<sup>112</sup> Each person must have the confidence that his or her particular contributions are beneficial to the whole, yet at the same time be open to allowing him or herself to be shaped by others.

### **Covenant**

When considering the reciprocity and mutuality that exists between people, it is also important to consider the idea of covenant. Significantly, the concept of covenant

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<sup>110</sup>Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 70.

<sup>111</sup>Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 313-21.

<sup>112</sup>Awad, “Personhood as Particularity,” 21.

is related to union with Christ. Through union with Christ believers fulfill the covenantal demands of the law. This was accomplished through Christ's active and passive obedience. "Because of his union with us and our union with him, we were in him as he [fulfilled the law]"<sup>113</sup> The idea of covenant illuminates the association between union with Christ and law. Because Christ fulfilled the law, he is called the "end" of the law (Rom 10:4). However, it should be noticed that although Christ fulfilled the law, the concept of law is not completely abolished. Through union with Christ we are empowered to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). In Christ the law reaches its goal and is reinterpreted. For those who are in Christ, fulfilling the law of Christ is especially associated with loving one's neighbor as oneself (Rom 13:8; Gal 5:14).<sup>114</sup> Through union with Christ, persons are brought into a new covenantal relationship with Christ and neighbor. This covenantal relationship has legal and ethical expectations.

Michael Horton describes covenant in a very general way. He begins with the assumption that all humanity is either covenantally under the headship of Adam or Christ. Because of this assumption, for Horton the idea of "covenant" refers to "the specific praxis developed throughout redemptive history." He further clarifies this definition by saying, "It is the culture of the people of God, shaped by the drama of the two cities and the two seeds."<sup>115</sup> Gentry and Wellum define a covenant in a more narrow sense as "a relationship involving an oath-bound commitment."<sup>116</sup> Using both of these definitions, it should be noticed that covenants are by definition relational and transformative. Horton

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<sup>113</sup>Letham, *Union with Christ*, 59.

<sup>114</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 569.

<sup>115</sup>Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 13.

<sup>116</sup>Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 132.

summarizes this correlation by saying, “In classic covenant theology, the solidarity of the body with its head is simultaneously legal and relational, judicial and familial. In such a union, there can be no facile oppositions between law and love, the courtroom and the family room, a verdict of righteousness *extra nos* and an organic, living, and growing relationship in which the justified grow up into Christ.”<sup>117</sup> The concept of covenant places people in an oath-bound commitment with God and through this commitment a person’s entire perspective on history is transformed.<sup>118</sup>

### **Covenant and Order**

In order to understand better how this concept of covenant relates to the relational anthropology that is being described in this research, it is important to notice that covenant is characteristic of the relationships among the Persons of the Trinity. Theologians frequently speak of pre-temporal “covenant of redemption” that existed within the Trinity. Grudem provides a helpful summary of this covenant, “It is an agreement among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in which the Son agreed to become a man, be our representative, obey the demands of the covenant of works on our behalf, and pay the penalty for sin.”<sup>119</sup> The covenant of redemption emphasizes cooperation within the life of the Trinity. The Father is regarded as the architect of redemption (Eph 1:3), the Son is sent to accomplish redemption (John 3:16-17), and the Spirit is sent to apply redemption (John 14:16-17). Noticing these distinct roles among the Persons as they seek to accomplish the work of redemption together serves as a reminder that identity of each of the Persons depends on their relationship to one another.<sup>120</sup> Each of the

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<sup>117</sup>Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 130.

<sup>118</sup>Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 57-58.

<sup>119</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, loc. 13506.

<sup>120</sup>Ware, “Cur Deus Trinus,” 50-51.

Persons of the Trinity works in concert with the others in a way that not only is mutually defining, but seeks to draw others into fellowship as well. “In . . . election, justification, and calling, we recognize the marvelous symmetry of love between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, yet not in a circle of exclusion but in an ecstatic, eccentric, extroverted movement of embrace, to include even enemies in a communion of peace.”<sup>121</sup> In the covenant of redemption, we see that the trinitarian Persons are identified by their relations, agree to specific roles, and move to embrace others.

The tendency of many relational anthropologies that emphasize an element of imitating the Trinity is to focus on relational identity and sacrificial love for others, but to overlook the idea of order and specific roles that exists within the Trinity. This oversight has already been mentioned in discussing Gunton’s ecclesiology of perichoresis, but this is also true of Volf’s understanding of identity. The reason Volf is able to dismiss concepts that relate to authority and submission is due to the fact that his understanding of catholic personality encourages people to imitate the immanent Trinity, but not the economic Trinity.<sup>122</sup> According to Volf, “Within a community of perfect love between person who share all the divine attributes, a notion of hierarchy and subordination is inconceivable.”<sup>123</sup> This inability to conceive of a concept of love that includes an element of submission is indicative of the presuppositions underlying Volf’s entire approach in the development of his concept of catholic personality. In his unwillingness to conceive of a submissive form of love, Volf evidences the projection of his egalitarian social agenda onto the Trinity.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Michael S. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 131.

<sup>122</sup>Johnson, “Imitating the Trinity,” 321-24.

<sup>123</sup>Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 217.

<sup>124</sup>Kevin J. Bidwell, *The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf’s Ecclesial Model*, W.E.S.T. Theological Monograph Series, Kindle ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock,

Rather than encouraging only an imitation of the immanent Trinity, reflection on the covenant of redemption helps to elucidate the close relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity. Horton comments, “As the eternal pact entered into by the members of the Trinity, it represents the close relationship of the *opera ad intra* and the *opera ad extra*, or the immanent and economic trinities.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly T. F. Torrance writes, “The economic Trinity and the ontological Trinity are not to be separated from one another for they are locked together in God’s threefold *self*-revelation and *self*-communication to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>126</sup> However, affirming the bond between these two ideas is not the same thing as conflating the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity.

Recognizing a close relationship between “God for us” (the economic Trinity) and “God in himself” (the ontological Trinity)<sup>127</sup> should not be confused with the often repeated “rule” of Karl Rahner: “The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’ Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity.”<sup>128</sup> If the immanent Trinity is completely circumscribed in God’s work for us, then grace is impossible because it would become a necessary aspect God’s being.<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless, a close relationship between the two must be maintained because if there is no real bond between the two then “the saving events proclaimed in the economy of the Gospel are without any divine

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2011), loc. 7323.

<sup>125</sup>Michael S. Horton, “Post-Reformation Reformed Anthropology,” in *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, 47.

<sup>126</sup>Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 7.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.

<sup>128</sup>Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 22.

<sup>129</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 68.



validity and the doctrine of the Trinity is lacking in any ultimate divine truth.”<sup>130</sup> By emphasizing the bond between these two aspects of the Trinity, believers are assured that they can learn something about who God is himself as he works on our behalf in salvation. Therefore, in the covenant of redemption, a close association is made between God’s being and act. If this principle within the covenant of redemption is applied to covenants in general, then it can be deduced that when humans engage in covenant making there should be an intention to align the inward self with outward obligation. The person should delight in performing his obligations.

Having established this close relationship between God for us and God himself, it should be understood that when people are called to “imitate God” (Eph 5:1), they are not being called to simply imitate the immanent Trinity. According to Ephesians 5:1, we are to imitate God by walking in love “as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” The focal point of the trinitarian relations in this verse clearly rests on God’s actions for us in the economic Trinity. Keith Johnson has helpfully summarized three ways to imitate the economic Trinity. He encourages believers to imitate God’s character as displayed in his communicable attributes, to imitate God’s conduct by ruling and exercising dominion, and to imitate God’s Son through love, humility, and obedience.<sup>131</sup>

The idea of obedience is especially significant in discussing covenants and the economic Trinity. It is also in the economic Trinity that covenantal order can be observed. As Ware has commented, “It is clear that the Son obeyed the Father in heaven, in order to come from heaven and do the will of his Father in his earthly mission. He was the Son of the Father in heaven, and he obeyed his Father in coming from heaven. Therefore, his submission to the Father existed in eternity past and his role here as Son

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<sup>130</sup>Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 7-8.

<sup>131</sup>Johnson, “Imitating the Trinity,” 325-31.

and Savior is only thereby rightly understood.”<sup>132</sup> The proper place to consider the submission and obedience of the Son in the realm of eternity is in the context of the covenant of redemption. By focusing on covenant, freedom rather than necessity is emphasized. The Son is not to be considered submissive to the Father by nature, but instead he freely chooses to engage in a covenantal relationship that involves obedience.<sup>133</sup>

Submission and obedience are concepts that need to be incorporated into the relational understanding of the self. The self is not an isolated individual, but rather an “interconnected, interdependent relational person in community.”<sup>134</sup> Due to the covenantal nature of the self, these interdependencies should entail an element of submission and obedience. As a person binds him or herself to another in a covenantal commitment, the individual is then responsible to uphold his portion of the commitment by faithfully serving.<sup>135</sup> This element of submission does not negate love, because the covenantal relationship is also reciprocal. The person in a covenantal position of authority is also responsible to imitate the economic Trinity through love and humility in order to develop mutuality in the relationship.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>Ware, “Cur Deus Trinus,” 50.

<sup>133</sup>Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, loc. 13522.

<sup>134</sup>Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, loc. 1891.

<sup>135</sup>Because this research is primarily interested in developing a construct of the self that is designed to engage with patterns of shared leadership that occur in the workplace, the focus of this paragraph rests on covenantal commitments that are made as free associations. However, it should also be recognized that not all covenantal associations are freely developed. Some associations are determined by God and revealed to humanity through Scripture. This emphasis on covenantal boundaries that are created by God, is especially important in discussing the ethics of family and ecclesiological relationships. The element of authority and submission that is being developed in this covenantal description of the relational self is equally applicable to those covenantal associations that are not freely assumed.

<sup>136</sup>Jack O. Balswick, Pamela Ebstyn King, and Kevin S. Reimer, *The Reciprocal Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 54-57.

## **Covenant and Identity**

Rather than discrediting the idea of a relational self by emphasizing responsibility and submission, the concept of covenant should bind people to one another in mutually affirming ways. Because of the fall, covenantal relationships can be perverted and develop destructive tendencies, but this perversion is equally applicable to overly egalitarian frameworks that refuse to make proper ethical distinctions. The idea of responsibility that arises out of covenantal obligation is especially significant. Horton understands covenants to be formative of the relational understanding of the self because they encourage a person to understand himself by his responsibilities to others. He says, “This approach [i.e., understanding the image of God as a covenantal commission with an eschatological orientation] necessarily directs our attention away from the inner quest, out toward a conception of the self that is inseparable from though not reduced to its external relations in a specific ‘form of life’ defined by mutual obligations.”<sup>137</sup> A covenantal understanding of the self highlights the identity forming nature of responsibilities.

Like the doctrine of the image of God and union with Christ, the concept of covenant leads to an understanding of the self that is both open and bounded. The self is open in the sense that it is determined by its responsibilities to others, yet it is bounded because it is commissioned to a particular task. The bounded individualistic self is impossible to conceive in a covenantal context because all people are in some sense determined by their relationship to Adam or Christ (Rom 5:12-21; 1 Cor 15:21-22).<sup>138</sup> Conversely, the covenantal context guards against understanding the self as a pure relation because the ethical requirements of the law require an individual to act with

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<sup>137</sup>Horton, “Image and Office,” 184.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., 193.

moral agency (Matt 12:36; Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10).<sup>139</sup> The covenantal perspective of the self emphasizes that relationality and individuality are equiprimal aspects of identity.

### **Conclusion**

The doctrines of the image of God, union with Christ, and covenant provide a “symphonic” perspective of the self. Each of these doctrines exist in a relational way that can be used to reinforce, improve, or correct the perspectives that might result if a doctrine of the self were to be formulated on only one of these doctrines.<sup>140</sup> For example, the doctrine of the image of God cannot be understood properly without also addressing union with Christ and covenant. Any understanding of the image of God that does not take into account the redemptive historical association of the image with union with Christ does not present a full biblical picture. Similarly, a full biblical picture of the image of God must also emphasize the covenantal responsibilities that are initiated by God at creation. Looking at these doctrines together informs a biblical understanding of the self that is both open and bounded.

Since persons are created in the image of God they bear the likeness of the Triune God. This means that people reflect and represent God in both substance and function. These concepts coalesce in union with Christ. Through Christ persons are renewed after the image of Christ. They become the beings that God intended them to be. This requires that they form an identity that originates in relationship with another Person. In opening the self to Christ, the self also becomes open to the entire body of Christ. It is also in this community that a person’s full particularity arises. Through relationships with others, not only is the self shaped, but also it is able to give a full

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<sup>139</sup>Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology*, 53.

<sup>140</sup>Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1987), 43.

contribution in the shaping of others. This principle of reciprocity requires the self to be understood in terms that are both bounded and open.

In addition to the image of God and union with Christ, the idea of covenant provides a third important contributing aspect of the self. Previously proposed understandings of the relational self such as the ecclesial self, catholic personality, perichoretic being, and being as communion tend to overlook the concept of covenant. Because of this oversight, these perspectives place the concept of freedom over responsibility. The biblical idea of covenant serves as a reminder that freedom is only understandable in the context of responsibility. Rather than a libertarian concept of freedom that assumes an unbounded will, covenant encourages the individual to extend freedom to others through obedience to covenantal norms. These covenantal norms recognize that reciprocal relationships might include postures of authority and submission.

In the context of forming an understanding of the self based on the Trinity, a secondary goal of this chapter has been to evaluate some of the other proposed models. In particular, this chapter examined Stanley Grenz's understanding of the ecclesial self, John Zizioulas's description of being as communion, Colin Gunton's understanding of perichoretic being, and Miroslav Volf's catholic personality. Although many very helpful insights were gained from examining each of these perspectives, ultimately each of them were found lacking for one of two reasons. Either there was a failure to consistently apply a trinitarian ontology that emphasized the equiprimordial relationship between unity and diversity or there was a failure to submit to and recognize the covenantal aspects of the self.

In the introduction it was pointed out that Joyce Fletcher called for the formation of a "new set of beliefs" for implementing the relational models of the self to shared leadership contexts. Taken together and interpreted through a trinitarian lens, the doctrines of the image of God, union with Christ, and covenant can be used to form this

new set of beliefs in a distinctly Christian way. This chapter outlined the conception of this new cognitive frame; the following chapters will unfold the practical aspects of this frame to the workplace environment.

## CHAPTER 4

### RELATIONAL PERSONS IN WORKGROUPS

If personal identity should be understood in terms that emphasize both unity and particularity, then persons should be understood to be both open and bounded. Moreover, in a trinitarian ontology both unity and particularity should be understood to exist in an equiprimal relationship. Personal particularity is not simply derivative of the community, nor is community simply a collection of individuals. Each person both contributes to the community and is shaped by the community. If unity is understood to be ultimate, then the tendency of workgroups is to treat each individual as an object. This overemphasis on unity, is typified in the scientific management theory of Fredrick Taylor. Because Taylor emphasized the efficient system over persons, his management system fostered distrust of workers and stifled the individual's ability to make free creative decisions.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, a system that overemphasizes particularity will create problems by disconnecting a person from community. If the workgroup is a collection of individuals with no community connections, then an overemphasis on competition and manipulation of others is likely to develop. These problems isolate individuals from each other within the workgroup.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this isolation of individuals encourages the development of a similar type of objectification to that which was described in the previous paragraph.

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<sup>1</sup>Maarten Derksen, "Turning Men into Machines? Scientific Management, Industrial Psychology, and the 'Human Factor,'" *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences* 50, no. 2 (2014): 165; Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 16-17.

<sup>2</sup>Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 88-89.

Individualism in workgroups encourages peers to view each other as “contacts” and to reduce social life in the workplace to the instrumental activity of “networking.”<sup>3</sup>

If the focal point of particularity is shifted from individuals within the workgroup to the leader, other complications are likely to result. From this type of particularism, command and control, authoritarian leadership styles develop. Amy Edmondson characterizes these styles of leadership as “execution-as-efficiency.” In her assessment, these types of leadership do not value feedback from followers, expect unconditional obedience, and use fear as a motivational tool.<sup>4</sup> Other research indicates that leadership styles that do not emphasize the relational connection between leaders and followers are frequently characterized by workplace bullying and coercive persuasion.<sup>5</sup> These styles of leadership are unbiblical (Matt 20:25-27) and contrary to the description of persons that has been outlined thus far in this research.

Of central concern in applying a trinitarian foundation to workgroups, is the development of a style of leadership that does not objectify the other. Since objectification leads to manipulation, coercive persuasion, and bullying, ethical leadership must refuse to objectify others. Instead leaders and followers must treat each other as genuine persons by engaging in relationships that are both capable of influencing and open to one another in humility. Because the shared leadership model shifts the focus from directive leader influence to the process of influence that occurs through individuals in relationship, the concept of leadership proposed in this chapter will give careful consideration to the similarities and differences that exist between the two ideas. Most

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<sup>3</sup>Dennis Tourish, *The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership: A Critical Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 51.

<sup>4</sup>Edmondson, *Teaming*, 225.

<sup>5</sup>See Tourish, *The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership*, 40-41; Sarah J. Tracy, Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik, and Jess K. Alberts, “Nightmares, Demons, and Slaves: Exploring the Painful Metaphors of Workplace Bullying,” *Management Communication Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (2006): 148-85.



significantly, focus will be placed on the dynamics of intra-workgroup relationships and the processes through which mutual influence can be achieved. The goal of this chapter is to provide an ethical framework for thinking about mutual influence in a way that treats others as genuine persons who are both open and bounded.

A helpful starting point in developing this ethical framework is provided by John Frame. According to Frame, the necessary and sufficient conditions for good works include having a right motive, right standard, and right goal.<sup>6</sup> From this observation, Frame develops three perspectives for evaluating behavior. He calls these three perspectives the existential, normative, and situational perspectives.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, each of these perspectives exists in an interdependent relationship. This relationship can be summarized by saying, “Ethical judgment involves the application of a norm to a situation by a person.”<sup>8</sup> The interdependence and relational aspects of these three perspectives are especially applicable to the trinitarian ontology that has been presented in this research.

Although Frame provides a helpful starting point for discussing intra-workgroup relationships, he is not particularly concerned with leadership or patterns of mutual influence among persons. Therefore, instead of focusing on the three perspectives broadly outlined by Frame, it will be helpful to provide a more narrow focus that is intentionally applicable to relationships between workgroups. In order to narrow the focus, this chapter will add a prescriptive element to the three perspectives. Rather than examining the existential, situational, and normative perspectives, this chapter will provide a more narrow focus that encourages workgroups to relate to one another with love, through dialogue, and in covenant. These elements are intended to be applications

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<sup>6</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 28.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 33.

of the three perspectives of ethical conduct. Love describes the correct existential posture for relating to others; dialogue is intended to describe the method for determining the situational complexities of decisions; and covenant describes the conditions for establishing normative boundaries.

### **Relating with Love**

Given the emotional connotations that are normally associated with the word “love” in western culture, it might seem a little unusual to choose this word to describe the correct existential posture for workgroup relations. However, the biblical description of love is central for understanding both the intratrinitarian relationships and understanding how people should relate to one another. Commenting on 1 John 4:16, Robert Letham says, “Love is the acid test of our discipleship. If we love others we belong to Jesus Christ. If we lack love, we are not his at all. God is a triune communion of persons. Love is intrinsic to who he is.”<sup>9</sup> The biblical description of love does not restrict itself to simply an emotive response. Love does not only respond, but it initiates as well.

Noticing this disparity between the emotive way love is frequently described and the biblical description of love, it is especially important to clarify what is meant by love. Vern Poythress summarizes these differences by stating, “Loving is difficult. It requires going out of ourselves . . . . True love results in *action*, not simply in good feelings.”<sup>10</sup> This description of love broadens the typical understanding of love by highlighting two significant features. Firstly, love requires “going out of ourselves.” A biblical description of love is not merely a self-referential emotion; it requires a person to

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 477.

<sup>10</sup>Vern Sheridan Poythress, *Redeeming Sociology: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 228.

open him or herself to others in a relationship. Secondly, love involves actions. These distinctions are especially foundational to understanding love as it should be applied to workgroup relations.

Several of the descriptions of personhood that were discussed in the previous chapter made extensive use of the idea of love. In describing the image of God, Anthony Hoekema devotes considerable attention to Christ. Since Christ is called the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and human persons are to be “conformed to the image of [God’s] Son” (Rom 8:29), it can reasonably be inferred that by looking to the life of Christ, human persons can better understand how to represent God as his image bearers. Commenting on this association, Hoekema says, “What must therefore be at the center of the image of God is not characteristics like the ability to reason or the ability to make decisions . . . but rather that which was central in the life of Christ: love for God and love for man. If it is true that Christ perfectly images God, then the heart of the image of God must be love.”<sup>11</sup> Because of Christ’s sacrificial love, believers are compelled to no longer live for themselves, but to serve others (2 Cor 5:14-15).

Similarly Miroslav Volf’s understanding of catholic personality also gives centrality of place to the idea of love. When Volf discusses union with Christ, he emphasizes that the relationships between believers are transformed. He summarizes this transformation by saying, “The relations between the many in the church must reflect the mutual *love* of the divine persons.”<sup>12</sup> This sharing of mutual love encourages a person to allow the self to be opened to the influence of others. After describing God as “perfect love,” Volf encourages people to reconcile differences in love. He says, “Reconciliation with the other will succeed only if the self, guided by the narrative of the triune God, is

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<sup>11</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 22.

<sup>12</sup>Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, ed. Alan G. Padgett, *Sacra Doctrina* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 195.

ready to receive the other into itself and undertake a re-adjustment of its identity in light of the other's alterity."<sup>13</sup> Through reconciliation human persons image the Trinity because it corresponds to the initiation of God's Kingdom on earth. This new rule results in a "change of heart and behavior."<sup>14</sup>

However, Volf's description of love does not allow for any disparity. In his thinking, a perfect community of love makes any notion of hierarchy inconceivable.<sup>15</sup> Because Volf's understanding of the Trinity only considers the single attribute of love outside of its relationship to other biblical concepts, such as covenant, he is able to force the concept of social equity onto love.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, it should be noticed that the notion of love as social equity is foreign to the Scriptures. Rather than thinking of love in terms of social equality, the biblical description of love accounts for an element of submission. Christians should "serve one another humbly in love" (Gal 5:13). We especially show our love for Christ by submitting to his commandments in love (John 14:15). Service to one another and love work together in the divine economy.

Stanley Grenz's understanding of the ecclesial self provides a helpful corrective to Volf's emphasis on egalitarianism in love. Like Hoekema and Volf, Grenz also makes extensive use of the concept of love. In particular, Grenz focuses on the form of love associated with the Greek word *agape*. Although there are multiple Greek words for love such as *storge*, *philia*, and *eros*, *agape* is the word that is most frequently used in the New Testament. "The reason for the predominance of *agape* in the New Testament

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<sup>13</sup>Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 110.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>15</sup>Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 217.

<sup>16</sup>Kevin J. Bidwell, *The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf's Ecclesial Model*, W.E.S.T. Theological Monograph Series, Kindle ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), loc. 7100.

lies in part in the meaning of the term itself. To the ancient Greek mind, *agape* spoke of a love that moved beyond emotion . . . . It has to do with mind and will.”<sup>17</sup> This word is especially appropriate for describing the intratrinitarian relationships. “As Christian thinkers from Athanasius to the new trinitarians have noted the divine unity is comprised by the mutual love—the mutual self-giving—among the three persons who comprise the one God. God is love, therefore, not only because the first trinitarian person loves but also in that the divine essence is the *agape* that characterized the life of the triune God.”<sup>18</sup> Grenz summarizes *agape* by commenting on 1 John 4:16 and saying, “Love ceases to be a qualifying—i.e. secondary—property of being and becomes *the supreme ontological predicate*.”<sup>19</sup> In Grenz’s estimation then, *agape* is characterized by a willful giving of the self in order to increase in communion with others. Both service and benevolence are a part of this description. This type of love is characteristic of relations within the Trinity and it is the type of love that people should share with one another.

In order to better understand the biblical description of love, it is helpful to notice that the Scriptures frequently use love as summative concept that relates to many other behaviors and personal attributes.<sup>20</sup> This is why the Scriptures can say, “God is love” (1 John 4:16), that love is the greatest virtue (1 Cor 13:13), or that love is the fulfillment of the law (Gal 5:14). As was just indicated, there is a very close association between love and servanthood. When Christians are called to imitate God, they are called to imitate him by walking in love. This example of walking in love is especially related to sacrificial service. Christ is the perfect example of love. We imitate God by loving “as

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<sup>17</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, The Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 313.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 314.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 316.

<sup>20</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 656.

Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:1). Therefore when we imitate the triune God in love, sacrificial service to others is a very important aspect of our behavior.

### **Love as Mutual Benevolence**

However, the idea of sacrificial service does not exhaust the biblical idea of love. Although love is not only an emotional commitment, it should not be considered to be somehow beyond emotion in a stoic sense.<sup>21</sup> This is clear from the great commandment to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matt 22:37). Love certainly has behavioral implications, but it also has emotional and cognitive aspects as well. Because love has emotional and cognitive implications, it is not only focused on others. That act of loving and being loved has a particularizing component. To love God is to be known by him (1 Cor 8:3), and God’s knowledge of the individual is related to the entire transformative experience of salvation (Rom 8:29-30). In love individuals give of themselves to others, but they are also transformed by others. Thus love is a component of understanding the self as both open and bounded.

Most of the literature on leadership talks very little about love. However, the work of Kenneth Boulding is a significant exception. In his book on power, he identifies three different types of power: threat, economic (or exchange), and integrative.<sup>22</sup> Of these three types of power, he considers integrative to be the most significant. According to Boulding, “The ultimate dominance of integrative power rest on the fact that integrative behavior creates communications and builds up communication networks.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 7.

<sup>22</sup>Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Three Faces of Power* (Newbury Park, NJ: Sage, 1989), 15-25.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.

Moreover, he considers love to be the most fundamental form of integrative power.<sup>24</sup> Love builds benevolent reciprocity between leaders and followers and delights in the successes of the other. In Boulding's conceptualization, love is "rational benevolence, expanding the self to the larger world."<sup>25</sup> Later, he further elaborates on this description of love when he says,

The capacity to love in a generalized sense . . . means a capacity not only to be aware both of the broader and narrower environment around a person but also to find these environments attractive and interesting, and to put a substantial value on them, especially in terms of benevolence. This means . . . that the person perceives an increase in his or her welfare when he or she perceives an increase in the welfare in some sense in the surrounding world.<sup>26</sup>

This generalized understanding of love is important in a shared leadership context because it fosters reciprocity between the members of a workgroup through a concern for mutual benevolence.

Mary Miller provides a similar description of love in her theory of leadership. She defines love as "choice(s) to will the highest good."<sup>27</sup> Like Boulding she also affirms a principle of mutual benevolence in her description of love.<sup>28</sup> This type of love for others within a workgroup is especially important because it develops a sense of humility before others and positions the member to more easily accept the cognitive frame of a learner. Miller considers this to be an essential part of transforming leadership. She says, "The openness, which the transforming leader extends to the follower that encourages and fosters mutual stimulation, can only happen because of the leader's self-schema. Self-aggrandisement cannot come into the picture here because self-aggrandisement prohibits

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 111.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>27</sup>Mary Miller, "Transforming Leadership: What Does Love Have to Do with It?" *Transformation* 23, no. 2 (2006): 95.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 102.

the type of free exchange that allows for mutual stimulation to occur.”<sup>29</sup> Through mutual respect and love, members of a workgroup are capable of discovering the necessary trust to freely share their thoughts and the necessary humility to learn from others.<sup>30</sup> If shared leadership is defined as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals,”<sup>31</sup> then love is foundational to developing a workgroup that functions on the principles of shared leadership because love enables the person to be open to others and capable of learning in humility.

### **Love as Mutual Self-Giving**

This principle of mutual benevolence that is evident in Boulding and Miller’s description of love is very significant, but it does not cover the full range of meaning that seems to be covered by the word *agape*. Following Grenz’s description of *agape* that was mentioned above, two principles need to be simultaneously affirmed in a trinitarian understanding of love: mutual benevolence and mutual self-giving. The first principle is upheld in Boulding and Miller’s theory of leadership and it bears some similarity to the most common descriptions of shared leadership. However, the second principle of mutual self-giving bears some similarities to servant leadership.

According to Robert Greenleaf’s theory of servant leadership, “The servant-leader *is* servant first . . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve . . .

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 103. Although Miller is referring to love in the context of transforming leadership rather than shared leadership, her definition bears some similarity to shared leadership. She chooses the label “transforming” leadership rather than “transformational” leadership because she wants to emphasize the ongoing process and principle of mutual reciprocity that exists between leaders and followers.

<sup>30</sup>Charles Hooker and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow, Creativity, and Shared Leadership,” in *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership*, ed. Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 225-26.

<sup>31</sup>Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, “All Those Years Ago: The Historical Underpinnings of Shared Leadership,” in *Shared Leadership*, 1.



then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”<sup>32</sup> In order to clarify, Greenleaf contrasts this position with someone who is a “*leader first*.” In his estimation, someone who is a leader first is a person who might need to “assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.”<sup>33</sup> Although Greenleaf does not claim to be developing his theory of leadership directly on the teachings of Jesus, the similarities between the two perspectives on authority are strikingly similar. According to Greenleaf, the leader-first perspective wrongly focuses on power instead of service. The teachings of Jesus come to a very similar conclusion regarding authority. According to Jesus, poor leaders “lord” their authority over others, but the disciples are encouraged to instead become great by being a servant to others (Matt 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-26). Greenleaf is certainly correct in noticing that this theory of leadership goes against the grain of culture. John Hutchinson points out that the radical change it calls for is so great that the prior work of the Holy Spirit is necessary in order to overcome a self-centered understanding of authority and to practice loving servanthood.<sup>34</sup>

Undoubtedly this servant aspect is central to a biblical understanding of love, but Christian leaders should still exercise caution when applying Greenleaf’s theory of servant leadership to Christian settings. In Greenleaf’s construct, true leadership is very internalized. Among other places, this is evident in his description of joy. He says, “Joy is inward, it is generated inside. It is not found outside and brought in. It is for those who accept the world as it is, part good, part bad, and who identify with the good by adding a little island of serenity to it.”<sup>35</sup> This internalized understanding of leadership differs from

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<sup>32</sup>Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, ed. Larry C. Spears, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 27.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>John C. Hutchinson, “Servanthood: Jesus’ Countercultural Call to Christian Leaders,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166 (2009): 69.

<sup>35</sup>Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, 57.

the description of identity that rests on the doctrine of union with Christ. Through union with Christ, a person finds joy and love outside of the self.

Greenleaf's understanding of identity is similar to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls the "cartesian self" or "private self." Regarding the self, he says, "A cartesian approach consists of peeling off the allegedly false person or mask of the self to attain the 'real me' (or cogito) inside. This goal of reaching for a private and original self is limited in that it ignores the process of cultivation."<sup>36</sup> In Greenleaf's description, this 'real me' may look like a servant, but nonetheless it is autonomous from outside influence. Many Christian approaches to servant leadership rest on a similar understanding of the self. For example Don Howell's description of servant leadership affirms "three trajectories that penetrate the fundamental identity of all servant leaders – character, motive and agenda"<sup>37</sup> As Howell continues to develop this understanding of identity, the impression can easily be formed that the self is open to God, but not necessarily the community.

A leadership methodology founded on trinitarian principles needs to account for the character, motive, and agenda of the leader as well as the concerns of the workgroup community. If one is emphasized without the other, then reciprocity and shared leadership cannot occur. In commenting on transformational leadership, Dennis Tourish and Ashley Pinnington highlight this concern by saying, "There is no a priori reason to presume that the goals proposed by a transformational leader need to represent a deeper mutual interest among organizational partners, and hence express the best interests of all concerned."<sup>38</sup> Recognizing this problem within transformational

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<sup>36</sup>Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (New York: Cambridge, 1981), 4.

<sup>37</sup>Don N. Howell Jr., *Servants of the Servant: A Biblical Theology of Leadership* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 296.

<sup>38</sup>Dennis Tourish and Ashley Pinnington, "Transformational Leadership, Corporate Cultism,

leadership, Steve Echols recommends that servant leadership principles be used to keep the transformational leader in check.<sup>39</sup> However, because servant leadership is also based on a private understanding of the self, it is not a reliable theory for providing this necessary check. The trinitarian understanding of love that is based on mutual benevolence and mutual servanthood provides a more reliable foundation for developing a leadership theory that allows for reciprocal influence.

### **Influence through Dialogue**

In order to actualize the benefits of these principles of mutual benevolence and mutual service, there needs to be a point of genuine connection between members of the workgroup. Effective dialogue requires a person to adopt the “second-person point of view.”<sup>40</sup> This simply means that the “listener adopts the perspective of the person talking.”<sup>41</sup> Adopting a second-person point of view, allows people empathetically to engage in conversation without polarization. William Isaacs offers a helpful definition of dialogue. He says, “*Dialogue . . . is conversation with a center, not sides*. It is a way of taking the energy of our differences and channeling it toward something that has never been created before.”<sup>42</sup> In this sense, dialogue emphasizes both unity and diversity. There are genuine differences in dialogue. These differences occur when two or more individual

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and the Spirituality Paradigm: An Unholy Trinity in the Workplace?” *Human Relations* 55, no. 2 (2002): 149.

<sup>39</sup>Steve Echols, “Transformational/Servant Leadership: A Potential Synergism for an Inclusive Leadership Style,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 8, no. 2 (2009): 108.

<sup>40</sup>C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges* (San Francisco: Berretto-Koehler, 2009), 19.

<sup>41</sup>Joyce K. Fletcher and Katrin Käufer, “Shared Leadership: Paradox and Possibility,” in *Shared Leadership*, 38.

<sup>42</sup>William Isaacs, *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*, Kindle ed. (New York: Currency, 1999), loc. 410.

people bring their unique perspective into a conversation. However, there is also unity in dialogue. Unity develops as the differences are channeled toward a unified goal.

This type of communication is especially important within the framework of a trinitarian foundation for leadership. Because all members share a concern for accomplishing the goals of the workgroup, each member must be able to voice his or her knowledge and be heard by other members to enable the emergence of leadership.<sup>43</sup> Although understanding leadership from a trinitarian foundation does not necessarily require the affirmation of an emergent leadership style, it does require all the members of a workgroup to adhere to the principle of mutual influence. Therefore, even if a person is in a position of assigned leadership rather than emergent leadership, he or she is still responsible to adopt the second-person point of view.

This concern for mutual influence is articulated well by Craig Pearce in his description of shared leadership. He says,

Shared leadership occurs when all members of a team are fully engaged in the leadership of the team and are not hesitant to influence and guide their fellow team members in an effort to maximize the potential of the team as a whole. Simply put, shared leadership entails a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that is characterized by ‘serial emergence’ of official as well as unofficial leaders.<sup>44</sup>

Although George Cladis does not use the language of ‘serial emergence’ his description of leaders shifting roles within a collaborative team bears some similarity to Pearce’s description of shared leadership. According to Cladis, as the group and individual decide together how to accomplish goals, some leaders in the team may shift in their assigned roles. He describes a collaborative team by saying, “Teams are made up of people who are diverse in skill and temperament. Each member contributes skill and knowledge for

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<sup>43</sup> Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Pearce, Craig L., “The Future of Leadership: Combining Vertical and Shared Leadership to Transform Knowledge Work,” *Academy of Management Executive* 18, no. 1 (2004): 48.

the benefit of the group's goal. This collaboration is synergistic, producing a net effect that far outweighs the sum of the work of individuals."<sup>45</sup> This type of collaboration requires both love and dialogue. While love delights in the mutual benefit that is derived through collaboration, it is dialogue that connects people and allows them to learn from one another.

The Scriptures do not specifically describe dialogue. However, there are several places in the Bible that describe how communication should occur within a fellowshiping community. From this description of communication, it can be deduced that biblical dialogue involves an active and a passive principle. In regard to the active principle of dialogue, one very interesting example occurs in Hebrews 10:24. This pericope is particularly interesting because it associates communication with love. In Hebrews 10:19-25, the author describes the three virtues of faith, hope, and love. He associates faith with drawing near to one another (10:22), hope with holding fast to the confession (10:23), and love to stirring up on another (10:24). Commenting on this portion of Scripture, William Lane says, "The third appeal is a summons for the continued caring for one another that finds an expression in love, good works, and the mutual encouragement that active participation in the gatherings of the community makes possible."<sup>46</sup> In Hebrews 10:24 communication clearly involves action stimulated by love. A person needs to be involved in the life of others as an encourager. In this sense he or she must have a bounded personality that is capable of influencing others.

In regard to the passive principle of dialogue, it is helpful to consider Philippians 2:3. This verse exhorts the community to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Peter O'Brien

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<sup>45</sup>George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 91.

<sup>46</sup>William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 47B (Dallas: Word, 1998), 289.

describes the humility described in this verse as “other person-centredness.” This orientation presupposes a “readiness to see and rejoice in the good in fellow believers.”<sup>47</sup> By counting others as more significant than the self, persons are capable of opening themselves to the influence of others. This opening introduces the passive principle of dialogue in which the community is given permission to change the individual. If the focus of the active principle is on the bounded self, the focus of the passive principle should be understood in terms of the open self. Both the active and passive principles of dialogue are necessary for understanding authentic communication within workgroups.

### **Active Principle of Dialogue**

The active principle of communication is concerned with what Edmondson refers to as “speaking up.” This is “interpersonal behavior that allows the development of shared insights from open conversation.”<sup>48</sup> Of primary concern is individual willingness to share insights, especially those insights that might increase knowledge, create a safer environment, or stimulate activity. In order for a workgroup to function at its best level these insights must be verbalized. However, for various reasons members of a team are frequently hesitant to speak up. Some of the reasons a person might be hesitant to speak up in a workgroup include, “Disengaged behavior based on resignation, self-protective behavior based on fear, and other-oriented behavior based on cooperation.”<sup>49</sup>

Consideration of this list emphasizes the close relationship that exists between developing a loving environment and encouraging active participation in dialogue.

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<sup>47</sup>Peter T. O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 182-83.

<sup>48</sup>Edmondson, *Teaming*, 53.

<sup>49</sup>Linn Van Dyne, Soon Ang, and Isabel Botero, “Conceptualizing Employee Silence and Employee Voice as Multidimensional Constructs,” *Journal of Management Studies* 40, no. 6 (2003): 1360.

In order for people to feel empowered to give voice to their ideas, there needs to be an environment that encourages mutual benevolence and mutual self-giving. Although this environment is not referred to as “love” in the literature on leadership, similar concepts are found. For example, workgroup environments that allow for mutual voicing are “psychologically safe.”<sup>50</sup> This idea is particularly important for encouraging employee voice. According to research done by James Detert and Amy Edmondson, people have learned through a process of socialization to find safety in silence before authorities. Detert and Edmondson identify this fear as “self-protective implicit voice.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, literature on leadership emphasizes a connection between trust and authentic communication. For workgroups to feel the requisite safety for engaging in productive dialogue an environment of mutual trust must be established.<sup>52</sup> The concepts of psychological safety and mutual trust are similar to the concept of love that was described in the previous section.

In a trusting environment built on love, persons can feel safe to actively engage in dialogue. This active engagement allows individuals to contribute to the learning conversation. Otto Scharmer has helpfully outlined the development of a learning conversation. In doing so he identified four distinct fields of conversation: (1) talking nice, (2) talking tough, (3) reflective dialogue, and (4) generative dialogue.<sup>53</sup> The first two fields of this model are very basic and do not require the degree of mutuality that is

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<sup>50</sup>James R. Detert and Amy C. Edmondson, “Implicit Voice Theories: Taken-for-granted Rules of Self-Censorship,” *Academy of Management Journal* 54, no. 3 (2011): 461; Amy Edmondson, “Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1999): 379. Edmondson, *Teaming*, 77.

<sup>51</sup>Detert and Edmondson, “Implicit Voice Theories,” 463.

<sup>52</sup>Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 188; Revathi Turaga, “Building Trust in Teams: A Leader’s Role,” *IUP Journal of Soft Skills* 7, no. 2 (2013): 14.

<sup>53</sup>C. Otto Scharmer, “Self-transcending Knowledge: Sensing and Organizing around Emerging Opportunities,” *Journal of Knowledge Management* 5, no. 2 (2001): 146-48.

characteristic of genuine dialogue. In talking nice, the emphasis is on courtesy and repeating rules. “Because individuals do not speak up or say what they really think, conversation devolves to a rule-repeating interaction.”<sup>54</sup> Talking tough raises the level of authenticity in a conversation because a person says what he or she thinks and a conflict is likely to ensue.<sup>55</sup> In talking tough, “Individuals want to make their perspectives understood and exert influence over the group rather than learn from others.”<sup>56</sup> However, this is still not considered genuine dialogue because there is not an element of joint responsibility.<sup>57</sup> Scharmer calls these first two fields of a learning conversation “non-self reflective speech acts.”<sup>58</sup>

In order to actively participate in genuine dialogue the second-person point of view needs to be adopted. This point of view is necessary for the higher order and dialogic aspects of a learning conversation to develop. In reflective dialogue and generative dialogue, the person must engage in “self-reflective speech acts.”<sup>59</sup> The first two fields of Scharmer’s model are not authentic dialogue because dialogue “implies that you no longer take your own position as final.”<sup>60</sup> In this sense the first two fields can only attain a status that looks more like debate than dialogue.<sup>61</sup> However, through self-reflective speech acts, the last two fields of the model become authentic dialogue.

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<sup>54</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 36.

<sup>55</sup>Scharmer, “Self-transcending Knowledge” 147.

<sup>56</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 37.

<sup>57</sup>Jürgen Weibler and Sigrid Rohn-Endres, “Learning Conversation and Shared Network Leadership: Development, Gestalt, and Consequences,” *Journal of Personnel Psychology* 9, no. 4 (2010): 183.

<sup>58</sup>Scharmer, “Self-transcending Knowledge,” 147.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Isaacs, *Dialogue*, loc. 424.

<sup>61</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 37.



Reflective dialogue is characterized by inquiry and a willingness to change points of view.<sup>62</sup> It differs from talking tough because it requires a suspension of judgment. Olen Gunnlaugson helpfully comments on this aspect of suspension in reflective dialogue by commenting,

Suspension of one's judgments or reaction requires learning to bracket one's views and embrace competing perspectives as important partial illuminations of the larger gestalt of the group subject or issue . . . . Suspension helps groups become more aware of the pervasive tendency to reenact past patterns based on unexamined assumptions, perspectives or beliefs.<sup>63</sup>

By focusing on suspension, reflective dialogue introduces the important element of critical self-reflection to the learning conversation. Critical self-reflection requires a person to evaluate the personal and cultural assumptions that limit his or her understanding of another's perspective and to consider other perspectives that can lead to the transformation of personal assumptions.<sup>64</sup>

A final transition occurs in the learning conversation in the shift from reflective dialogue to generative dialogue. According to Scharmer, the principal leverage in moving from [reflective dialogue] to [generative dialogue] is based on reconnecting what we think, say, and do with what we see."<sup>65</sup> It is at this level of dialogue that the group begins to understand one another to such a degree that a new perspective is capable of emerging. Generative dialogue requires a high level of mutual understanding that transcends individual interests.<sup>66</sup> According to Joyce Fletcher and Katrin Käufer, "A generative dialogue is by definition shared leadership. It is a form of social interaction in

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<sup>62</sup>Scharmer, "Self-transcending Knowledge," 147.

<sup>63</sup>Olen Gunnlaugson, "Exploratory Perspectives for an AQAL Model of Generative Dialogue," *Integral Review* 4 (2007): 47.

<sup>64</sup>Jack Mezirow, "On Critical Reflection," *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (1998): 193.

<sup>65</sup>Scharmer, "Self-transcending Knowledge," 147.

<sup>66</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, "Shared Leadership," 38.

which the whole team or group shares the responsibility of the process itself and improves their ability to cooperate.”<sup>67</sup>

Examining the steps of generative dialogue highlights two related aspects of the active principle of dialogue. Firstly, a person must speak up and contribute to the conversation. The ability to speak up requires an empowerment that is fostered by developing an environment that is psychologically safe, mutually trusting, and loving. Secondly, a person must engage in self-reflection to be able to contribute to the dialogue process. In order for members of a workgroup to be able to mutually influence one another, they must be willing to evaluate their assumptions and change when necessary. Taken together, these two aspects emphasize the responsibility of each particular member of the workgroup to engage actively in dialogue.

### **Passive Principle of Dialogue**

Thinking through the generative dialogue process also introduces a passive principle of dialogue. Not only does a person need to contribute and reflect on his or her assumptions, but also it is necessary to listen and learn from others. In calling these two aspects passive, it is not being suggested that the individual person is completely static. Rather than referring to inactivity or stasis, passivity in this sense refers to a person’s willingness to allow others to affect him or her. The fact that the will is involved demonstrates that there is an element of activity in listening and learning from others, but there is also a change that occurs through dialogue that originates from outside the self.

A common failure of dialogue is a refusal to receive the other into the self. In authentic dialogue each individual must allow him or herself to be touched by another person’s reality.<sup>68</sup> The failure to do this is most clearly represented in the refusal to listen

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Izhak Berkovich, “Between Person and Person: Dialogical Pedagogy in Authentic Leadership Development,” *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 13, no. 2 (2014): 252.

that characterizes many conversations. Many conversations in the work setting tend to take on a debate form in which the primary concern is winning. In this scenario the person is not truly open to another or to the possibility that he or she could be wrong.<sup>69</sup> In agreement with Wayne C. Booth, Colin Gunton refers to this condition as the “death of rhetoric.” He says, “The death of rhetoric is the reason why much modern political dispute takes the form of aggressive confrontation rather than rational engagement . . . . Given loss of confidence in argument, the noisy and potentially violent demonstration is all that remains.”<sup>70</sup> Authentic listening requires a different posture. The individual person must be open to the other and willing to change if necessary.

Listening requires the hearer to unhinge the conversation from the win/lose debate mentality and instead grant voice to the other person. Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey summarize this point by saying, “It is not your job to point out to someone something you think he or she may be missing.”<sup>71</sup> Rather than polarization and debate, listening emphasizes connection. To listen well the listener must connect to the context of the speaker. Scharmer calls this “emphatic listening.” It occurs when “we move from staring at the objective world of things, figures, and facts into the story of a living being, a living system, and self . . . [when] we forget about our own agenda and begin to see how the world unfolds through someone else’s eyes.”<sup>72</sup> This type of listening submerges the hearer into the context of the speaker and allows for the emergence of a new change in perspective.

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<sup>69</sup>Isaacs, *Dialogue*, loc.733.

<sup>70</sup>Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), 102-3.

<sup>71</sup>Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, *How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work: Seven Languages for Transformation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 14.

<sup>72</sup>Scharmer, *Theory U*, 12.

When a person engages in emphatic listening, he or she must adopt a position of humility before the speaker. Listening well requires a tacit admission of some degree of ignorance. The listener admits that he or she has something to learn from the speaker. This humble admission allows the listener to reframe the goal of a conversation. Instead of engaging in a conversation to “win” the goal should be to learn. This is especially true in conflict or failure. Edmondson calls this reframing “organizing to learn.”<sup>73</sup> A workgroup that is built around the principle of organizing to learn is more concerned with discovering what happened during a specific failure than assigning blame.<sup>74</sup> Adopting a learning frame enables the person to be influenced by others.

It is especially important for workgroup members to adopt a learning frame in their conversations. Often in workgroup settings two competing methods for accomplishing a particular task may develop. If members representing these two methods engage in dialogue, they are likely to encounter some type of disturbance in their point of view. According to Isaacs, the natural tendency in this situation is to listen in a way that is self-confirming. Instead of listening to others in a self-confirming way, he encourages members of the workgroup to “follow the disturbance.” By this he means, “Instead of looking for evidence that confirms your point of view, you can look for what *disconfirms* it, what challenges it.”<sup>75</sup> According to Fletcher and Kaufer, those who adopt this frame have a different understanding of the self. Rather than self-esteem, they are more concerned with self-in-relation esteem. Because of this reorientation, members of the workgroup are more willing to accept criticism as a learning opportunity rather than a

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<sup>73</sup>Edmondson, *Teaming*, 83-85.

<sup>74</sup>Amy C. Edmondson, “Strategies for Learning from Failure,” *Harvard Business Review* 89, no. 4 (2012): 51.

<sup>75</sup>Isaacs, *Dialogue*, loc. 1535.

personal injury.<sup>76</sup> By reframing for learning rather than self-confirmation, workgroup members are able to grow personally and professionally.

Both listening and learning are aspects of the passive principle of dialogue. This passive principle of dialogue emphasizes the openness of the self. Through dialogue others are invited into the self and given permission to initiate a change in perspective. However, the active principle of dialogue emphasizes the bounded self. In dialogue not only is the self open to change, but also it is given permission to change others. Through this process of mutual change, the dialogue is able to account for the complexities of situations that workgroups encounter. No one person is able to analyze the full range of possibilities in a complicated situation, but through dialogue each member of the workgroup can increase their capacity for understanding. In dialogue, each member of the group must speak up, engage in self-critical behavior, listen to others, and learn from others.

### **The Covenanting Workgroup**

Dialogue and love work together to encourage both openness to others and influence by individuals in the lives of others. However, without some form of normative framework these concepts cannot provide a fully ethical system. Existential and situational ethics focus on the primacy of love for and openness to others, but a biblical ethic requires these aspects as well as a normative perspective.<sup>77</sup> Of primary importance are the covenantal norms that are revealed in Scripture. The norms of Scripture provide direction to love, and work as a limiting concept regarding openness to others. Relationships that attempt to show benevolence to others but operate on principles derived from outside God's authoritative word are not truly loving relationships.

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<sup>76</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, "Shared Leadership," 41.

<sup>77</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 45.

Similarly, an openness to others that allows the individual to think or behave in unbiblical ways is not truly beneficial. The normative aspect of covenant gives definition to a community. It exists “to invest love with a form.”<sup>78</sup> Michael Horton summarizes this normative aspect of covenant by saying, “Every covenant has a canon (meaning ‘rule’), and every community is defined by its constitution. As the word suggests, such a document actually *constitutes* a nation or company.”<sup>79</sup>

Scripture is the ultimate covenantal constitution under which all individuals and organizations should derive their normative framework. However, covenant should not be understood as simply a synonym for rule or law. The idea of covenant does not only relate to law, but also to ideas such as a loving relationship and continuous fellowship.<sup>80</sup> Commenting on the Old Testament background of “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15), Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum claim that this is a method of summarizing the covenantal commitment that should characterize a believing community.<sup>81</sup> They believe that the concepts of covenant and love mutually define one another, and they give careful consideration to each term. Love can be defined as, “A covenant commitment to the other person, demonstrated in actions that seek the well-being of the other person.”<sup>82</sup> Similarly, the idea of covenant is summarized in the word

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<sup>78</sup>John D. Zizioulas, “Preliminary Considerations on Authority,” in *The One and the Many: Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World Today*, ed. Fr. Gregory Edwards (Alhambra: Sebastian Press, 2010), 175.

<sup>79</sup>Michael S. Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 151.

<sup>80</sup>Morton Smith, “The Church and Covenant Theology,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21, no. 1 (1978): 48.

<sup>81</sup>Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 570.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 572.

pairs “justice-righteousness” and “loving-kindness-truth.”<sup>83</sup> This leads them to the conclusion that the concept of covenant relates to social justice.<sup>84</sup>

In summarizing the practical implications of covenant it is important to keep all these ideas in mind. Covenant is concerned with law, love, fellowship, and social justice. Grenz’s description of covenant gives a helpful starting point for applying all of these concepts to leadership. In a Christian organization where all the members confess allegiance to Christ, they also share common allegiance to one another.<sup>85</sup> According to Grenz, this implies that neither the organization nor the individual is primary. “Rather than focusing on the primacy of either, we must balance the individual and the corporate aspects of Christian identity.”<sup>86</sup> Starting from this point of view the concepts of law, love, fellowship, and social justice should be clearly evident in the interdependent relationships of those people who are joined together in a community through covenantal commitments.

The concept of covenant encourages organizations to develop a mission and vision that upholds these commitments. The mission and vision form a normative boundary that influences the members of the workgroup. However, the concept of covenant also encourages individual members of the workgroup to existentially delight in manifesting these characteristics in relationships with others. Therefore, in the concept of

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<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 582.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 614.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid. Grenz wrote these comments in the context of ecclesiology. As such they are primarily concerned with an application to the church. It should be recognized that the unifying Spirit of God is present in the church in a special way that is not necessarily the same as a Christian workgroup. However, if members of a working community share a common confession of Christ, this principle of unity and diversity should still be present.

covenant, norms are understood to be both universally binding and particularly beneficial.

### **Covenant and Authority**

Much of the literature on shared leadership has an aversion to assigned authority.<sup>87</sup> Authors writing on shared leadership theory emphasize the fluidity of roles and the shifting dynamics of power rather than positional power.<sup>88</sup> By making this shift, they move the focal point from directive uses of authority by an individual leader to the social dynamics of interpersonal influence within a group. A central concern in shared leadership literature is to determine “how interpersonal influence (e.g., leadership) will operate when individuals do not have formal authority.”<sup>89</sup> However, there is also an admission in much of the literature that a vertical dimension to leadership is also necessary.<sup>90</sup> This has caused some researchers to comment, “It is difficult to create less hierarchical systems by relying solely on better hierarchical leaders . . . . It creates contradictory demands of leaders who are expected both to set themselves apart—and above—the group, while at the same time interact as an integral part of the group.”<sup>91</sup> In

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<sup>87</sup>Edwin Locke, “Leadership: Starting At the Top,” in *Shared Leadership*, 272.

<sup>88</sup>Jonathan F Cox, Craig L. Pearce, and Monica L. Perry, “Toward a Model of Shared Leadership and Distributed Influence in the Innovation Process: How Shared Leadership Can Enhance New Product Development Team Dynamics and Effectiveness,” in *Shared Leadership*, 53; Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 34; Jürgen Wegge and others, “Promoting Work Motivation in Organizations: Should Employee Involvement in Organizational Leadership Become a New Tool in the Organizational Psychologist’s Kit?” *Journal of Personnel Psychology* 9, no. 4 (2010): 161.

<sup>89</sup>Anson Seers, Tiffany Keller, and James M Wilkerson, “Can Team Members Share Leadership? Foundations in Research and Theory,” in *Shared Leadership*, 80.

<sup>90</sup>Cox, Pearce, and Perry, “Toward a Model of Shared Leadership,” 58; Christine R. Day, “The Salty Line Manager and Organizational Learning: A Conversation with Nick Zeniuk,” *Reflections* 3, no. 1 (2001): 36-37; Julia E. Hoch, “Shared Leadership and Innovation: The Role of Vertical Leadership and Employee Integrity,” *Journal of Business and Psychology* 28, no. 2 (2013): 160; Craig L. Pearce, “The Future of Leadership,” 50; Michael Shane Wood, “Determinants of Shared Leadership in Management Teams,” *International Journal of Leadership Studies* 1, no. 1 (2005): 76.

<sup>91</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 25.



regard to this apparent paradox, the concept of covenant can provide a helpful perspective.

In a covenantal way of thinking, relationships involving authority and submission are expected. As discussed in the previous chapter, the covenant of redemption illustrates a submissive relationship within the economy of the Trinity (John 6:38). However, the concept of authority and submission through covenantal obligations is applicable to relationships outside of the Trinity as well. This concept is especially illustrated in the family (Eph 5:22-6:4),<sup>92</sup> but it is also evident in the church (Heb 13:17)<sup>93</sup> and the political structures of society (Rom 13:1-2).<sup>94</sup> Authority structures are a gift from God and submission to them is a covenantal responsibility. This relationship between authority and covenantal responsibility is illustrated in the traditional interpretation of the fifth commandment. Traditionally, the fifth commandment has been understood to apply not only to father and mother, but also to every sphere of society. Frame summarizes this interpretation of the fifth commandment by saying, “Every authority structure carries an obligation similar to the obligations of children to parents. And faithfulness in each of these relations results in the divine promise of long life and prosperity.”<sup>95</sup> In this context, there is a clear connection between authority and covenant.

Although the application of a covenantal perspective to the workgroup allows for the adaptation of authority to the leadership structure, a covenantal perspective on authority does not allow for domineering leaders. A covenantal relationship between

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<sup>92</sup>Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance*, Kindle ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 9.

<sup>93</sup>Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 268-70.

<sup>94</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), loc. 1970ff.

<sup>95</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 584.

persons is different than a contractual relationship. In contracts a person seeks to receive from a relationship the same that he or she puts into the relationship. However, in covenantal relationships those in positions of authority emphasize grace, love, service, and mutual benefit.<sup>96</sup> Covenantal leaders may not participate in a perfectly egalitarian power structure as is imagined in some of the shared leadership literature, however, covenantal leaders are always concerned to integrate the insights of those over whom they have authority.<sup>97</sup>

Rather than producing a command and control style of leadership, in covenantal relationships, authority is used to empower others. Commenting on covenants in teams, Cladis says, “Teams must have a leader, but the principal role of that leader is, paradoxically, taking the responsibility to initiate a team process that results in the giving away of responsibility.”<sup>98</sup> This is similar to the point that Edmondson makes in applying her concept of teaming, she says, “The principal strategy for developing the necessary level of collaboration, however, is leadership inclusiveness, in which higher-status individuals in a group actively invite and express appreciation for the views of others”<sup>99</sup> Because a goal of covenantal uses of authority is to give away responsibility, the covenantal perspective encourages an element of lateral influence even within its authority structures. In this regard, covenantal authority structures can be understood as a form of shared leadership.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Jack O. Balswick, Pamela Ebstyn King, and Kevin S. Reimer, *The Reciprocal Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 56-58.

<sup>97</sup>Locke, “Leadership,” 281-83.

<sup>98</sup>Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 41.

<sup>99</sup>Edmondson, *Teaming*, 205.

<sup>100</sup>Wegge and others, “Promoting Work Motivation in Organizations,” 161.

## Covenant and Boundaries

In addition to a new perspective on authority, the concept of covenant also relates to the formation of boundaries within a workgroup. Boundaries refer to those ideas that are shared by the community and form a collective identity.<sup>101</sup> This collective identity is particularly important in workgroups that encourage lateral and mutual influence because mutual influence requires members to understand themselves in an interdependent relationship. Relational models of leadership, “signal a significant shift away from individual achievement and meritocracy toward a focus on collective achievement, shared responsibility, and the importance of teamwork.”<sup>102</sup> Kenwyn Smith and David Berg explain the significance of boundaries in saying, “For the group to have a sense of itself as an entity capable of acting as a whole, it must have clear external boundaries.”<sup>103</sup> Smith and Berg understand boundaries to serve a somewhat paradoxical function. “The paradox is that boundaries simultaneously make it possible for a group to take actions and limit those actions by what the boundaries define.”<sup>104</sup> This description of boundaries is similar to the normative function of covenant. Through covenant, rules are placed on people that guide and limit their behavior, but these rules are designed in such a way that obedience to them should draw people closer to one another and aid in the development of a healthy understanding of the self.

A shared vision for the workgroup is an important boundary that should draw individual members closer to one another in a covenantal relationship. In his description of building visionary teams, Cladis describes this function of shared vision. Although Cladis is dealing primarily with relationships in a church, his comments can be applied

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<sup>101</sup>Kenwyn K. Smith and David N. Berg, *Paradoxes of Group Life: Understanding Conflict, Paralysis, and Movement in Group Dynamics* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 102-3.

<sup>102</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, “Shared Leadership,” 23.

<sup>103</sup>Smith and Berg, *Paradoxes of Group Life*, 103.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

more broadly to Christian organizations. In his estimation the effectiveness of a ministry is dependent on the shared quality of the vision.<sup>105</sup> He believes that this vision should be developed in a “series of loops.”<sup>106</sup> The primary leader may first articulate the vision, but other members of the group should be brought into the dialogue process as well.

This understanding of the visioning process is slightly different than that described by Edwin Locke. According to Locke, “Great companies (with very few exceptions) cannot function unless led by a single vision.”<sup>107</sup> For Locke this implies a single leader at the top of a hierarchical structure. He further clarifies his point by saying, “If there were leadership by a team, then the result would be anarchy.”<sup>108</sup> Although Locke does encourage listening and learning from other members of the workgroup, ultimately the leader must remain independent of the workgroup. In Locke’s description, individual vision is prior to group empowerment. In a trinitarian foundation for leadership that utilizes the idea of covenant, vision and empowerment belong together. This creates a model for visioning that looks more similar to Cladis’s description than Locke’s.

A trinitarian foundation for leadership emphasizes both independence and interdependence working together in community. The individual may be responsible for independently articulating the vision, but after an initial articulation, there should also be a time of dialogue and interdependence. Dwight Zschiele contrasts this community approach to visioning with an individualistic and “heroic” approach to leadership. He says, “A collaborative, trinitarian approach calls instead for the leader to listen attentively *in community* for God’s movement in its midst, and in the world, particularly at the grass

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<sup>105</sup>Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 57.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>107</sup>Locke, “Leadership,” 278.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

roots.”<sup>109</sup> The leader needs to be open to learning from others and changing during the process. This may result in a vision that is slightly different than that which was initially proposed by a leader, but the resulting shared vision will create an increased level of commitment and cohesion among the workgroup.<sup>110</sup>

This mutual commitment to one another and the vision of an organization is extremely significant in developing a shared leadership construct. Charles Hooker and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi emphasize the importance of this social dynamic in their discussion of shared leadership. They say, “In order for a form of shared leadership to arise, a certain level of commitment and cohesion among group members must exist.”<sup>111</sup> Although a covenantal perspective emphasizes authority and hierarchy more than what is frequently associated with shared leadership, it bears some similarities to this model because it emphasizes the openness of authority figures toward members of the workgroup. Covenant holds the universal and particular elements of authority-submission structures together in an equiprimal relationship.

### **Conclusion**

The primary goal of applying a trinitarian foundation to relationships within workgroups is to treat each member as authentic persons in a united community. This chapter outlined perspectives that can be used for creating environments that accomplish this goal. By relating to one another in love, influencing others through dialogue, and working together in covenant, workgroup members create ethical environments that allow for individual contributions and collective influence in the workgroup experience.

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<sup>109</sup>Dwight J. Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (2007): 60.

<sup>110</sup>Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 59.

<sup>111</sup>Hooker and Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow, Creativity, and Shared Leadership,” 219.

Each of these perspectives is intended to represent the existential, situational, and normative aspects of ethics in leadership settings.

In this sense love, dialogue, and covenant should not be understood in a pyramid-like fashion in which love is seen as the foundation on which dialogue and covenant rest. Instead, these perspectives mutually inform and influence one another. Although love for another person is likely to increase the desire to engage in dialogue, it is just as true that dialogue can increase a person's concern for the benevolence and self-giving that characterize love. Similar observations can be made about covenant. Through covenant people recognize norms for acceptable dialogue and learn how to best express love. In the workgroup setting love, dialogue and covenant work together to motivate ethical influence.

This trinitarian foundation for leadership looks similar to shared leadership in many regards. Both models share a concern for openness to others and lateral influence. However, especially as is emphasized in the idea of covenant, a trinitarian foundation for leadership is more comfortable with authority-submission relationships. From the perspective of covenant, authority should be understood as a gift from God that is beneficial for the ordering of society. This concern for order is applicable to the formation of ethically motivated workgroups. However, authority understood from a trinitarian foundation is not authoritarianism. There is a concern for reciprocity and mutuality. Regardless of a person's positional power, all people in a workgroup should be mutually involved in the lives of others through love, dialogue, and covenant.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLEMENTING A RELATIONAL CULTURE

In describing how the doctrine of the Trinity relates to biblical anthropology, thus far this research has described an understanding of the self that is both open and bounded. This understanding of the self has applicability to a dynamic understanding of leadership that emphasizes the social interactions between members rather than just the static positions of hierarchical influence. The aim of these social interactions is to laterally influence one another through love, dialogue, and covenant. By emphasizing mutual reciprocity and lateral influence, a theory of leadership based on a trinitarian foundation bears some similarity to shared leadership. One important similarity to trinitarian leadership and shared leadership concerns the cultural context required for implementation. Like shared leadership, the implementation of this model in the workgroup is dependent on the development of a particular organizational culture that values openness to multiple sources of influence.<sup>1</sup>

Edgar Schein's description of organizational culture is a helpful starting point for further elaborating on this relationship between openness to multiple sources of influences and culture. According to Schein, culture consists of three levels. He refers to these levels as artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jay B. Carson, Paul E. Tesluk, and Jennifer E. Marrone, "Shared Leadership in Teams: An Investigation of Antecedent Conditions and Performance," *Academy of Management Journal* 50, no. 5 (2007): 1230; Jay A. Conger and Craig L. Pearce, "A Landscape of Opportunities: Future Research on Shared Leadership," in *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 295; Joyce K. Fletcher and Katrin Käufer, "Shared Leadership: Paradox and Possibility," in *Shared Leadership*, 34-35; Anson Seers, Tiffany Keller, and James M Wilkerson, "Can Team Members Share Leadership? Foundations in Research and Theory," in *Shared Leadership*, 92-93.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed., Kindle ed. (San Francisco:

Although the primary goal of this research has been to apply a trinitarian understanding of ontology to identity in the workgroup, the method used also has applicability to organizational culture. The previous two chapters of this research have approached Schein's framework in reverse order. By looking at the image of God, union with Christ and covenant, chapter 3 examined the most basic theological assumptions Christians hold in regard to identity. In chapter 4 the ethical implications of these assumptions were applied to the workgroup setting. This resulted in an emphasis on the values of relating to one another in love, influence through dialogue, and exercising authority through covenantal relationships. This final chapter will focus on the level of artifacts.

Schein describes artifacts very broadly as referring to "all the phenomena that you would see, hear, and feel when you encounter a new group with an unfamiliar culture."<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to account for all of these phenomena in describing the trinitarian foundations of leadership. Many of these artifacts are dependent on the particular group of people that compose the workgroup, the persons in positions of greatest influence, the goals of the organization, and the broader cultural context in which the organization is situated. In order to narrow the focus of this chapter, it is helpful to notice that artifacts not only include the observed behavior of a group, but also the processes by which this behavior is made routine.<sup>4</sup> In order for workgroups in organizations to develop the type of leadership that is presented in this research, certain processes must be put in place that encourage members to relate to one another in love, influence each other through dialogue, and exercise authority in covenantal relationships.

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Jossey-Bass, 2010), loc. 686.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., loc. 681.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., loc. 699.



## Designing for Covenantal Relationships

One of the most important processes for encouraging openness to others and the importance of individual contribution originates in the design of an organization. If an organizational framework is built on the foundation of the Trinity, it seems almost axiomatic to assume that this design will utilize teams in some way. In criticism of the “lone ranger” mentality, Kenneth Gangel evidences this axiomatic assumption about teamwork. He comments, “Even God is Three-in-One, each Person of the Trinity eternally in relationship with the others.”<sup>5</sup> Presumably, Gangel does not further elaborate on this statement because it implies a self-evident conclusion. If human persons are to imitate God, then they must avoid a “lone ranger” mentality and work as persons in relation. An organization designed around teams encourages members to work together in a collaborative effort that is capable of emphasizing the principles of particularity and universality that are necessary in trinitarian thinking.

However, not all types of teamwork equally reflect an application of trinitarian thinking to leadership. Team leadership based on a trinitarian foundation is not just a collection of individuals working toward a common goal. This individualistic conception of a team anticipates “star players” in successful ventures and the assigning of individual blame in the event of failure.<sup>6</sup> Rather than focusing on only the individuals within a team, a healthy team should emphasize collaboration. Dwight Zscheile emphasizes this correlation between the Trinity and collaboration by focusing on the idea of community. He describes the implications of community for leadership by saying, “Rather than construing the leader as operating alone, wielding authority in isolation from others, the

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<sup>5</sup>Kenneth O. Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry: Using Multiple Gifts to Build a Unified Vision* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997), 133.

<sup>6</sup>J. Richard Hackman, *Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 38.

Trinity points toward a collaborative, shared, team-based approach.”<sup>7</sup> In this model of leadership, the cultivation of a community of mutuality and interdependence is central.<sup>8</sup>

This emphasis on community in teamwork encourages members to involve themselves in each other’s lives in mutually beneficial ways. One of the most important ways that members can encourage mutual benefice is by holding one another accountable in covenant relationships. The previous chapter discussed the importance of collaboration in the visioning process. Patrick Lencioni comments on the relationship between collaborative vision and accountability. According to Lencioni, if the workgroup has formulated a vision together, then the members should have an increased sense of “buy-in” that will encourage them to hold one another accountable. He says, “Without committing to a clear plan of action, even the most focused and driven people often hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviors that seem counterproductive to the good of the team.”<sup>9</sup> From a Christian perspective, the idea of accountability is especially important due to the effects of sin.

Accountability is also an important aspect of authority. Although authority is a gift of God in covenantal relationships, like many other gifts, it can be abused due to human depravity and the reality of sin. Commenting on the role of elders in church government, Alexander Strauch emphasizes the importance of accountability in groups. He says, “The collective leadership of a biblical eldership provides a formal structure for genuine accountability. Only when there is genuine accountability between equals in leadership is there any hope for breaking down the horrible abuse of pastoral authority

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<sup>7</sup>Dwight J. Zscheile, “The Trinity, Leadership, and Power,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 6, no. 2 (2007): 55.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>9</sup>Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 189.

that plagues many churches.”<sup>10</sup> Although Strauch is applying this need for accountability specifically to churches, this need has a much broader application as well. All individuals are affected by sin, not just church leadership. Because of the universality of sin, all leaders need to be held accountable. The idea of mutual influence working in shared leadership teams provides an organizational design that can ameliorate the sinful aspects of unitary understandings of leadership by encouraging accountability.

Benjamin Williams and Michael McKibben provide a helpful model for applying the benefits of shared team leadership to an authority structure. Williams and McKibben begin their theory of leadership from an Eastern Orthodox understanding of the Trinity in which the Father is understood to be the source of the Godhead.<sup>11</sup> From this point of view, they develop a theory of leadership that is designed around a hierarchical conciliarity. In this design, team members may have different levels of authority. Some members will have more decision-making authority than others. However, within each team, members share in the communication aspect of the decision making process. This creates a team dynamic in which the team leader can be understood as “first among equals.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1995), 43.

<sup>11</sup>Benjamin D. Williams and Michael T. McKibben, *Oriented Leadership: Why Every Christian Needs It* (Wayne, NJ: Orthodox Christian Publication Center, 1994), 120. Eastern Orthodox and Western descriptions of the Trinity tend to have a different understanding of “source” or “cause.” According to the Eastern Orthodox perspective, the Father is the “only cause of divine existence” (John D. Zizioulas, “The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution,” in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000]). However, Western perspectives tend to associate the source of divinity with the shared essence of the Trinity (Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004], 250). This distinction has caused Western theologians to accuse the East of tri-theism and Eastern theologians to accuse the West of modalism. Rather than focusing on only the Father or the Essence as the source of divinity, this research aims to emphasize the equiprimordial relationship between the Persons and the Essence.

<sup>12</sup>Williams and McKibben, *Oriented Leadership*, 101-16.

This application of the Trinity to the foundations of leadership has some similarities and differences to the model that is being proposed in this research. It is similar in the sense that it posits an authority structure within groups that is based on trinitarian thinking. However, the method for understanding this authority is different. Because of this different method, the application to team dynamics is also slightly different. Rather than focusing on the Father as the source of authority, it is better to express the relations between the trinitarian Persons in terms of mutual indwelling.<sup>13</sup> As discussed in chapter 3, a better framework for understanding the authority relations within the Trinity is the idea of covenant.

By understanding authority in terms of covenant rather than personal source, there is a greater emphasis on mutual responsibility. The members of the group may have different responsibilities and varying degrees of authority, but they are involved in reciprocal relationships of mutual concern. This emphasis on mutuality is also consistent with the equiprimal focus on unity and diversity that is founded on trinitarian ontology. The personal source understanding of authority that is posited by Williams and McKibben emphasizes the particularity of the leader over the workgroup. The idea of covenant provides a better context for understanding the leader as “first among equals.” This context gives more focused attention to the mutual responsibilities that exist between a team leader and group members. From this point of view there is less emphasis on positional authority and more encouragement to guard against the abuse of authority.

This covenantal understanding of authority and accountability in a team setting, is related to shared leadership. The research of Jay Carson, Paul Tesluk, and Jennifer Marrone demonstrated that an internal environment that encourages shared purpose, social support, and encouraged individual members to have voice were

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<sup>13</sup>Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 219.

necessary antecedents in the development of shared leadership in a team.<sup>14</sup> Shared purpose, social support, and voice work together to create the “buy-in” that Lencioni associates with accountability in teamwork.<sup>15</sup> Although shared leadership is normally associated with more emergent understandings of leadership and does not tend to emphasize someone in a “first among equals” role, this understanding of leadership is still compatible with shared leadership.

In order to highlight this compatibility it is helpful to make a distinction between function and influence. The principle of “first among equals” is concerned with function.<sup>16</sup> The theory of shared leadership is concerned with mutual influence.<sup>17</sup> The “first among equals” may have the function of holding the primary responsibility, but he or she is still open to influence from other members of the team. In groups that have a positional team lead leader, this leader should not function in a “lone ranger” fashion, but must be open to influence from other members within the group. From this perspective the covenantal understanding of authority in a team design is compatible with shared leadership.

### **Selecting for Dialogue**

Because shared leadership teams encourage accountability and allow for a covenantal understanding of authority, an organization designed around teams is most appropriate for developing a leadership structure built on a trinitarian foundation. In small organizations, the idea of a single team exercising mutual influence with someone acting as “first among equals,” is a healthy organizational design because it allows for the

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<sup>14</sup>Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone, “Shared Leadership in Teams,” 1228.

<sup>15</sup>Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 189.

<sup>16</sup>Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 48.

<sup>17</sup>Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger, “All Those Years Ago: The Historical Underpinnings of Shared Leadership,” in *Shared Leadership*, 1.

sharing of leadership resources.<sup>18</sup> However, in larger organizations team size could discourage the development of the type of relationships necessary for lateral influence to occur.<sup>19</sup>

In large groups, research has indicated that although the potential for productivity increases, the actual productivity of a group tends to decrease.<sup>20</sup> Richard Hackman and Neil Vidmar researched the relationship between group size, team performance, and member reactions. The results of this research indicated that the optimal team size in terms of productivity and member satisfaction was between four and five people.<sup>21</sup> More recently, Susan Wheelan researched the relationship between group size, group development, and group performance. By group development, she is referring to a four-stage process in which members learn to (1) depend on one another, (2) conflict with each other, (3) maturely negotiate together, and (4) achieve group goals.<sup>22</sup> In her study she found that optimal performance occurred in groups between three and eight members.<sup>23</sup> Although the research of Hackman, Vidmar and Wheelan, came up with slightly different numbers regarding optimal team size, both research projects associate best team performance with relatively small groups. These observations about group performance led Hackman to comment, “Most of the time smaller really is better. Indeed,

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<sup>18</sup>Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone, “Shared Leadership in Teams,” 1230-31.

<sup>19</sup>Jonathan F Cox, Craig L. Pearce, and Monica L. Perry, “Toward a Model of Shared Leadership and Distributed Influence in the Innovation Process: How Shared Leadership Can Enhance New Product Development Team Dynamics and Effectiveness,” in *Shared Leadership*, 60.

<sup>20</sup>Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 117; Susan A. Wheelan, “Group Size, Group Development, and Group Productivity,” *Small Group Research* 40, no. 2 (2009): 254-56.

<sup>21</sup>J. Richard Hackman and Neil Vidmar, “Effects of Size and Task Type on Group Performance and Member Reactions,” *Sociometry* 33, no. 1 (1970): 48-49; Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 118.

<sup>22</sup>Wheelan, “Group Size, Group Development, and Group Productivity,” 249-50.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 254-56.

a team may function better when it has slightly *fewer* members than the task actually requires.”<sup>24</sup>

This association of small groups with best performance highlights the significance of selectively dividing members of larger workgroups into small teams for accomplishing tasks. In order to maximize the benefits of dialogue, it is important to make careful consideration of the methods for selecting and mixing members into teams. Effective dialogue requires that each participant has something to contribute to a conversation and that each participant has something to learn in a conversation. In order to create teams that allow for this type of dialogue, it is important for teams to have the requisite amount of diversity. If homogenous teams are created, then the likelihood for teams to operate on the principles of groupthink increases.

Irving Janis defines groupthink as, “A mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”<sup>25</sup> Janis intends for the term to convey invidious overtones. In his estimation, “Groupthink refers to a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures.”<sup>26</sup> This type of thinking is more likely to develop in groups that are homogenous.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, in order to avoid groupthink in teams it is necessary to incorporate a certain amount of diversity into team dynamics.

However, the selection of members for the diversification of a team also needs to be carefully considered. According to Hackman, “A well-composed team strikes a

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<sup>24</sup>Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 118.

<sup>25</sup>Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), 9.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Scott E. Seibert, Raymond T. Sparrowe, and Robert C. Liden, “A Group Exchange Structure Approach to Leadership in Groups,” in *Shared Leadership*, 182.

balance between having members who are too similar to one another on the one hand and too different on the other.”<sup>28</sup> As discussed above, teams with a high degree of homogeneity may get along well, but they are also more likely to lack the sufficient resources to complete tasks efficiently, correctly, or ethically. In short, homogenous teams are more prone to groupthink. The solution to this problem is not simply to create diversified teams. An overly diverse team can present its own problems. Diversity creates boundaries. Amy Edmondson identifies three types of boundaries created by diversity: physical distance, status, and knowledge. If these boundaries are not adequately accounted for they can limit collaboration.<sup>29</sup> When selecting members for teams who can engage in productive dialogue, it is important to take into consideration both unity and diversity.

This language of unity and diversity is represented in the biblical metaphor of the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12 the church is described of consisting of many members who constitute one body (1 Cor 12:12). These many members possess a variety of gifts and each of these gifts provide an important contribution to the to whole organization in fulfilling a unified mission (1 Cor 12:4-11). This mission is unified by the Holy Spirit as he appropriates gifts with perfect wisdom (1 Cor 12:11). Commenting on this body metaphor as it is presented in Romans 12:5, Gangel states, “Team leadership, commitment to shared responsibility and authority, depends on a proper understanding of what it means to be the body of Christ. It emphasizes the truth of being ‘laborers together,’ not only with God but also with each other.”<sup>30</sup> In order for a team to be able to engage in both the active and passive principles of dialogue, it must be composed of

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<sup>28</sup>Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 122.

<sup>29</sup>Amy C. Edmondson, *Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate, and Compete in the Knowledge Economy* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 197-201.

<sup>30</sup>Gangel, *Team Leadership in Christian Ministry*, 32.



members that comprise a similar unity and diversity to that which is described in the body metaphor. There is a unity of purpose and vision yet a diversity of skills and personalities.

Balanced groups have a variety of talents and perspectives yet they are able to authentically communicate and collaborate.<sup>31</sup> Edmondson calls this skill “teaming across boundaries.”<sup>32</sup> She recognizes that it is beneficial to have people in teams that span a diversity of physical, status, or knowledge boundaries, but in order for these members to effectively collaborate they must share certain common commitments. These commitments can be summarized in strategies that encourage good communication.<sup>33</sup> Communication strategies that encourage dialogue and bring unity to teams include “establishing a superordinate goal, fostering curiosity, and providing process guidelines.”<sup>34</sup> Goals and guidelines are established through mutual commitments in covenantal relationships. Curiosity requires a prior commitment to learning from and love for others. In this sense, effective dialogue working in diversified teams requires both covenant and love working together. In order for team members to desire to learn from one another and contribute to each other’s growth there must be a commitment to love.

### **Committing with Love**

Thus far two principles have been discussed for implementing a relational culture into organizations. These two principles include structuring an organization around smaller covenantally committed teams and encouraging dialogue through a diversification of members. Covenantal commitments in teams emphasize unity and the

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<sup>31</sup>Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 123.

<sup>32</sup>Edmondson, *Teaming*, 201.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 217.

diversification of members emphasizes particularity. However, both of these principles can be used to negative ends if they are not held together by a commitment to mutual benevolence and mutual service through love. If covenantal relationships are not genuinely loving, then they can result in contractual relationships that are more concerned with things than people.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, if dialogue is not characterized by love, then it can result in politicking that is more concerned with manipulation of others and the accrual of power.<sup>36</sup> In order for team commitments and member dialogue to function in a mutually beneficial way, there must be a third principle associated with relational culture. Love for others allows uniformity and diversity to function together in an equiprimal relationship.

Coaching is an important factor in creating organizations that are characterized by commitments to mutual benevolence and mutual service. Through coaching, leaders at all levels of an organization are able to influence the ethical conduct of team members.<sup>37</sup> Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone identify two types of coaching. They characterize these two types as active and supportive coaching. Active coaching refers to behaviors that engage in task interventions and disrupt the autonomy of a team. Supportive coaching reinforces the self-leadership of a team.<sup>38</sup> Because a trinitarian foundation for leadership encourages team members to engage in relationships that both influence others and are open to influence from others, this requires some degree of group autonomy. Influence might begin to function in a unidirectional way and group autonomy lost if coaches are involved too actively in task management. By fostering a sense of self-confidence, building a

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<sup>35</sup>Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 140-41.

<sup>36</sup>Fletcher and Käufer, "Shared Leadership," 39-40.

<sup>37</sup>John Schaubroeck and others, "Embedding Ethical Leadership within and across Organization Levels," *Academy of Management Journal* 55, no. 5 (2012): 1054.

<sup>38</sup>Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone, "Shared Leadership in Teams," 1223.

shared commitment, and providing greater clarity, supportive coaching allows teams to develop social support.<sup>39</sup>

Supportive coaching does not necessarily need to originate from outside the team. According to Hackman good coaching is motivational in regard to effort, consultative in regard to performance, and educational in regard to knowledge.<sup>40</sup> “This kind of coaching can be done by anyone (including rank-and-file team members, external managers, and outside consultants – not just a person designated as ‘team leader’).”<sup>41</sup> Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone are particularly interested in external coaching. They believe that external coaching is especially important in shaping the internal environment of a team through encouraging, reinforcing and rewarding behaviors that contribute to a unifying direction, interpersonal support, and member involvement.<sup>42</sup> However, external supportive coaching is also intended to have a limited time of applicability. Overtime, the external coaches expectations become imbedded in team members and the level of ethical commitment among team members increases.<sup>43</sup> When this occurs coaching becomes more internalized, and external coaching is less necessary.

Central to the ethical commitments of team members is the idea of love. Because it involves allegiance, actions, and affection, it is a way of summarizing the ethical aspects of an organization.<sup>44</sup> By engendering a desire for mutual benevolence and service, a commitment to love prevents the behavior of individual team members from

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 1223-24.

<sup>40</sup>Hackman, *Leading Teams*, 176-77.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 177.

<sup>42</sup>Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone, “Shared Leadership in Teams,” 1228-29.

<sup>43</sup>Schaubroeck and others, “Embedding Ethical Leadership,” 1073.

<sup>44</sup>John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 332-33.

becoming manipulative or organizational goals from being unethical. Although it is relatively easy to say that coaching encourages ethical behavior and love is central to ethical behavior, it is more difficult to explain exactly what types of coaching influences are most likely to engender love among team members.

An important aspect of embedding a loving culture among teams is to reward desirable behavior.<sup>45</sup> In order to embed mutual benevolence and mutual service in the culture, it is important to identify which behaviors are most likely to be understood as loving. Because love is frequently understood in subjective and emotive terms, it is difficult to identify exactly which behaviors to associate with love. An obvious place to start might be 1 Corinthians 13. According to verses 4-6, “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” In looking at these verses, loving behaviors can be identified with patience, contentment, humility, submissiveness, peacemaking, and truthfulness.

However, it should also be recognized that 1 Corinthians 13 is situated in a specific context. This pericope is especially concerned with the use of spiritual gifts as a status indicator.<sup>46</sup> In the context of the epistle, love should be understood as giving of the self for the growth of others.<sup>47</sup> First Corinthians 13 does not speak directly about leadership except to indicate that spiritual gifts should not be used to increase personal status and power. Therefore, in order to formulate a list of leadership behaviors that are related to love, it might also be beneficial to look at leadership models that value qualities

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<sup>45</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, loc. 1470.

<sup>46</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1028.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 1074.

similar to love. Because of the similarities between love and servanthood, another helpful place in compiling a list of loving behaviors is to look at those behaviors that are considered to be best practices in servant leadership. According to Paul Wong and Dean Davey, the best practices in servant leadership include humility, sacrificing self-interest, empathy, inspiring others, and integrity.<sup>48</sup>

Undoubtedly more behaviors could be added to these lists, but in general these lists indicate that loving behaviors are those that show authentic concern for others by putting their needs before one's own desire for status. A person acting in love does not necessarily always need to condone the actions of others, but he or she should always seek the good of others.<sup>49</sup> These behaviors empower others and create connection while allowing the giver to maintain his or her individual identity.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, loving behavior creates a virtuous cycle in which people encourage others to perform at their best quality and to act with loyalty to each other.<sup>51</sup> By creating an environment in which people enjoy working with one another, loving behaviors cause work to become "autotelic" or an end in itself.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Paul T. P. Wong and Dean Davey, "Best Practices in Servant Leadership" (Paper presented at the Servant Leadership Research Roundtable, Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, 2007), 7-8.

<sup>49</sup>Cam Caldwell and Rolf D. Dixon, "Love, Forgiveness, and Trust: Critical Values of the Modern Leader," *Journal of Business Ethics* 93, no. 1 (2010): 93. This statement needs to be conditioned by the criticisms of servant and transformational leadership that were mentioned in chapter 4. When an individual seeks the good of others in an organizational setting, he or she should be open to the other in charting a plan of action. Due to the sinful condition of persons, it is not possible to always know what is for the best good of others in every circumstance.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>51</sup>Kim Cameron, "Ethics, Virtuousness, and Constant Change," in *The Ethical Challenge: How to Lead With Unyielding Integrity*, ed. Noel M. Tichy and Andrew R. McGill (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 191-92.

<sup>52</sup>Charles Hooker and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Flow, Creativity, and Shared Leadership," in *Shared Leadership*, 223.

This description of loving behaviors, not only identifies some actions that might be considered loving, but also highlights the importance of embedding these behaviors in the culture of organizations. Both external and internal coaching behaviors can work to embed these behaviors in organizations by celebrating loving behaviors, providing encouraging feedback, and modeling. Opportunities for celebrating, encouraging, and modeling frequently occur in informal settings within a team. These informal messages provide powerful teaching and coaching mechanisms that work to embed a culture of love into an organization.<sup>53</sup>

Although internal and external coaching can help work to create virtuous cycles of mutual benevolence and service, it should also be recognized that the degree of social engagement required for this to occur might not naturally develop. In order to create the environment where this type of coaching can occur, other embedding mechanisms will likely be necessary. Jonathan Cox, Craig Pearce, and Monica Perry describe a sequence of conditions that must hold for shared leadership to emerge. “First, team members must understand that constructive lateral influence is a standing performance expectation. Second, members must accept responsibility for providing and responding appropriately to constructive leadership from their peers. Third, the team members must develop skills as effective leaders and followers.”<sup>54</sup>

This list provided by Cox, Pearce, and Perry is not directly describing conditions that are necessary for love to thrive in organizations, but there are some similarities to the expectations of shared leadership and a loving environment. In particular, both environments expect members to be open to learning from others and involved in the work of other team members. In addition to constructive peer criticism

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<sup>53</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, loc. 4456-77.

<sup>54</sup>Cox, Pearce, and Perry, “Toward a Model of Shared Leadership,” 53.

that is similar to coaching, Cox, Pearce, and Perry encourage external leaders to develop performance expectations that require mutual influence and to train members to behave as both leaders and followers. Performance expectations, coaching, and training work together to create powerful embedding mechanisms in culture that encourage team members to commit to one another in love.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Implementing an organizational culture that values the insights of trinitarian thinking requires specific artifacts to be set in place. These artifacts represent the most observable aspects of an organization such as organizational structure, personnel selection, and the processes for embedding culture. In order to maximize the benefits of a trinitarian perspective on leadership each of these artifacts need to be considered. Regarding structure, organizations should be divided into small teams that can operate in covenantal relationships. Regarding personnel selection, team members should be united in vision but diverse in skills and personalities. This emphasis on unity and variety is intended to maximize the potential for creative dialogue to occur. Regarding embedding mechanisms, external and internal coaching should work together to create environments that are characterized by love. In order to be able to rely on this type of coaching, performance expectations and training will be necessary to teach members to exert lateral influence by using both leadership and followership skills.

Despite the importance of cultural artifacts, other aspects of culture should be given more attention. Artifacts cannot be correctly understood without also properly understanding the basic assumptions and values of a culture.<sup>55</sup> Because of this recognition, the primary focus of this research is more directed at the assumptions and values that can apply trinitarian thinking to a theory of leadership.

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<sup>55</sup>Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, loc. 846.

The application of trinitarian thinking to contemporary theories of leadership provides a unique perspective. Currently, the most popular models of Christian leadership utilize many insights from secular theories of team leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. The insights provided by these theories have been very beneficial to Christian leaders. However, in recent years the theory of shared leadership has added a new focal point to leadership theories. Rather than focusing on the relationship between leaders and followers, the theory of shared leadership has shifted the focus to mutual influence between team members.<sup>56</sup> These team members are in shifting roles of influence in which they sometimes behave as leaders and other times behave as followers.<sup>57</sup> Evaluating the theory of shared leadership and incorporating some of its insights into Christian theories of leadership present the opportunity to apply some of the insights of trinitarian theology regarding personhood and identity.

Trinitarian thinking requires that both unity and particularity be held together in an equiprimal relationship.<sup>58</sup> This leads to an understanding of the person that equally values both individuality and community. Because shared leadership requires members to behave in ways that mutually influence one another and learn from one another, this understanding of the person is particularly applicable to a shared leadership context. In acknowledgement of the need for an open understanding of identity, Joyce Fletcher emphasized that working in a shared leadership context would require a new mental

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<sup>56</sup>Pearce and Conger, "All Those Years Ago," 1.

<sup>57</sup>Craig L. Pearce, Charles C. Manz, and Henry P. Sims Jr, "Where Do We Go From Here?: Is Shared Leadership the Key to Team Success?" *Organizational Dynamics* 38, no. 3 (2009): 234.

<sup>58</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 614; Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1993), 69-70; Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1967), 27; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, ed. Alan G. Padgett, *Sacra Doctrina* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 193.



model of the self.<sup>59</sup> By emphasizing both the open and bounded aspects of the self, trinitarian thinking provides a foundation for developing this new mental model.

This new mental model forms some of the most basic assumptions that are formative of a Christian organizational culture. In particular the doctrines of the image of God, union with Christ, and covenant all emphasize the equiprimal relationship between unity and diversity. The doctrine of the image of God teaches that humans share a universal likeness to God as they obediently pursue the particular functional tasks they have been given. The doctrine of union with Christ emphasizes that individuals find their particular identity outside of themselves. Through union with Christ individuals are united to the body of Christ. This means that each person contributes unique aspects of his or her particularity, but is at the same time united to the universal body of Christ. Similarly, the concept of covenant unites individuals into a corporate identity. Each of these doctrines emphasize the need for people to understand themselves as both open and bounded as they work together to complete organizational tasks in teams.

These basic assumptions of Christian identity are foundational to the core values that should characterize Christians in organizational life. As Christians work together in teams, they should adhere to values that emphasize both the open and bounded aspects of the self. These values can be summarized as love, dialogue, and covenantal relationships. Through love, members encourage mutual benevolence and mutual service to each other. These qualities require individuals assert themselves in genuine concern for others, but also to be open to the influence of others. As a value, dialogue emphasizes both an active and a passive principle. Each member must speak up and give voice to his or her perspective while at the same time being open to change from the perspective others. A person is active in asserting voice but passive welcoming

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<sup>59</sup>Joyce K. Fletcher, "The Paradox of Post Heroic Leadership: Gender Matters" (Center for Gender in Organizations Working Paper, No. 17, Simmons School of Management, Boston, 2003), 14.

personal change. Similarly, the idea of covenant encourages persons to value both authority and submission. As individuals bind themselves to others in covenant they form communities in which authority and submission structures develop. These structures encourage people to individually respond with moral agency and to understand themselves in terms of their relationship to others.

Trinitarian thinking is foundational to forming a comprehensive internal understanding of leadership. This comprehensive internal way of thinking emphasizes that Christians need to look first to their own sources of authority in order to form systematic categories for developing theories about human nature.<sup>60</sup> Although external sources, such as contemporary theories of shared leadership, can be very informative in developing a Christian understanding of leadership, ultimately a Christian understanding of leadership must be explainable in its own categories. This research has shown that by beginning with a trinitarian foundation, a theory of leadership can be developed that encourages people to engage in mutual influence at all levels of organizational culture.

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<sup>60</sup>David Powlison, “Cure of Souls (and the Modern Psychotherapies),” in *The Biblical Counseling Movement: History and Context* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010), 277.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE TRINITARIAN FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP: WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOD'S GLORY IN UNITY AND DIVERSITY

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In the last decade, the theory of shared leadership has received considerable attention. This theory shifts the primary focal point of leadership discussions from vertical to lateral forms of influence. Moreover, it has been recognized that the shared leadership environment requires a unique understanding of identity. Working in teams that allow for lateral forms of influence requires that members have both a bounded and open understanding of identity.

This research examines the association between trinitarian thinking and the understanding of personal identity in the context of positions of lateral influence. In particular the doctrines of the image of God, union with Christ, and covenant are examined from a trinitarian perspective. Because the doctrine of Trinity emphasizes that the one God eternally exists as three persons, trinitarian thinking requires that both universals and particulars be held together in an equiprimal relationship. Each of these doctrines is examined in order to highlight the significance of this equiprimal relationship in understanding personal identity.

In the concluding chapters of this research, a model of leadership is proposed that values both the bounded and open aspects of personal identity. This model encourages the development of ethical lateral influence through love, dialogue, and a covenantal understanding of authority. These three aspects of ethical lateral influence are then applied to the workgroup setting through the development of a particular



organizational culture. In order for a culture that values love, dialogue, and covenantal relationships to develop, organizations must build observable patterns of teamwork, diversification, and coaching.

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