



Christ's Integrity as a Bridge for Value Gaps: a Dialogue Between Paul David Tripp's Theology and 1 Peter 2:21–23

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Abstract

The crisis of integrity in Christian leadership often manifests itself in the gap between confessed faith and the values that functionally govern life and leadership practices. Paul David Tripp calls this phenomenon the value gap, which is the gap between confessional values and functional values that causes the gospel to no longer function as the operational center of life. This study aims to integrate Tripp's theological diagnosis with grammatical-historical exegesis of 1 Peter 2:21–23 in order to formulate the integrity of Christ as the theological foundation that bridges this value gap. Using a qualitative approach with biblical-analytical theological methods through conceptual analysis of Tripp's thought, exegesis of the text of 1 Peter 2:21–23, and theological-constructive synthesis. The results of the study show that the integrity of Christ is constructed as a whole structure of life in the context of suffering, which includes a normative lifestyle, relational honesty without manipulation, and sustained theological surrender to God. This research contributes to the theological discourse of Christian leadership by presenting the integrity of Christ as a theological bridge that restores the gospel as the center of life and leadership, so that the gap between the faith recognized and the practice of living can be bridged structurally, not just normatively.

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INTRODUCTION

Integrity is a central theme in contemporary Christian leadership discourse, especially in the midst of increasing moral failure,¹ abuse of power,² and a crisis of trust in spiritual leaders.³ Studies have shown that the issue of integrity is not always rooted in a lack of theological knowledge or rejection of the Christian faith, but rather in the tension between the faith that is professed and the faith that is lived in the practice of daily life and leadership. Integrity crises are often functional, not merely doctrinal, because the verbally acknowledged gospel does not always serve as an operational center in Christian leaders' decision-making, relationships, and responses under pressure.

Paul David Tripp formulated the value gap concept to illustrate the gap between confessional values, which are theologically recognized values, and functional values, which are the values that actually direct one's life and leadership. According to Tripp, this gap arises when the gospel is maintained as a language of faith, but loses its formative power in real life, so that Christian leaders functionally live as if God is not close enough, just, or trustworthy enough.⁴ This theological diagnosis enriches the discourse of Christian leadership by highlighting that disintegrity is often not the result of a rejection of faith, but rather of the failure of that faith to function practically in the context of suffering, conflict, and the pressures of ministry.

This phenomenon of value gap is increasingly relevant in the context of churches in Asia, where Christian leadership is often lived in the midst of complex social dynamics, unequal power relations, and real experiences of suffering.⁵ In such situations, Christian leaders face the temptation to adjust functional values for the sake of institutional stability, social acceptance, or continuity of ministry, even if the confession of faith is maintained verbally. This condition shows

¹ Leniwan Darmawati Gea, Deni, and Sulianus Susanto, "Success and Failure Factors of Christian Leadership and Its Implications for Today's Christian Leaders," *Journal of Evangelical Theology* 2, no. 1 (2022): 60–71, <https://doi.org/10.55626/jti.v2i1.26>.

² Martinus Renda et al., "Abuse of Priesthood Power in Cases of Sexual Abuse," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 22, no. 1 (2022): 114–37, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v22i1.412>.

³ Rita Oktavia Gunarto, Samuel Herman, and Jovita Elizabeth Abraham, "The Challenges of Christian Leadership in an Era of Disruption: Responsibility, Integrity, and Adaptation in Church Service," *Charism: Scientific Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (2024): 26–37, <https://doi.org/10.54553/kharisma.v5i2.256>.

⁴ Paul David Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020).

⁵ Maruli Tua Tampubolon and Asep Afaradi, "Christian Leadership as a Witness of Faith in Modern Society," *REI MAI: Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 3, no. 2 (2025): 242–54, <https://doi.org/10.69748/jrm.v3i2.404>.

that integrity cannot be understood solely as individual moral consistency, but rather as theological fidelity that is concretely tested in the reality of life and service.

On the other hand, the exegesis study of 1 Peter 2:21–23 broadly highlights the theme of the imitation of Christ,⁶ ethics of suffering,⁷ and the relationship of the early church to the power structure of the Roman period.⁸ Christ is presented as *hypogrammos*, which is a normative lifestyle exemplified in suffering, which is characterized by relational honesty and surrender to God. Nevertheless, these studies generally focus on the ethical or historical dimension of the text and have not explicitly linked the structure of Christ's integrity in this passage to the question of the gap between the confession of faith and the living practice of contemporary Christian leadership.

To this day, there is still a lack of studies that systematically integrate theological diagnoses of value gaps in Christian leadership with the exegesis reading of 1 Peter 2:21–23 as a normative source of integrity formation. This absence of dialogue causes the integrity of Christ to be often understood as a general moral exemplar, without being developed as a theological structure capable of bridging the gap between the acknowledged faith and the values that functionally direct the life of the Christian leader.

Based on the research gap, this study aims to integrate Paul David Tripp's theological diagnosis of value gap with grammatical-historical exegesis of 1 Peter 2:21–23 to formulate the integrity of Christ as the theological foundation that bridges the gap between the professed faith and the living practice of Christian leadership. By combining conceptual analysis of leadership and an in-depth biblical reading, this study argues that the integrity of Christ is not presented as a separate moral quality, but rather as a whole living structure that restores the gospel as the operational center of Christian life and leadership, particularly in the Asian context.

⁶ Ferijanto Setiadarma, "Leadership by Example: A Study of the Word 'Exemplary' in the New Testament and Its Implementation for Today's Christian Leadership," *TRACK: Journal of Christian Leadership, Theology, and Entrepreneurship* 2, no. 1 (2023): 63–86, <https://doi.org/10.61660/tep.v2i1.58>.

⁷ Agus Prasetyo, "1 Peter and Ethics: A Perspective in Understanding the Ethical Idea of 1 Peter," *Predica Verbum: A Journal of Theology and Mission* 2, no. 2 (2022): 85–97, <https://doi.org/10.51591/predicaverbum.v2i2.43>.

⁸ Tri Endah Astuti and Betty Latupeirissa, "An Analysis of the Authorship of the Letter of 1 Peter: A Response to the Pseudonymous Theory," *Predica Verbum: A Journal of Theology and Mission* 1, no. 1 (2021): 16–30, <https://doi.org/10.51591/predicaverbum.v1i1.5>.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative theological research design that integrates grammatical-historical exegesis with conceptual and constructive theological analysis.⁹ The research is conducted in three interrelated stages. First, a grammatical-historical exegesis of 1 Peter 2:21–23 is carried out through close analysis of key Koine Greek terms, syntactical structures, and the socio-historical context of the Petrine community in Asia Minor, in order to identify how the text constructs the integrity of Christ within the context of unjust suffering. Second, a conceptual analysis of Paul David Tripp's diagnosis of the value gap is undertaken by examining his primary works on Christian leadership and gospel-centered integrity, focusing on the distinction between confessional and functional values. Third, the findings from the exegetical and conceptual analyses are brought into a constructive theological synthesis, in which the integrity of Christ as articulated in 1 Peter 2:21–23 is interpreted as a theological framework capable of addressing the value gap in contemporary Christian leadership. This study is textual and theological in nature and does not employ empirical methods; its aim is to develop a coherent theological model grounded in Scripture and theological reflection rather than to measure practical outcomes in specific leadership contexts.

RESULT

This section presents the main findings of the grammatical-historical exegesis of 1 Peter 2:21–23 concerning the integrity of Christ in the context of unjust suffering. The analysis demonstrates that the epistle constructs Christ's integrity not as an abstract moral ideal, but as a coherent structure of life that functions normatively for the community. Three interrelated dimensions emerge from the text: Christ as a normative way of life to be concretely followed, relational honesty without manipulation in the face of injustice, and sustained theological surrender to God as the righteous Judge. These findings provide the textual foundation for the subsequent theological discussion on integrity and Christian leadership.

⁹ Hank Voss, "From 'Grammatical-Historical Exegesis' to 'Theological Exegesis': Five Essential Practices," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 37, no. 2 (2013): 140–52.

Christ as a Normative Way of Life

Analysis of the term ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) in 1 Peter 2:21 shows that Peter used a term that specifically referred to Greco-Roman pedagogical practice. Lexically, ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) refers to examples of writing or patterns that are provided for students to be traced precisely,¹⁰ not just to be copied freely. Jobes asserts that the term contains the nuances of "concrete imitation that demands the conformity of form and direction."¹¹

The use of this term in the context of Christ's suffering suggests that suffering is not placed as an exception from the normative life, but rather as an inherent part of the exemplary pattern of life. Syntactically speaking, the clause "ἵνα ἐπακολουθήσητε τοῖς ἵχνεσιν αὐτοῦ" (*hina epakolouthēsēte tois ichnesin autou*) reinforces the aspect of active searching, where the life of Christ's followers is directed to follow concrete tracks, not just general values.¹² These findings confirm that the integrity of Christ in this text has an operational normative dimension.

Peter seems to be trying to correct the church's assumption that suffering signifies a failure of faith or the absence of God. Rather, by referring to Christ as ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*), Peter constructs suffering as a space in which the integrity of faith is tested and manifested. Schreiner asserts that this pattern is not intended to legitimize injustice, but rather to affirm the faithfulness of the congregation in a situation that they cannot directly change.¹³

In addition to the pedagogical meaning attached to the term ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*), this analysis also shows that the use of the term has a conceptual relationship with the tradition of discipleship in the Gospels, specifically the idea of "following" (ἀκολουθέω—*akolouthéō*) Jesus in the context of suffering (cf. Mark 8:34).¹⁴ Although the terms used are different, the theological pattern is in line with the fact that following Christ is not just adopting abstract values, but tracing the concrete traces of life, including the experience of suffering and self-denial.

¹⁰ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 4th ed., ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), 922.

¹¹ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005).

¹² Greg W. Forbes, *1 Peter-Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Andreas J. Kostenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough (Brentwood, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2014).

¹³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1:2 Peter - Jude*, 37 vols., The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003).

¹⁴ Johnny Davis, "Mark 8:34-9:1 Exegetical Paper," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, ahead of print, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3892542>.

When compared to other terms that can be used for examples, such as παράδειγμα (*parádeigma*), Peter's choice of ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) shows a stronger emphasis on precision and directness of life. παράδειγμα (*parádeigma*) tends to point to general examples or moral illustrations,¹⁵ while ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) demands suitability of form and direction. This comparison confirms that the integrity of Christ in this text is not intended as a loose ethical inspiration, but rather as a normative pattern that shapes the overall orientation of the church's life.

Relational Honesty without Manipulation

Verse 22 continues the description of Christ's integrity with the statement that "there is no δόλος (*dólos*) in His mouth." Semantically, δόλος (*dólos*) refers to deliberate deception, strategic cunning, or the use of language as a tool of relational manipulation.¹⁶ In the Septuagint, the term is often associated with disloyalty and dishonesty before God (cf. Ps. 32:2), which shows that its meaning goes beyond mere verbal lying.

In the socio-historical context of suffering, the use of δόλος (*dólos*) to be very significant. The congregation that receives the letter is in a vulnerable social position, where language manipulation and relational strategies can be a means of survival. However, Peter asserts that Christ's integrity is characterized by the absence of δόλος (*dólos*), even when he was reviled and treated unjustly. Donelson notes that this emphasis underscores "the unity between the inner character and the verbal expression of Christ."¹⁷

In addition, this verse contains a powerful echo of Isaiah 53:9, which implicitly associates Christ's suffering with the figure of the Servant of the Lord. These findings show that Peter not only presented an ethics of suffering, but also tied it to a narrative of redemption. Christ's integrity includes relational honesty rooted in faithfulness to God, not on situational calculations.

Use of the term δόλος (*dólos*) in 1 Peter 2:22 shows a strong continuity with the Old Testament tradition, especially Psalm 32:2 and Isaiah 53:9, where the absence of deception is a sign of a true relationship with God. By echoing the text of Isaiah, Peter not only affirms the innocence of Christ, but also places relational honesty as an expression of integrity rooted in

¹⁵ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 906.

¹⁶ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 842.

¹⁷ Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

covenant faithfulness. In the OT tradition, δόλος (*dólos*) is often associated with a divided heart and a broken relationship, so that its absence shows inner integrity before God.

From the lexical side, δόλος (*dólos*) can be compared to other Greek terms such as ἀπάτη (*apatē*), which also means fraud. However, δόλος (*dólos*) contains a stronger sense of intentionality and manipulative strategies, often oriented towards self-gain through relationships. Peter's choice of δόλος (*dólos*) shows that the integrity of Christ is not only concerned with factual truth, but with the absence of a hidden agenda in relationships, even when they are marked by suffering and injustice.

Continued Theological Surrender

Verse 23 reaches its climax with the statement that Christ "gave himself continually (παρεδίδου—*paredidou*) to the One who judges righteously." Grammatical analysis shows that the use of imperfect forms signifies repetitive and continuous actions, not momentary decisions.¹⁸ This shows that Christ's surrender was a consistent orientation of life in the entire experience of His suffering.

Theologically, the object of this surrender is very significant, namely, God as the righteous Judge. In the context of the church experiencing injustice, this statement affirms that final justice does not lie in the social system or human response, but in God Himself. Liebengood emphasizes that this dimension constitutes "an eschatologically oriented theological logic of Christian suffering."¹⁹

These findings show that Christ's integrity is rooted in active theological belief, not passive or fatalistic attitudes. Christ's surrender is not an evasion of responsibility, but a constant expression of trust in the character of God. The integrity of Christ in 1 Peter 2:21–23 reaches a theological depth that underpins the normative and relational dimensions outlined earlier.

Use of verb παρεδίδου (*paredidou*) in imperfect form also shows an intertextual connection to the Gospel narrative, particularly in the story of Jesus' passion, where the act of "surrender" is often associated with God's will working through Christ's suffering (cf. Rom. 8:32). In the context

¹⁸ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 676.

¹⁹ Kelly D. Liebengood, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9–14* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

of the Gospels, Jesus' surrender was not a passive act, but an active obedience to the redemptive mission entrusted to him by the Father.

Lexically, *παρεδίδου* (*paredidou*) can be compared to the verb *παρατίθημι* (*paratithēmi*), which is also used in the context of entrusting or handing over.²⁰ However, *παρεδίδου* (*paredidou*) emphasizes the aspect of surrender into a process that is not entirely within the control of the subject, whereas *παρατίθημι* (*paratithēmi*) more emphasizes the act of consciously entrusting. Peter's choice of *παρεδίδου* (*paredidou*), especially in the form of imperfect form, shows that Christ's integrity is expressed through perseverance in surrendering oneself to God's justice, not through mastery of results or self-defense.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate how the integrity of Christ in 1 Peter 2:21–23 is textually articulated within the context of suffering. The following discussion builds on this exegetical foundation by exploring the theological significance of this structure of integrity and placing it in critical dialogue with Paul David Tripp's diagnosis of the value gap and contemporary Christian leadership discourse.

DISCUSSION

This discussion begins by elaborating the normative structure of Christ's integrity in 1 Peter 2:21–23 as identified in the exegetical findings, namely a normative way of life shaped by suffering, relational honesty without manipulation, and sustained theological surrender to God. These interrelated elements provide the theological framework through which the integrity of Christ can be understood not merely as an ethical ideal, but as a coherent structure of life. Building on this framework, the discussion then places the integrity of Christ in critical dialogue with Paul David Tripp's diagnosis of the value gap and contemporary discourse on Christian leadership. In this light, Christ's integrity functions as a theological bridge that structurally addresses the gap between acknowledged faith and lived practice, restoring the gospel as an operational center rather than an additional moral demand in the life and leadership of Christians.

²⁰ Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 685.

The Normative Structure of Christ's Integrity in 1 Peter 2:21–23

A textual analysis of 1 Peter 2:21–23 shows that this passage is structured as a coherent argumentative unit, in which Christ's integrity is presented not as an abstract ethical principle, but as a structure of life embodied in Christ's response to unjust suffering. Peter begins with a call statement (κλήσις— *Klēsis*) the congregation to suffering (v. 21),²¹ then directs the reader's attention to Christ as the normative basis of the call.

The socio-historical context of the receiving church of the letter is that of the diaspora Christian community in Asia Minor who live as a social minority, suggesting that the suffering in question is not systematic state persecution, but rather social pressure, relational injustice, and unfair treatment in household and work structures (cf. 1Pet. 2:18–20).²² In this milieu, Peter eschews strategies of deliverance or resistance, framing suffering instead through the imitatio Christi. As Williams and Horrell note, according to Elliott this approach aims to form a community identity that is "rooted in Christ, not in changing social conditions."²³

The structure of this passage shows a clear progression, in which Christ is presented as a normative pattern of life (ὕπογραμμός—*hypogrammos*), then explained through two main characteristics, namely the absence of deception (δόλος—*dólos*) and the act of continuous surrender to God (παρεδίδου—*paredidou*). These findings affirm that Christ's integrity is constructed narratively and relationally, not through conceptual definitions or direct moral commands.

These findings also show a strong pattern of intertextuality between 1 Peter 2:21–23 and Old Testament traditions, particularly the singing of the Servant of God in Isaiah 52:13–53:12.²⁴ The use of themes of unjust suffering, the absence of deceit, and surrender to a just God suggests that Peter consciously placed Christ's suffering within the framework of the OT redemptive narrative that has become widely known in the Jewish tradition. This intertextuality is not merely

²¹ Made Nopen Supriadi and Iman Kristina Halawa, "The Meaning of Christ's Suffering in 1 Peter 2:18-21," *Manna Rafflesia* 5, no. 1 (2019): 69–91, https://doi.org/10.38091/man_raf.v5i1.99.

²² María José Schultz Montalbetti, "The Relationship Between Submission and Sacrifice in the First Letter of Peter," *Religions* 16, no. 655 (2025): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16050655>.

²³ Travis B. Williams and David G. Horrell, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on 1 Peter in 2 Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: T&T Clark, 2023), 144.

²⁴ Sook-Young Kim and Koot van Wyk, "The 'Warrior Messiah' in the Servant Song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12," *융합학문과 기독교* 2, no. 2 (2021): 5–22, <https://doi.org/10.53665/isc.2.2.5>.

illustrative, but has a normative function, since the reader is directed to understand Christ's suffering as the fulfillment of a previously revealed pattern of life.

In the context of the New Testament, this construction also resonates with the narrative of Jesus' suffering in the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in the trial and crucifixion scenes, where Jesus chooses silence and surrender over self-defense (cf. Matt. 26:63; 27:12–14). This finding shows that the integrity of Christ in 1 Peter is not an isolated concept, but part of a consistent canonical testimony, in which suffering becomes a space for the revelation of God's character and the Son's faithfulness to the Father's will.

The Value Gap as a Theological-Functional Crisis

Paul David Tripp asserts that many failures of integrity in Christian leadership are not rooted in rejection of the Christian faith or theological ignorance, but rather in the failure of the gospel to serve as the driving value of daily life.²⁵ The concept of the value gap that he proposed illustrates the gap between confessional values, that is, what is theologically recognized, and functional values, which are what are truly believed and lived in real situations of pressure, suffering, and leadership responsibility. Under these conditions, Christian leaders can maintain the correct language of faith, but practically live as if God is not sovereign enough, not just enough, or not close enough to be trusted.

The exegesis' findings of 1 Peter 2:21–23 show that Christ's integrity is constructed directly in the context that is most prone to the emergence of value gaps, namely unjust suffering. Christ not only taught faith in God, but lived that trust in a concrete way when He was reviled, suffered, and treated unjustly. The integrity of Christ shows that true faith is functional, not merely conventional. In this light, the value gap that Tripp diagnoses can be understood as a failure to emulate the structure of Christ's life as shown in this passage.

The understanding of the value gap as a theological-functional crisis is also in line with the reflections of a number of contemporary theologians who highlight the relationship between faith, practice, and social context. Kelendenu, Tuela, and Mawikere, assert that the failure of faith to shape the practice of life often occurs when Christian identity is detached from the narrative of the cross and suffering, so that faith is reduced to a system of private meaning that no longer structures

²⁵ Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*, 105-106.

ethical and relational responses in the public sphere.²⁶ In this perspective, the value gap is not just a matter of personal inconsistency, but a symptom of faith losing its formative power in the face of the reality of suffering and injustice.

In addition, Shawa, through his study of grace in the context of the New Testament, shows that grace that is no longer understood as a transformative power will be easily separated from the practice of living.²⁷ These findings reinforce Tripp's analysis that a true confession of faith does not automatically result in an integrated life, unless the gospel is understood and lived as a force that shapes the orientation of values and actions. The integrity of Christ in 1 Peter 2:21–23 can be understood as a concrete manifestation of faith that remains functional in the midst of suffering, not simply as an individual ethical response.

The Integrity of Christ as a Normative Way of Life

The concept of ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) in 1 Peter 2:21 makes an important contribution to the understanding of integrity as an operational normative lifestyle. In Tripp's thought, the gospel is often reduced to a recognized theological foundation, but no longer serves as a lifestyle that directs the concrete response of Christian leaders.²⁸ When other values such as the need for control, institutional stability, or social recognition replace the gospel as a functional value, value gaps become inevitable.

Christ as ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) negates this separation by displaying a life that is entirely shaped by faith in God, even when that faithfulness brings suffering, not success. Integrity, in this perspective, is not just moral consistency, but structural fidelity to the gospel as a way of life. Malan Nel asserts that failed Christian discipleship is often rooted in an inability to make the gospel as "Way of Life," not just a belief system.²⁹ These findings show that Christ's integrity serves as a normative bridge that restores the gospel from a mere language of faith to a concrete way of life.

²⁶ Lonny A. A. Kelendenu, Anita I. Tuela, and Marde C. S. Mawikere, "Following Jesus in the Modern World Between the Cross and the Selfie," *International Journal of Education, Information Technology and Others (IJEIT)* 8, no. 3.A (2025): 119–27.

²⁷ Jason Scott Shawa, "The Necessity of Weaknesses in Experiencing the Grace of God: An Examination of Paul's Use of Grace, Culminating in 2 Corinthians 12:7–10" (Dissertation, Liberty University, 2024).

²⁸ Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*, 110.

²⁹ Malan Nel, "Disciple-Making: What Is It All About?," *HTS Theological Studies* 81, no. 1 (2025): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10761>.

Christ's Integrity as ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) challenges this reduction by presenting the life of Christ as a normative pattern that must be explored concretely, not simply admired or used as moral inspiration. This concept is in line with Björkander's argument that human beings are shaped primarily by the practice of life, not just by ideas or cognitive beliefs.³⁰ In this light, the value gap that Tripp diagnoses can be understood as a failure of discipleship praxis, in which the gospel no longer shapes the habits, dispositions, and real responses of Christian leaders, especially in situations of suffering and conflict.

Furthermore, Siburian affirms that the faithful Christian life is always rooted in participation in the story of Christ, not simply obedience to universal moral principles.³¹ Christ as ὑπογραμμός (*hypogrammos*) places integrity within the framework of the gospel narrative, where faithfulness is measured not by external success or stability, but by the alignment of life with Christ's own way of life. Normative integrity is not understood as an external standard to be achieved, but as a sustained participation in the life of Christ that shapes the values orientation and practice of Christian leadership as a whole.

The Integrity of Christ as Relational Honesty without Manipulation

The relational dimension of Christ's integrity, which is characterized by the absence of δόλος (*dólos*), shows how value gaps are often subtly manifested through the use of the language of faith. Tripp warns that correct theological language can easily be used as a tool of self-justification, position security, or relational manipulation when the gospel is no longer the center of life. In the context of Christian leadership, this is evident in the way the leader frames conflict, suffering, and failure with spiritual rhetoric that masks inner motivation.

Christ's integrity points in the opposite direction. The Absence of Δόλος (*Dólos*) signifies the unity between inner motivation and verbal expression, even when such honesty carries a greater risk of suffering. Relational integrity cannot be reduced to communication ethics or leadership skills, but is rooted in theological beliefs that liberate leaders from the need to control perceptions and outcomes. In this light, the integrity of Christ serves as a relational bridge that bridges the gap

³⁰ Martina Björkander, "The Quest for Lived Theology: A Reflection," *Approaching Religion* 15, no. 1 (2025): 79–92, <https://doi.org/10.30664/ar.156186>.

³¹ Faramita Siburian, "Maintaining Faithfulness Amidst the Temptations of the World," *The Wisdom of the Christian Journal* 02, no. 02 (2024): 46–51.

between the language of faith and inner motivation, a crucial aspect of the restoration of authentic Christian leadership.

The relational dimension of Christ's integrity can also be deepened through dialogue with study honor–shame in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world. Georges points out that in a culture that places a heavy emphasis on public honor, the response to humiliation and suffering has significant social implications.³² In this kind of context, the absence of δόλος (*dólos*) in Christ's response shows a rejection of the strategy of defending honor through manipulation of language or aggressive self-defense. The integrity of Christ, thus, challenges the social logic that places reputation and honor as the highest values.

This dialogue enriches Tripp's analysis of the manipulative language of faith by adding a cultural-historical dimension. If Tripp highlights how theological language can be used to protect self-interest in the context of modern leadership, then the context honor–shame shows that similar temptations have been present since the early church. The integrity of Christ presents a theological alternative that is consistent across cultures, namely relational honesty rooted in belief in God, not in the management of social perceptions.

The Integrity of Christ as Sustained Theological Surrender

At the deepest level, the integrity of Christ answers the value gap at the theological level through the act of sustained surrender to God, as demonstrated by the use of the imperfect form παρεδίδου (*paredidou*). Tripp asserts that many Christian leaders functionally live as if the future of ministry, reputation, and end result are entirely in their own hands.³³ In this condition, control becomes the main functional value that replaces belief in God.

The integrity of Christ displays the opposite theological logic. By constantly entrusting himself to God as the just Judge, Christ refused to make control the center of gravity of His life. This surrender is not a passive attitude, but an active expression of trust in God's character and justice. Venter emphasized that a mature Christian faith has always been eschatologically oriented,

³² Jayson Georges, "From Shame to Honor: A Theological Reading of Romans for Honor-Shame Contexts," *Missiology: An International Review* 38, no. 3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182961003800305>.

³³ Tripp, *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church*, 60.

that is, entrusting final justice to God.³⁴ In this perspective, the integrity of Christ serves as a theological bridge that restores trust in God as the basis of Christian life and leadership.

Although the concept of the value gap Put forward by Paul David Tripp provides a sharp diagnosis of the crisis of integrity in Christian leadership, this concept also needs to be read critically in the light of the context of structural and cross-cultural suffering. Tripp's emphasis on the personal and functional dimensions of faith potentially lacks account for situations in which Christian leaders live and serve in an inherently oppressive or unjust social system. In this kind of context, the gap between recognized values and life practices cannot always be explained solely as a failure of individual faith.

The integrity of Christ in 1 Peter 2:21–23 adds important nuance to this discourse by showing that theological fidelity can be lived even when structural changes are not immediately available. However, this text also does not negate the reality of injustice, but rather frames it in an eschatological horizon where God's justice becomes the final reference. The Integrity of Christ expands and at the same time corrects Tripp's reading by placing the issue of integrity in the tension between personal responsibility and structural reality, a tension relevant to Christian leadership in Asia.

By integrating the findings of exegesis and Tripp's theological diagnosis, this discussion shows that the integrity of Christ provides a coherent and profound theological framework for bridging the value gap in Christian leadership. Integrity is no longer understood as an additional moral demand, but rather as a living and tangible expression of the gospel in the context of suffering, relationships, and uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the crisis of integrity in Christian leadership, as diagnosed by Paul David Tripp as a gap between recognized values (confessional values) and the values lived (functional values), is a theological-functional problem that cannot be adequately answered through a purely moralistic or managerial approach. Through the integration of Tripp's conceptual analysis and grammatical-historical exegesis of 1 Peter 2:21–23, this study shows that the integrity of Christ is constructed as a whole structure of life in the context of suffering, which includes a

³⁴ Rian Venter, "Trends in Contemporary Eschatological Reflection," *Missionalia* 43, no. 1 (2015): 105–23, <https://doi.org/10.7832/43-1-72>.

normative lifestyle that demands concrete alignment between faith and practice, relational honesty without manipulation that reveals the unity between the language of faith and inner motivation, and a sustained theological surrender to God as Righteous judge. The three elements identified in the exegetical findings of 1 Peter 2:21–23, namely a normative lifestyle, relational honesty without manipulation, and sustained theological surrender are intertwined and function as a theological bridge, so that the gap between the acknowledged faith and the life lived can be bridged structurally, not just normatively. The main contribution of this article lies in presenting an integrative biblical reading of contemporary Christian leadership issues, particularly in the context of churches in Asia, while also opening up space for further research that tests and develops this structure of Christ's integrity in concrete ecclesiastical leadership practices. This research has limitations because it focuses on a theological-textual approach through exegetical and conceptual analysis, so it has not explored empirically how this structure of Christ's integrity is lived out and applied in concrete ecclesiastical leadership practices in various socio-cultural contexts.

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