

From marketplace to table of fellowship: Religious transactionalism, Jesus' critique, and contemporary church leadership reconstruction

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Article History

Submitted: March 28, 2025

Reviewed: May 23, 2025

Accepted: May 30, 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v12i2.1373>

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Abstract: Contemporary church leadership faces a theological crisis rooted in the dominance of transactional logic, which organises relationships between leaders, congregation, and God on conditional exchange, reduces the Gospel to a system of spiritual contracts, and structures faith communities by market logic rather than grace. This article argues that Jesus is the earliest, most radical, and most consistent critic of religious transactionalism and that his praxis offers a hospitalis leadership paradigm that moves leadership from *emporion* (marketplace) to *trapeza* (table of fellowship). Using biblical-theological exegesis integrated with systematic-constructive theology and contextual hermeneutics, it develops four arguments: a diagnosis of transactionalism as religion in Barthian terms; a reading of Jesus's action in the Temple as prophetic deconstruction; Jesus's table fellowship as reconstructing the *hospitalis* paradigm; and a proposed *hospitalis* leadership paradigm for the contemporary Indonesian church. The article contributes by inverting the common practice of borrowing secular leadership models and baptizing them with biblical references, instead departing from the historical Christ as the primary paradigmatic source.

Keywords: hospital leadership, Indonesian church, Jesus, religious transactionalism, table fellowship

Introduction

Church leadership in contemporary Indonesia faces a serious paradox: churches are growing numerically, yet their leadership is undergoing moral, relational, and theological decline. Financial scandals, abuses of pastoral authority, psychological manipulation in the name of spirituality, and the commodification of sacred ministry increasingly surface in the public sphere. This contextual premise is not a mere impression. Wibowo and Kristanto, in a study published by the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK), show that weak internal control in church organisations stems from the high degree of sacralisation attached to spiritual office, which gives rise to blind trust in financial managers and congregational leaders, a structural condition that opens the way for irregularities.¹ Banks

¹ Eka Adhi Wibowo and Heru Kristanto, "Korupsi dalam Pelayanan Gereja: Analisis Potensi Penyimpangan dan Pengendalian Internal," *Integritas: Jurnal Antikorupsi* 3, no. 2 (2017): 105–136

and Ledbetter have identified that the crisis of contemporary church leadership does not arise solely from the personal moral failure of the leader but from a deeper paradigmatic failure: Church leadership has allowed itself to be shaped by the organisational and exchange logic of the secular corporate world and so has lost its most fundamental Christological orientation.² This crisis cannot be resolved merely through managerial skills training or programme renewal; it requires a theological recalibration that touches the Christological and ecclesiological foundations of leadership itself, namely an understanding of which Christ the leader represents and of the nature of the community the leader leads.

In Indonesia, one of the clearest manifestations of this paradigmatic failure is the deep-rootedness of transactionalism in church leadership practice. Religious transactionalism is a pattern of relationship in which loyalty, blessing, forgiveness, and access to the presence of God are treated as goods that can be obtained through ritual obedience, financial contribution, and submission to the leader. It has become a kind of spiritual ecology of which many congregations and church leaders are unaware. Aritonang and Steenbrink note that prosperity theology, now prominent in the Pentecostal-Charismatic landscape of Indonesia supplies the most systematic theological structure for this transactionalism: God is perceived as a cosmic business partner who will grant material prosperity and success in return for faithfulness in giving and daring faith.³ In the hands of some leaders, this formula becomes a highly effective instrument of control over the congregation and, at the same time, a source of legitimacy that can scarcely be challenged.

In leadership studies, the concept of transactional leadership was first systematically formulated by Burns, who understood it as a form of leadership operating through a system of conditional exchange: the leader grants rewards in response to the performance of subordinates, and the relationship between the two within the organisation revolves around the achievement of measurable short-term goals.⁴ Bass subsequently developed this typology further and positioned transactional leadership as the antipode of transformational leadership.⁵ In the context of the church, Greenleaf had earlier critiqued leadership oriented toward control and results while proposing servant leadership as an alternative.⁶ Yet all of this criticism still operates within the framework of leadership science and organisational psychology; it does not reach the deepest theological root of transactionalism, nor does it take Jesus as its point of departure, as both the principal critic and the source of an alternative paradigm.

The real depth of the problem of transactionalism in the church can be adequately grasped only if we move beyond managerial critique into a more radical theological critique. Karl Barth, in §17 of *Church Dogmatics* I/2, entitled “The Revelation of God as the Abolition of Religion,” draws a fundamental distinction between *offenbarung* (revelation), the initiative of God descending from above, gracious and unconditional, and *Religion*, the human attempt to

² Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 13–15

³ Jan S. Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 891–895.

⁴ James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 3–4.

⁵ Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 11–12.

⁶ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 7–8.

ascend to God through ritual, morality, and measurable systems of compliance.⁷ It must be added at once that for Barth the relation between the two is dialectical rather than a simple binary opposition: the word "aufhebung," which he employs, means at once to abolish and to lift up, so that religion is not merely rejected but judged and, at the same time, justified by grace alone, Christianity as a religion included, which for Barth is likewise untrue from the human standpoint. This nuance is important so that the diagnostic reading below does not become a harsher judgement than Barth himself pronounced. Within Barth's diagnostic framework, it can be argued that transactionalism in worship and leadership is an expression of religion in a fairly pure form: human beings attempting to control, manipulate, and obtain God through actions regarded as having spiritual exchange value. It must be emphasised that this application is the author's own construction of Barth's categories, not a claim that Barth himself discussed church leadership; what Barth discusses is religion as human endeavour in general.

Bonhoeffer adds a diagnostic layer no less incisive through his concept of *billige Gnade* (cheap grace): grace preached without the demand of discipleship, without the cross, and without transformation.⁸ Transactional leadership produces a spiritual ecology in which cheap grace becomes a traded commodity: the congregation "pays" through compliance, attendance, and financial contribution, and in return receives "grace" in the form of blessing, position, and a spiritual security that never challenges them to grow in any genuine way. A leader who operates this system fails not only pastorally but also actively blocks the congregation's chance of truly encountering a God who is free, generous, and cannot be manipulated. This is a theological distortion that is pastorally dangerous, concealed behind the face of institutional piety.

Although criticism of transactional leadership in the church has become a more developed discourse, a gap remains in the available literature. Criticism arising from leadership science (Burns, Bass, and Greenleaf) and from theology (Banks and Ledbetter, Barth, and Bonhoeffer) has not systematically taken the praxis of Jesus himself as an exegetical source for an alternative leadership paradigm.⁹ This claim must be honestly limited in two respects. First, it is not a claim that there is no Christocentric leadership literature: Nouwen in fact formulated Christian leadership from the person and praxis of Jesus, and his work is an important reference in this article.¹⁰ The difference lies in the point of entry: Nouwen begins from the spiritual struggle of the leader and from the temptation of Christ, whereas this article begins from exegesis of two complexes of Jesus's action that directly confront the system of exchange, namely the action in the Temple and the practice of table fellowship, and then reads both as a single paradigm running in the opposite direction to transactionalism. Second, the claim is limited to the literature in English and Indonesian that was accessible to the author and does not exclude the possibility of similar studies in other linguistic traditions. What can be stated more safely is that studies of Jesus's table fellowship as socio-theological subversion are

⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. I/2, trans. G. T. Thomson and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 280–283.

⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 43–45.

⁹ Burns, *Leadership*; Bass, *Leadership and Performance*; Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*; Banks and Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership*; Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/2*; Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*.

¹⁰ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 17–19.

already well established (Crossan, Jeremias, and Borg), yet they have rarely been operationalised specifically as a paradigm of pastoral leadership for the contemporary church, particularly in the Indonesian context.¹¹

This article aims to formulate a hospitalis leadership paradigm as a Christological reconstruction of transactional leadership, taking as its methodological point of departure the praxis of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel tradition. The Latin term *hospitalis* is retained as a technical term and is not rendered as “hospitable” or “welcoming,” because the available English equivalents tend to shift its meaning into the sphere of personal disposition, whereas what is meant here is a structure of leadership relations in which giving precedes the worthiness of the recipient. The method employed is biblical-theological exegesis integrated with systematic-constructive theology, and three matters must be stated transparently. First, the criteria for selecting texts: the texts analysed were chosen because they satisfy two conditions at once, namely that they present Jesus in direct confrontation with mechanisms of exchange (the Temple, the table, the parables of wages) and that they have a sufficiently broad trace in the Gospel tradition so as not to depend on a single pericope. Other texts relevant to leadership, for example, Mark 10:35–45 or John 13, are not analysed independently because they do not directly confront the logic of exchange, although both converge with the conclusions of this article. Second, the principle of integration: exegesis comes first, and its results are not extended beyond what the text supports; theological construction is clearly identified as such, and every leap from exegetical description to normative proposal is explicitly marked in the body of the article. Third, the acknowledged limitations: this article is conceptual and includes no empirical research on any particular congregation; its engagement with Greek is limited to a few key lexemes and is not a thorough philological study; and the context addressed is the mainline and Pentecostal-Charismatic churches of Indonesia, not the whole of Indonesian Christianity. All biblical quotations follow the *Alkitab Terjemahan Baru* (Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 1974) unless otherwise stated.¹² The discussion is organised in four parts: first, a theological diagnosis of transactionalism as a religion of the market from the perspectives of Barth and Bonhoeffer; second, an exegesis of Jesus’s action in the Temple (John 2:13–22; Mark 11:15–17) as prophetic deconstruction; third, a reading of table fellowship and Jesus’s anti-transactional parables as the reconstruction of the *hospitalis* paradigm; and fourth, a proposal for a *hospitalis* leadership paradigm in the context of the contemporary Indonesian church.

Religion as marketplace: The theological anatomy of transactional leadership in the church

To understand transactionalism in church leadership adequately, we need to move from the level of symptoms to the level of theological roots. At the level of symptoms, transactionalism appears in many concrete forms: leaders who give pastoral attention in proportion to the level of the congregation’s financial contribution; congregants who measure the value of worship

¹¹ John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. N. Perrin (London: SCM Press, 1966); Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

¹² Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, *Alkitab Terjemahan Baru* (Jakarta: Indonesian Bible Society, 1974). English renderings of quotations from this version are translated from the Indonesian text.

by the subjective benefit they feel; teaching that promises material blessing as God's response to faithfulness in giving; and communities that build hierarchies on the capacity to give and receive. Yet these symptoms are only the surface of a far deeper distortion. Hays reminds us that moral understanding in the Christian community cannot be separated from its theological understanding of who God is and how he acts in the world; and when the understanding of God has been distorted into that of a transactional partner, the entire moral and pastoral ecology of that community will be systematically distorted along with it.¹³

Barth's diagnostic framework, as stated in the introduction, provides the sharpest analytical tool for this layer. For Barth, religion in its most serious theological sense is not merely tradition or the practice of worship; it is the fundamental human stance that seeks to grasp, control, and obtain God through one's own actions. Religion in this sense tends towards the transactional because it operates on the assumption that there is something human beings can do to "produce" a divine response: sufficiently intense prayer, sufficiently large offerings, and sufficiently consistent ritual compliance. Revelation, by contrast, moves wholly from God above: it cannot be manipulated, is not bound to human prerequisites, and is always surprising because it comes to those who are unworthy, unprepared, and without any bargaining power. The diagnostic consequence for leadership can be formulated thus: transactional church leadership is not merely a leader who uses mistaken management techniques but a leader who practises the pattern of religion while using the name of the Gospel. Once again, the drawing of this consequence is the author's constructive work, not a quotation from Barth.

Bonhoeffer deepens this diagnosis through his concept of *teure Gnade* (costly grace) as the contrast to *billige Gnade* (cheap grace).¹⁴ Genuine grace, for Bonhoeffer, is costly grace: not because human beings pay for it, but because it cost God himself dearly on the cross of Christ. This grace calls its recipient to total discipleship and genuine transformation. Transactional leadership, by contrast, trades in cheap grace: the congregation "buys" spiritual security, religious identity, and the promise of blessing without ever being called to life-changing repentance, costly discipleship, and a real cross. In a leadership ecology of this kind, the leader is no longer a shepherd but a merchant who sells spiritual commodities, and the congregation is no longer made up of disciples but of consumers who assess the satisfaction of a service.

In the context of the contemporary Indonesian church, this transactional ecology is most clearly manifested in the widely pervasive prosperity theology. The give-to-get formula (give an offering so that God will grant multiplied prosperity) is the barest transactional paradigm: God is positioned as a cosmic investment machine guaranteeing a return on investment to those who are bold and faithful enough in giving. Singgih has warned that this kind of theology fails not only theologically but also contextually: it measures the success of faith by standards of material success that in fact marginalise the poor, the sick, and the suffering, the very groups who in the Gospels are the principal recipients of Jesus's ministry and attention.¹⁵

¹³ Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 27–30.

¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 43–45.

¹⁵ Emmanuel G. Singgih, *Berteologi dalam Konteks: Pemikiran-Pemikiran mengenai Kontekstualisasi Teologi di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2000), 91–93.

Leaders who preach prosperity theology unconsciously build churches that are hierarchical on the basis of financial capacity rather than communities of equals before grace.

From the perspective of missiology, Bosch shows that a church that has lost its missiological orientation towards the poor and marginalised is almost certainly undergoing what he calls a Constantinian reversal: a process in which the church identifies itself with power, prosperity, and the centres of power instead of with the margins, weakness, and those who have no bargaining power.¹⁶ Transactional leadership is a natural product of this reversal: it produces leaders who manage access to spiritual and material resources rather than leading from a position of humility and service. Brueggemann describes this kind of church as one that has surrendered to Pharaoh's dominant imagination, an imagination that measures everything by production, efficiency, and profitable exchange.¹⁷

It is important to underline that transactional leadership is not always explicit and intentional. In many cases, leaders who practise transactional patterns do so without full awareness that they are distorting the Gospel: they have been formed by a transactional theological ecology from the very beginning of their ministry, and they reproduce it because they have never been confronted with an alternative more faithful to Christ. Gorman reminds us that the formation of a leader's character is always narrative: we become what we narrate, and we lead according to the narrative that most deeply shapes our imagination.¹⁸ A leader formed by a transactional narrative, in which God responds to human action, will naturally lead in a transactional pattern, even when sincerely well-intentioned. Recalibrating leadership therefore requires recalibrating narrative, and this is precisely what Jesus does through his actions and parables.

The ecclesiological dimension of transactional leadership also deserves serious attention. Volf shows that an ecclesologically healthy church reflects Trinitarian *perichoresis*: mutual giving, mutual receiving, and mutual glorifying in a unity of love that neither calculates nor demands repayment.¹⁹ A transactional church, by contrast, reflects not the Trinity but the market: every relationship is calculated by exchange value, every ministry is measured by the benefit gained, and the "community" that forms is not a genuine fellowship of love but a coalition of mutually advantageous interests. When church leadership operates within this market logic, it fails not merely pastorally; it betrays the church's nature as the image of the Triune God, who lives in mutually giving love.

Horton adds a crucial covenantal dimension: the whole history of God's redemptive work in the Bible moves within the logic of *berit* (covenant), a divine commitment that is unilateral in its initiation and is not annulled by the failure of the human party.²⁰ The God of the Bible is not a contractual partner responsive to human action; he is the covenant God who initiates, sustains, and brings to completion his relationship with his people from his own side. This distinction between covenant and contract will become important in the fourth part, where we

¹⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 389–393.

¹⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 3–5.

¹⁸ Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 4–6.

¹⁹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 211–213.

²⁰ Michael Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 4–6.

distinguish covenantal accountability, which is fully compatible with grace, from the religious transactionalism criticised here. Transactional leadership is therefore not merely a pastoral failure; it misreads the entire biblical narrative of who God is and how he works in salvation history. This is what makes Jesus's critique of the transactional system in the Temple so fundamental: Jesus was not repairing the technical details of a basically sound system; he was challenging the theological architecture of a human-God relationship built on the logic of exchange.

Jesus in the temple: Prophetic deconstruction of the transactional system

Jesus's act of driving the merchants and money changers out of the Temple is one of the most multidimensional events in the Gospel tradition and, at the same time, one of those most often interpreted too narrowly as an expression of ritual anger. The common reading treats it as Jesus's reaction to indecorum in a place of worship, a kind of purification intended to restore lost sacredness. Such a reading is not entirely wrong, but it stops far short of the theological and prophetic depth of the action. Wright argues persuasively that Jesus's action in the Temple must be understood within the larger frame of Israel's prophetic narrative as a prophetic-symbolic act announcing God's judgement on an institution that had lost its integrity and indicating that something new and radical would replace it.²¹

Before turning to the exegesis, one hermeneutical clarification is needed, since this article refers to two texts at once. John 2:13–22 and Mark 11:15–17 locate the event at very different narrative points: John at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, the Synoptics in its final week. This difference raises an unresolved historical-critical question: whether we are dealing with a single event that John has relocated for theological reasons or with two separate events. This article does not attempt to resolve the question and adopts a self-aware position: the two texts are read at the canonical level as two witnesses that converge theologically on Jesus's attitude towards the system of exchange in the Temple, without presupposing the identity of the historical event and without conflating the redactional context of each. The practical consequence must be stated: every linguistic argument built below applies to the text in which the lexeme actually occurs and is not extended to the parallel text that uses different vocabulary.

The exegetical significance of the word choice in John 2:16 cannot be underestimated. Jesus uses the word "emporion," a Greek word that refers specifically to a commercial market or trading centre, to describe what has happened to the Temple: "Do not make my Father's house a place of trade." It must be stressed that *emporion* occurs only in John and not in Mark; Mark 11:17 instead uses the language of the quotation from Jeremiah 7:11 ("a den of robbers"), so that the two texts reach a similar target of critique by different lexical routes, the one through the category of commerce, the other through the categories of robbery and cultic hypocrisy. Carson notes that John's word choice here is deliberate and forceful: Jesus does not merely object to the bustle of the Temple courts but questions the logic that governs that space.²² The Temple, which ought to be the place of God's accessible presence, has been described in the categories of the market.

²¹ Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 413–416.

²² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 178–181.

The historical-economic context of the system of money changing and the sale of sacrificial animals needs to be understood, and here greater caution is required than is customary in homiletical literature. Jeremias provides more detailed economic data on the Temple system and pilgrim traffic in Jerusalem: pilgrims from outside Palestine were obliged to exchange their currency for Tyrian shekels, which were accepted as payment of the Temple tax, and the provision of sacrificial animals in the Temple courts formed part of a large-scale infrastructure of worship.²³ Schnackenburg reads this configuration theologically as a mechanism mediating access to worship.²⁴ Yet the stronger claims, that the money changers made exploitative profits, or that inspecting priests systematically rejected animals brought by pilgrims in order to force purchases at high prices, must be advanced with qualification. Sanders argues that trade in the Temple was a service required by the sacrificial law itself and that no adequate evidence shows the system was corrupt; he therefore reads Jesus's action not as a protest against exploitation but as a symbolic sign of the Temple's destruction.²⁵ Interestingly, Carson also states that no evidence shows the merchants and the priestly authorities colluded in extortion.²⁶ This article therefore does not hang its argument on claims of empirical corruption. The issue is not the merchants' honesty but the logical structure: access to the presence of God was mediated by a series of transactions, so financial capacity became a variable in a person's nearness to God. The critique of this logic stands even if every money changer in the Temple courts had acted honestly, and for that very reason it becomes the more fundamental critique.

Horsley reinforces this reading by showing that Jesus's action in the Temple had a political-economic dimension that cannot be ignored: the high-priestly class in Jerusalem, which administered the Temple and the economic system surrounding it, was part of an elite whose position depended on the Roman order of power.²⁷ When Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 ("my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations") and Jeremiah 7:11 ("but you have made it a den of robbers"), he places his action within the prophetic tradition most critical of collusion between religion and injustice. Jeremiah 7 is especially relevant: the prophet criticises those who used the Temple as a cloak of spiritual legitimacy for the social injustice they practised outside its walls.

From a leadership perspective, Jesus's action in the Temple has two interrelated Christological implications. First, it is an act of declaring authority: Jesus claims the right to redefine what constitutes the right relationship between human beings and God, directly challenging the authority of the religious leaders who maintained the system. Schnackenburg notes that the Jewish authorities' immediate question ("What sign can you show us to prove that you have the right to do this?") John 2:18) reveals the heart of the conflict: a contest over the source and character of authority.²⁸ Jesus's leadership does not rest on institutional legitimacy but on its conformity to the character of God the Father, whom he knows and represents.

²³ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, trans. F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave (London: SCM Press, 1969), 32–57.

²⁴ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, vol. 1, trans. K. Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 344–346.

²⁵ Ed Parish Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 61–76.

²⁶ Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 179.

²⁷ Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 286–289.

²⁸ Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:344–346.

Second, and more important for our theme, Jesus's action in the Temple is an act of liberating access. Wright notes that by emptying the Temple courts of the merchants, Jesus symbolically reopened the space to those who had been in the weakest position within the system: the poor, who were most burdened by costs; the foreigners in the outermost court; and those marginalised by the ritual hierarchy.²⁹ This is consistent with the whole of Jesus's mission as summarised in Luke 4:18–19: proclaiming good news to the poor, setting the captives free, and declaring the year of the Lord's favour. Leaders who follow Jesus are called to a similar liberation of access: to lead in a way that reduces, rather than adds to, the barriers between the people and the presence of God.

John places the action in the Temple within a broader Christological frame through Jesus's statement about the temple of his body (John 2:19–21): Jesus not only criticises the old system but also announces that he himself is its replacement. At this point the article moves from John to the Letter to the Hebrews, and the move must be accounted for, since the two were written from different theological perspectives and for different readers. What is done here is a cross-corpus canonical reading: the two writings are treated as parts of one canon that independently develop the theme of the replacement of the sacrificial system by Christ himself, and it is this thematic convergence, not a literary relationship or direct influence, that is the basis for linking them. With this limitation, Hebrews 4:14–16 and 9:11–14 can be read as a more explicit articulation of what in John still takes the form of a sign: Christ is at once the one who offers the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself, so that the transactional logic of sacrifice in exchange for forgiveness comes to an end and is replaced by the logic of freely given grace. Carson shows that for John, the cleansing of the Temple is not merely a historical event but a Christological sign pointing to Jesus's whole mission as the one who makes God present directly, without transactional mediation.³⁰

For church leadership, a Christological reading of Jesus's action in the Temple opens a concrete vision: leaders who follow Christ are called to deconstruct the transactional systems that have grown up within the church, not because those systems are organisationally inefficient, but because they betray the character of the God who has made himself known not as a contractual partner but as a Father who runs to meet his child. Labberton states that genuine leadership is always prophetic in this sense: it is willing to bear the social and institutional cost of prophecy because it knows that maintaining an unjust system, even one regarded as sacred, is a more serious betrayal of the Gospel than the conflict that prophetic action provokes.³¹

The table fellowship of Jesus: Reconstructing the meal as a paradigm of hospitable leadership

If the action in the Temple is the destructive-prophetic side of Jesus's critique of transactionalism, then table fellowship, Jesus's radical and consistent practice of eating together, is its constructive-positive side. Jesus did not merely dismantle the old system; he built a new paradigm through the most concrete and everyday practice: sharing a table.

²⁹ Wright, *Victory of God*, 413–416.

³⁰ Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 178–181.

³¹ Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor: Seeing Others through the Eyes of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 13–15.

Jeremias shows that in first-century Palestine, sharing a table carried theological and social weight far beyond eating together: it expressed fellowship, acceptance, and deep solidarity.³² Sharing a table with someone meant acknowledging equal dignity, offering protection, and opening oneself to a mutually binding relationship. Thus, when Jesus consistently chose to share a table with tax collectors, sinners, women held in contempt, and those regarded as socially and ritually unclean, he was not merely breaching norms of propriety; he was practising a subversive theology in the simplest of gestures.

At this point a semantic clarification must be given openly, since the metaphor that forms the backbone of this article rests upon it. The word *trapeza* in John 2:15 refers to the money changers' tables, that is, the transaction tables Jesus overturned, not the fellowship table. The use of *trapeza* as a metaphor for the *hospitalis* fellowship in this article is therefore a deliberate semantic shift, and not a claim that John uses the word in that sense. The shift can be justified because *trapeza* in the wider usage of the New Testament does carry both senses: the table of transaction (John 2:15; Mark 11:15; Luke 19:23) and the table of eating or fellowship (Luke 22:21, 30; 1 Cor. 10:21). It is precisely this lexical ambiguity that makes the metaphor work: what is proposed is not a movement from one word to another but the restoration of one and the same object, the table, from a transactional function to a function of fellowship. The table that Jesus overturned in the Temple courts and the table at which he sat with the tax collectors are lexically the same *trapeza*, and the difference lies entirely in the logic that governs it.

Crossan calls this practice open commensality, table fellowship open to all, which challenges the basic principle of social exchange: the dining table functions as an instrument for reproducing hierarchy and social boundaries.³³ In first-century Mediterranean society, who one ate with and how the table was seated reflected and reinforced the existing social order. Jesus consistently rejected the table as an instrument for reproducing hierarchy and transformed it into a space of subversion: at Jesus's table, those who are unworthy become guests of honour, those regarded as distant become the nearest, and those who have no bargaining power receive the greatest attention. Borg sees this practice as the most consistent expression of Jesus's "politics of compassion" against the "politics of holiness," a socio-religious order built on the principle of separation between the holy and the unclean, the worthy and the unworthy.³⁴

The narrative of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) is the most instructive illustration of Jesus's *table fellowship* from the perspective of leadership. Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus's house, an act that, from a transactional perspective, is a scandal: no formal invitation, no prerequisite, no guarantee of reciprocity. Bailey shows that, in the cultural context of the Middle East, Jesus's act of calling Zacchaeus down and inviting himself to his house reverses the customary pattern of hospitality, since the host normally invites the guest, not the other way round.³⁵ Bailey's reading must be used with one methodological qualification. Bailey's comparative-cultural approach, which presupposes continuity of Middle Eastern village culture from the first to the twentieth century, has been seriously disputed: Weeden argues that the evidence

³² Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 204–206.

³³ Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 261–264.

³⁴ Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again*, 46–49.

³⁵ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 175–178.

Bailey advances does not support his theory of controlled oral tradition,³⁶ while Dunn defends Bailey by maintaining that Weeden's critique misunderstands how oral tradition works.³⁷ The debate is unresolved, and this article therefore treats Bailey's reading as an enriching cultural illumination rather than decisive historical evidence; the main argument about Jesus's initiative stands on the structure of Luke's narrative itself, which states that Jesus took the initiative first (19:5) and that salvation came to Zacchaeus's house (19:9) without being preceded by a list of conditions. The implied leadership paradigm is radical: the hospitalis leader does not wait for the congregation to prove itself before giving attention and presence; such a leader takes the initiative to be present, especially to those regarded as unworthy.

Two parables, in Luke 15 and Matthew 20, are the most explicitly anti-transactional narratives in the Gospel tradition. Jeremias has shown that the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) is narratively designed to expose and reverse transactional logic.³⁸ The younger son devises a thoroughly transactional plan on the journey home: he will confess his sin and then offer himself as a hired servant (15:18–19). He did deliver the first part of the plan, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you" (15:21), but he did not deliver the second part, namely, the offer to be employed as a hired servant. The father had already run, embraced, and commanded the robe, the ring, and the sandals (15:20, 22) before the transactional proposal was uttered. In other words, what the father's action cancels is not the son's confession of sin but his attempt to negotiate his return through a scheme of work and wages. God in this parable does not respond to qualifications; he moves out of a love that does not wait. This is the most elegant narrative deconstruction of transactional logic.

Capon offers a fresh reading of the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1–16) as the most emphatic anti-transactional manifesto in the Gospels.³⁹ The parable deliberately builds a transactional expectation in the minds of its hearers (those who work longer will surely receive more) only to overturn it totally: all receive the same wage, not because their contributions are equal, but because the owner of the vineyard chooses to be generous. The protest of the workers who had laboured longer ("These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us," Matt. 20:12) is the voice of threatened transactionalism: a system that measures worth by contribution cannot accept a generosity that is not bound to calculation. Jesus does not apologise for the scandal of this paradigm; he sharpens it with a question: "Am I not free to do what I wish with what is mine? Or are you envious because I am generous?" (Matt. 20:15). God does not become more generous because we give more; he is generous because that is simply his character.

Pohl provides a useful theological-historical framework for understanding Jesus's hospitality as a paradigm of leadership.⁴⁰ She shows that in the classical Christian tradition, hospitality is not mere social friendliness; it is a theological practice that recognises the

³⁶ Theodore Weeden, "Kenneth Bailey's Theory of Oral Tradition: A Theory Contested by Its Evidence," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7, no. 1 (2009): 3–43.

³⁷ James D. G. Dunn, "Kenneth Bailey's Theory of Oral Tradition: Critiquing Theodore Weeden's Critique," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7, no. 1 (2009): 44–62.

³⁸ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed., trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM Press, 1972), 128–131.

³⁹ Robert Farrar Capon, *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 195–198.

⁴⁰ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 3–6.

presence of Christ in the guest, especially the guest who is most vulnerable and least able to repay. When classical Benedictine monasteries received every guest as though receiving Christ himself,⁴¹ they were practising a radical spiritual epistemology: the leader does not assess the guest by capacity to contribute but by the fact that in every guest who comes, Christ himself is present. Leadership formed by this epistemology can hardly be transactional, for the question of exchange value loses its footing when one is facing Christ.

Nouwen describes hospitality as creating a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend rather than an enemy.⁴² This definition is highly relevant for the leadership paradigm: the *hospitalis* leader is one who actively creates space (physical, emotional, social, and spiritual) where those who have until now been regarded as “outsiders” can enter and find unconditional acceptance. This is the opposite of transactional leadership, which manages access to that space based on the congregation’s ability to meet certain conditions. The *hospitalis* leader does not ask, “What can you give?” before opening the door; such a leader opens the door first and then, together with those who enter, discovers what the newly formed community can build.

The eucharistic meaning of Jesus’s table fellowship must also receive attention in the context of leadership. Jeremias shows that Jesus’s meals with his disciples and with sinners were not separate from the Last Supper; all were expressions of one theological reality: table fellowship with Jesus that anticipates the eschatological fellowship of the Kingdom of God.⁴³ Every time Jesus sat down to eat with someone regarded as unworthy, he gave a foretaste of the Kingdom fellowship, in which all who are invited come not because of their worthiness but because of the host’s generosity (Luke 14:21–23). A church leader who presides at the celebration of Holy Communion is therefore leading an act that is definitively anti-transactional: no one is “worthy” at that table; all are present by grace, and all receive the same portion.

Leadership from emporion to trapeza: Proposing a hospitable paradigm for the contemporary Indonesian church

The journey from *emporion* to *trapeza*, from marketplace to fellowship, is not merely an inspiring metaphor; it maps the transformation that must take place in a church leader’s character, praxis, and imagination. The *hospitalis* leadership paradigm proposed in this part departs from the Christological legacy built up in the preceding three parts and seeks to operationalise it in four concrete characteristics relevant to the Indonesian church. From the outset, this paradigm is not spiritual utopianism that ignores the church’s institutional realities; it takes seriously the real tensions and resistance any leader who dares to move in this direction will face.

The first characteristic of hospital leadership is the initiative of grace: the ability and courage to begin from giving without calculating the recipient’s capacity for repayment. Like the father who ran to meet the son who had not yet had the chance to negotiate his return, and like Jesus who invited himself to Zacchaeus’s house before there were any signs of repentance, the hospital leader does not wait for the congregation to become “worthy” before giving

⁴¹ *Regula Benedicti* 53.

⁴² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 66–69.

⁴³ Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 204–206.

attention, time, presence, and service. McKnight argues that a Kingdom-of-God orientation in leadership is always proactive in grace: it moves first, even and especially towards those regarded as outside the circle of the worthy.⁴⁴ For the Indonesian church context, this means leaders who actively identify who is unseen in the congregation (the poor, the sick, those who bear social shame, and those who have no advantageous network of relationships) and who specifically take the initiative of presence and service towards them, not as an additional humanitarian programme but as an expression of the character of the God they represent.

The second characteristic is the stewardship of the open table: the leader as guardian of an inclusive space who opposes every mechanism that excludes on the basis of status, contribution, or socially constructed worthiness. Pohl reminds us that genuine hospitality always challenges social boundaries taken as natural, as Jesus challenged the boundaries between the holy and the unclean, Jew and non-Jew, and the worthy and the unworthy.⁴⁵ In the context of the Indonesian church, which is often hierarchical on the basis of financial contribution, length of membership, or closeness to the leader, the *hospitalis* leader is called to disrupt this hierarchy, not by abolishing all differences but by ensuring that such differences are not translated into differences of access to the community, to ministry, and to the presence of God.

Here one distinction must be affirmed so that this paradigm is not misread by practitioner readers. *Hospitalis* leadership does not mean the abolition of structure, membership, church discipline, or responsible financial management. Following Horton's distinction between contract and covenant discussed in the first part, covenantal accountability is in fact a consequence of grace and not its opposite: shared commitment, transparency in the management of congregational funds, and mutual responsibility among members arise from a relationship that has already been given beforehand, not as conditions for obtaining it.⁴⁶ What is criticised in this article is religious transactionalism, that is, the conditioning of access to grace, community, and pastoral care upon the capacity to repay. For that very reason, a *hospitalis* church should have governance that is stricter, not looser; the finding of Wibowo and Kristanto about weak internal control resulting from the sacralisation of office shows that the absence of accountability is not a sign of grace but a gap through which abuse enters.⁴⁷

The third characteristic is the re-narration of grace: the leader's function as a narrator who consistently reshapes the community's imagination through narratives that oppose market logic and reintroduce the logic of the fellowship. Brueggemann argues that the pastoral leader's most fundamental task is to be a poet for a community in exile: providing the words, stories, and metaphors that enable the community to imagine a reality alternative to the one offered by the dominant imagination.⁴⁸ In the context of an Indonesian church long formed by a prosperity-transactional narrative, the *hospitalis* leader must be bold and patient in retelling a different narrative: the narrative of the father who runs to meet his son, the narrative of the generous owner of the vineyard, and the narrative of Jesus who invites himself to Zacchaeus's

⁴⁴ S. McKnight, *Kingdom Conspiracy: Returning to the Radical Mission of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2014), 68–70.

⁴⁵ Pohl, *Making Room*.

⁴⁶ Horton, *Covenant and Salvation*.

⁴⁷ Wibowo and Kristanto, "Korupsi dalam Pelayanan Gereja."

⁴⁸ W. Brueggemann, *Cadences of Home: Preaching among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 27–29.

table. This is not merely a variation of sermon themes; it is a project of reshaping the community's imagination that requires consistency, patience, and the courage to face resistance from those who have grown comfortable with the old narrative.

The fourth characteristic is the readiness to bear the cost of prophecy: the recognition that the journey from *emporion* to *trapeza* will not proceed without conflict and real cost. Jesus did not drive the merchants out of the Temple without consequence; that action directly triggered the conspiracy to arrest him (Mark 11:18). Bonhoeffer reminds us that costly grace always comes at a high price for those who choose to proclaim and live it.⁴⁹ Church leaders in Indonesia who choose to deconstruct transactional systems in their congregations must be prepared to face serious resistance: from senior leaders who have built influence upon the old system, from congregations accustomed to the logic of give-to-get, and from institutional pressure to keep producing growth figures as proof of success. Bosch reminds us that genuine mission always contains a dimension of the cross and that missionary leadership in the deepest sense cannot evade that dimension.⁵⁰

The *hospitalis* leadership paradigm is not without precedent in Indonesia's Christian history, and this claim needs an example that can be examined rather than left as a rhetorical statement. One of the best-documented examples is Y. B. Mangunwijaya. Between 1980 and 1986 he chose to live in the Code River Valley in Yogyakarta among an urban poor community threatened with eviction, rejected the eviction plan, and together with the residents reorganised the settlement, work that received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1992. What is relevant to this paradigm is not the award but the structure: the initiative of presence preceded the worthiness of the recipients, service was not conditioned on the capacity to repay, and the leader moved himself into the living space of those he served instead of managing access from a safe distance. Two qualifications must be stated. First, Mangunwijaya was a Catholic priest, so this example crosses the denominational boundary that this article focuses on; it serves as a paradigmatic illustration across traditions, not as a claim about any one ecclesial tradition. Second, he did not formulate his praxis within a systematic Christological framework like the one proposed here, so the relationship between his praxis and this paradigm is one of convergence, not application. Singgih reminds us that authentic contextual theology always begins by listening to the voices and experiences of the local community; within that framework, systematically documenting figures and communities who have lived out *hospitalis* leadership in Indonesia, including those not widely known, is an agenda for further research we cannot ignore.⁵¹

The heaviest contextual challenge to the *hospitalis* paradigm in Indonesia is what may be called transactional inertia: the systemic resistance of a theological ecology and church culture that has operated for so long on the logic of exchange that the logic of grace feels alien, unrealistic, and even institutionally dangerous. Artonang and Steenbrink show that the historical roots of these patterns are quite deep and have become part of denominational identity, liturgical tradition, and power structures regarded as sacred.⁵² A leader who wants to move from *emporion* to *trapeza* is therefore not merely changing a leadership style; such a

⁴⁹ Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*.

⁵⁰ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*.

⁵¹ Singgih, *Berteologi dalam Konteks*.

⁵² Artonang and Steenbrink, *History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

leader begins a long-term, nonlinear process of cultural transformation, full of temporary setbacks. Brueggemann suggests that leaders in such situations need eschatological patience: the conviction that genuine change does not occur within one programme cycle but over generations, and that the leader's role is to plant seeds that may be harvested only by others.⁵³

The implications of this paradigm for the formation of church leaders in Indonesia need separate attention. Nouwen insists that a leader who can lead with a *hospitalis* paradigm has truly encountered personal weakness and dependence before God: a leader who no longer needs to manage an image or protect status because identity is anchored not in the success of ministry but in God's unconditional love.⁵⁴ This is a spiritual dimension of leadership that cannot be acquired through skills training alone: it is born of a long process of soul formation that involves a deep encounter with God's grace in the leader's own personal vulnerability. Seminaries and theological colleges in Indonesia need to consider seriously whether their leadership formation curricula shape leaders who truly encounter the paradigm of Christ's grace or merely train efficient religious managers.

Conclusion

This article has travelled a theological path from the anatomy of transactionalism to the vision of a *hospitalis* leadership paradigm rooted in the praxis of Jesus. Four movements of argument reinforce one another. First, transactional leadership in the church is a crisis that transcends managerial dimensions: it distorts God's character as revealed in the Gospel, placing exchange where there should be grace, contract where there should be covenant, and marketplace where there should be fellowship. Second, Jesus's action in the Temple deconstructs that logic at its root, not by accusing the merchants of cheating but by rejecting the structure that makes access to the presence of God something mediated by transaction. Third, Jesus's table fellowship reconstructs the counter-paradigm by consistently opening the table to those who are unworthy and unable to repay. Fourth, the anti-transactional parables reverse the logic of wages-for-work with the surprising logic of divine generosity. These four give rise to the *hospitalis* leadership paradigm, with four characteristics: the initiative of grace, the stewardship of the open table, the re-narration of grace, and the readiness to bear the cost of prophecy.

This article's methodological contribution lies in inverting the procedure common in Christian leadership literature. Rather than borrowing a secular leadership model and then baptising it with biblical references, this article departs from Christ himself (from his actions, parables, and relationships) as the primary and normative paradigmatic source and from there formulates a Christocentric vision of leadership. This inversion demands a certain discipline, which has been pursued throughout the article: every exegetical claim is restricted to the text in which the lexeme concerned actually occurs, every leap from exegesis to theological construction is explicitly marked, and every cross-corpus linkage is accounted for as a canonical reading, not as a claim of literary relationship. In this way the resulting paradigm does not depend on a single controversial historical claim but on a consistent pattern across a number of texts.

⁵³ Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*.

⁵⁴ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 17–19.

The practical implications are direct and demanding. For congregational leaders, this paradigm demands a re-examination of who receives pastoral attention and on what basis. For theological education institutions, it demands an examination of whether the formation curriculum forms shepherds or religious managers. For church governance, it demands stricter, not looser, covenantal accountability, since the absence of oversight is not a sign of grace but a gap for abuse. Several directions for further research are wide open. First, empirical documentation of figures and communities in Indonesia who have lived out this paradigm, which this article represents with only one illustrative example. Second, field studies of congregations attempting to transition away from transactional patterns, including the institutional costs they bear. Third, a philologically thicker exegetical deepening of the vocabulary of "fellowship" and "exchange" in the New Testament, which this article limits to a few key lexemes. What is offered here is not the last word but a Christological foothold firm enough for that work to be carried further from there.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced this article.

Credit authorship contribution

The authors affirm that both contributed equally throughout the writing process, from preparing the initial draft to finalizing the manuscript. Pelealu developed the conceptual draft, while Runtuwene reviewed the manuscript, expanded the discussion in several sections, and refined the final text before submission.

AI disclosure

The authors state that the use of AI can be justified from an academic perspective. They utilize AI tools, such as Gemini, to develop initial ideas and to find references relevant to their discussion.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Global Glow Indonesia Research Ethics Committee (No: 01/SP/STTGGI/59/IX/2026).

Funding information

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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